CSA Senate Survey Results

Compiled 5/11/12

Thank you to all of you who filled out the survey. I received 17 responses from the 22 people with the link (all 18 senators, the three officers, and the secretary). You can see a graphical representation of the data below, with a copy of all responses received. The responses were placed into alphabetical order, and therefore, there is no connection between responses from category to category (the first response from one question is not necessarily the first response from another question). I think this is a useful internal assessment on how we are doing so far, and where we can improve for next year. We will have an opportunity to discuss the implications of this survey at a meeting in the near future, and I look forward to that conversation.

Thank you all for this valuable feedback,

-Michael
Do you approve of the actions and conduct of President Michael McClellan?

- (Approve) Although this is not serious cause for concern, it would help if President McClellan [better] established order, so as to better facilitate meetings, particularly when they become heated.
- (Strongly Approve) Be more authoritative in directing the senate body to maintain order and treat one another with appropriate respect. Also help ensure guests feel welcome and respected.
- (Strongly Approve) Calls to order should probably have been made at some points during sessions in which the speakers list was ignored in favor of rolling arguments.
- (Approve) He does well at trying to mediate tense situations and has had a rough time adjusting. To avoid some issues that have come up, perhaps a stricter maintenance of the bylaws on structure and Roberts' Rules would help keep the meetings in good order. I can only wonder what impression our recent guests have received of Senate - but that's really for below.
- (Approve) He is new to the position, but he is doing his damndest to do a good job, especially in light of the shitty spot we are in right now. I have no concerns that McClellan is responsible and does put Senate, and the duties of his office - first.
- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) He should push for better guidelines and more streamlined decision-making process.
- (No Response) I can take charge more in tense situations. I should brush up on more Robert's Rules to make consistent parliamentary decisions. I should do more campus outreach to repair some damage that has been done this term and act as the truly independent/impartial voice on Senate since I cannot vote.
- (Approve) "I think McClellan does a good job making people feel welcome at Senate and staying on top of all the issues that are being tackled. I think he needs to be more familiar with the procedures and voting requirements but I think that this has been improving already. He needs to better enforce order in the meetings by strictly sticking to the speaker's list in order to improve conduct in the meetings and move smoothly. This term has been very budget-heavy given the current financial crisis. However, in the future I think he needs to be better at empowering/encouraging senators to take on projects that they're working on outside of meetings. As of now, I think few or no senators are working on things outside of the various meetings they have to attend, and we should require more work from people who are elected to this body. I very much appreciate that he initiated this survey."
- (Approve) "I think Michael has been solid all around. However, sometimes during deliberations he allows for discussions to go on too many tangents, and we end up just bickering over semantics. I know Michael is supposed to be unbiased, but I wish he would take a more direct control over the meetings to ensure their smooth running."
- (Approve) Mr. McClellan is doing a satisfactory job. There have been some kinks in the running of meetings this term, but this is to be expected with a new president. I am glad Mr. McClellan selected a new secretary for next year.
• (Strongly Approve) Nah man. I think you are doing a great job. Just keep it up. I enjoy working with him.
• (Approve) Sometimes I feel like we are rushing through votes, and it is not quite clear what we are voting on exactly (to make something emergency funding, to amend something), as well as if it is a procedural vote (so we can abstain or not). It would be nice to slow things down a bit and make all of these details very clear.
• (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) Sometimes Michael shares his opinion too much and I thought as president he was supposed to be impartial.
• Approve
• Strongly Approve
• Approve
• Strongly Approve

Do you approve of the actions and conduct of Vice President Yasin Dara? Do you have any feedback as to how Vice President Yasin Dara can be more effective?

• (Disapprove) by being friendlier and being on top of senate proceedings by understanding the governance of the body.
• (Strongly Approve) Continue to voice thoughts on how you think the Senate should proceed, your experience makes your input very insightful and helpful in forming opinions.
• (Approve) Does a good job but needs to work on organizational things a bit i.e. replying to emails in a timely fashion, coming to meetings he is leading early and prepared.
• (Strongly Disapprove) "He should be doing *everything* differently if he wants to be more effective. As a leader he inspires no confidence. But more problematic, he seems unprepared, and overwhelmed by his duties, which negatively impacts everyone else. He is irresponsible, and seems to enjoy making people uncomfortable, especially at BC meetings. It is necessary to make some hard choices in terms of funding - it is not necessary to be a jerk about it. Answer your emails on time, respond politely and promptly, be a leader on BC so that it functions better, etc."
• (Disapprove) He sometimes lower the morale of the CSA meetings. Also, he should behave more professionally in budget meetings.
• (No Response) I could be far more welcoming towards student group leaders who use the resource of Budget Committee, as well as establish better professionalism and conduct with regards to Budget Committee members, including myself. I could be involved in more projects which directly impact the members of the CSA. I could be more timely when responding to any and all inquiries regarding my position, or the status of a Budget Committee request, Chartering request, or other CSA concern.
• (Disapprove) I feel as though Yasin gets caught up in personal matters as well as the fact that he can sometimes be dismissive and rude towards the president.
- (Disapprove) I think that Vice President Dara is not completely familiar with the rules and tends to mess up small but important matters frequently. Further, I think he tends to be too biased in affairs.
- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) It seems more discipline is needed in Budget Committee. He seems to have had a hard time keeping up with email lately and I'm a little worried about his load. I am also concerned about the lack of minutes from the beginning of Budget Committee meetings when the secretary is not there. He said he would handle it and whether he does it personally or not, I hope someone does take notes on the meetings.
- (Disapprove) Mr. Dara is somewhat unprofessional in running meetings and, despite his role as the "objective" chair of budget committee, has had conversations before presentations that suggest the Budget Committee is colluding not to fund something before a presentation has presented.
- (Strongly Disapprove) "There are a number of areas for improvement here. First, I have heard various complaints from people who submit requests to budget committee that their requests are not handled in an organized and timely way. I do not have specific examples or a more specific concern, but I do think that he needs to pay special attention to being on top of this process at all times. He needs to effectively and in a timely manner communicate with club leaders about what is needed from them to move through the budget process. He also needs to better regulate the proceedings of budget committee by, for example, making sure that there are always minutes even if the secretary is not present, ensuring that those minutes are made public in a timely manner, and distributing all relevant materials (i.e. appeals documents) to senators. In addition, in senate meetings he often makes very conclusive statements with a great deal of authority that may oversimplify the content of the budget issue being discussed. I think he needs to show more respect for the people from the organization and also for the nuances of each budgetary case. I think this change could go a long way to making people feel more comfortable throughout the whole budget process. I was pleased in the last meeting that he is resurrecting the parking working group. As vice president, his duties extend beyond budget committee. He should be actively encouraging senators to take on projects, coming up with ideas, and working with other groups on campus to make new projects happen."
- (Strongly Disapprove) Yasin has been at the center of numerous hang-ups that Senate has experienced this term. He needs to take more control of Budget Committee and the conduct that occurs there. Michael said in Senate that he talked to BC and Yasin but I haven't seen much improvement yet.
- Approve
- Approve
- Neither Approve nor Disapprove
- Neither Approve nor Disapprove
- Approve
Do you approve of the actions and conduct of Treasurer Cooper Buss? Do you have any feedback as to how Treasurer Cooper Buss can be more effective?

- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) by providing senate (more for next year) with running tabs of the amount of money in our accounts.
- (Approve) "Cooper is very knowledgable, and effectively communicates any questions we have about issues pertaining to money. However, I would like if he shared in more detail our situation as we ""are broke, but we have lots of money.'"
- (Approve) Cooper would be more effective if the VP was also more effective. There is sometimes some opacity on how much money we *actually* have at any given point. I think he's trying and doing the best he can. On rare occasions, his comments seem a little patronizing to the presenters, but that has greatly improved.
- (Strongly Approve) He seems to be on top of things and is always managing financial papers when I stop by the Student Activities Office; no apparent problems.
- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) He should behave more professionally in budget meetings, and make better financial suggestions.
- (No Response) "I learned a few key lessons this term: Let the committee give the bad news Give students suggestions for how to better interact with BC but do not impose any consequences if they do not follow our guidelines/bylaws without the committee behind you."
- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) I see him as effective within the position of Treasurer.
- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) I think we should always have information shown about how much money we have, where it is, etc., throughout meetings (on the screen, for example), and that it is updated as we approve budget requests.
- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) Mr. Buss is somewhat opaque in his discussions of the finances of CSA.
- (Strongly Approve) Please make sure everyone is aware of exactly where our funds stand so that we don't keep blowing through emergency funds to fund things that are not emergencies.
- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) Too soon to tell. I believe he will make a decent, maybe even good, treasurer.
- Approve
- Strongly Approve
- Approve
- Strongly Approve
- Approve
- Neither Approve nor Disapprove

Do you approve of the actions and conduct of CSA Senate in general? Do you have any feedback as to how CSA Senate can be more effective?
• (Approve) Always keep in mind that we are representing the student body in making funding decisions. If it is prohibitively expensive and benefits only a few students we may well have to be the "bad guy" and not fund the event.

• (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) As we said tonight, the meetings have been very tense lately. I try to avoid some discussions afterwards when some senators get really frustrated and vocal about their complaints with other members. I hope that such differences will be settled in reasonable discussion during the meetings and that Senate remembers it is a 'deliberative' body.

• (Approve) CSA does good work. However, I feel like members who have been on CSA for years try to keep CSA running like it used to. I think this needs to be a flexible organization, but sometimes people stop it from doing so.

• (Approve) Following Robert's Rules of Order more consistently while having discussion would be beneficial I think.

• (Strongly Disapprove) "I believe that the conduct and atmosphere in senate this term has been (overall) inappropriate for a number of reasons. First, the style of debate is not respectful. People do not respect the opinions that our guests or other senators are voicing. They need to learn to listen better to what other people are saying, and make well-informed critiques of those positions instead of yelling about what they believe to be right. This not only fosters even worse communication and lack of collaboration between senators, but projects a very poor image to those who visit our meetings. Second, Senators need to be more respectful to people who come to present to Senate, about budget committee or otherwise. I think we need to set up a few designated visitors seats in the horseshoe so it is less intimidating. We need to not whisper to each other, type or read on our computers or look generally bored/spaced out when other people are presenting. We have to put ourselves in their shoes and understand that this is incredibly important to them. We need to carefully explain our rationale as it relates to budget committee guidelines or whatever other concerns we have, as to not be misinterpreted. The reputation of senate has always been shaky, but it is growing even worse. I know this is especially true in minority communities around campus, which is incredibly concerning to me. I think we need to actively reach out to diverse communities in Carleton and talk about senate and how they can be better served by the senate. Apart from conduct, senators this term are not doing work outside of meetings. Being a senator does not mean just attending senate meetings and whatever other liaison meetings you are required to attend. It means actively engaging with your constituents and taking on projects that can make a difference in the community. I also think senators need to be better educated about the budget committee guidelines so that we know what is appropriate to fund and what is not appropriate to fund."

• (Strongly Approve) I think Senate does an alright job of what they are supposed to do (represent the student body) but I think they need to be more active as individuals, doing things outside of Monday night meetings. Being a senator does not mean you simply go to a room every Monday and talk.

• (Approve) "I would hope we can be more open to students in the future and act as a more compassionate body. I also hope that we can move away from purely discussing financial matters. While I understand that these are an important part of Senate, I hope that we can also
discuss other issues. It seems like people get elected on platforms and then go on to do very little actually relating to them."

- (Approve) I'm frustrated with some of the flippant and downright nasty behavior of some of the members of senate. Interrupting and needling other senate members to try to get them to play along is not a fair tactic.

- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) Like Rebecca brought up at the end of the meeting last night, I think we need to be more civil towards our guests as well as towards each other. I also think the time commitment is important; like Andy was saying, we can't just be focused on leaving by 8. Maybe we should have a process where senators have to e-mail you before the meeting if they HAVE to leave by a certain time. Otherwise, we should be willing to sit it out for however long it takes (within reason. 2 hrs?)

- (Approve) Many of the comments I wish to bring up can be discussed as proposed changes to procedure. I am admittedly less concerned with the efficiency and functionality of the CSA Senate as a whole - this is because I feel that our decisions as a body are fairly well thought out, detailed, and largely appropriate. Our issue can be reduced to a problem regarding image, communication, and awareness - the average student harbors negative sentiment towards Budget Committee and the CSA Senate because we fail to communicate our involvement, our care, and our respect for their issues, to them. If we get better at this, and we succeed in informing the student body of the reasoning behind each and every one of our decisions, then not only will we be living up to our status as representatives of the student body, but we will have the students' support and approval.

- (Disapprove) Some Senates constantly lower the moral of the meetings and make frustrating comments about funding certain events, which gave CSA a bad name. CSA should have better guidelines to decision-making processes. And CSA should debrief new senates about regulations as soon as they are elected instead of just letting them "absorb" the bylaws and procedures as the term goes along.

- (Strongly Disapprove) The entire campus thinks we are assholes. Our most public face is budget committee, and we are shooting ourselves in the face with a 12-gauge by pissing off everyone. Let's not do that. Let's not pretend we are more important than we really are. Do we do good work? Certainly. Do we let that get to our heads? Definitely. Enough of that. You aren't better than anyone else because you won an election.

- (Neither Approve nor Disapprove) This Senate has been up and down, with some moments of "strongly disapprove" and many moments of "approve" over the term. Senate needs to make a name for itself on campus OTHER than as the group of people who will take away funding from groups. I know that's not what we do, but that's the impression that many people have.

- (Approve) Try to be more consistent in our support/denial of bids which share similar aspects.... (i.e. defining what constitutes an emergency or not, what guidelines we use to justify a bid, etc.)

- (Approve) While I do not always agree with the decisions of the Senate, I respect the difficult decisions that many senators have to make. The body as a whole is very deliberate and appears to be doing well.

- Approve
Do you approve of the actions and conduct of CSA Budget Committee? Do you have any feedback as to how CSA Budget Committee can be more effective?

- **Approve**

- **(Disapprove)** Budget Committee is less effective than should be because it is not effectively chaired. Deliberations should be shorter, and bids should be more methodical and less arbitrary (contrary to the desires of Mr. Dara.) All members of Budget Committee should be present at all meetings.

- **(Strongly Approve)** I feel that BC is making excellent progress in creating new and sustainable funding practices.

- **(Disapprove)** I feel that the current budget crisis shows that an overhaul of budget committee policy may be necessary especially as this budget crisis was not exactly unforeseeable based on previous years.

- **(Neither Approve nor Disapprove)** I recommend that the Deliberations period be kept, but continue to have it strictly regulated. Further, as I’ve answered in the previous question, Budget Committee could do a lot better job earning the respect of the student group leaders and students who utilize it as a resource. There are many ways to accomplish this, and I am eager to implement the many ideas that I suspect will arise as a result of this survey question.

- **(Strongly Disapprove)** "I think BC has been doing an excellent job this term in getting groups to decrease their requests and carefully deciding what to fund. I very much approve of that. There are two main issues I see with budget committee now. The first is a conduct issue. The student body is never going to love budget committee because they are the ones who control their money. But the current reputation of BC is way more negative than necessary. People feel antagonized by the group. As we discussed last night, a lot of these are structural and procedural changes that can be made. However, BC members need to be better at putting themselves in the shoes of those who are presenting, and adjust their comments accordingly. BC should not be about being on a power trip because you can judge who deserves money and who does not. That has never been the attitude of BC until recently, and it is not acceptable. The other problem I see with BC has to do with our current financial situation. I do not blame the members of BC for this, but I think it points to the need for some serious changes to the budget process so as to prevent this type of situation in the future. I have thought of (with some other senators) some specific suggestions to discuss with BC for how to improve on the current situation: -giving senate a running tab on current finances -give senate update on big events coming up -discuss/alter the amount of money per term including putting more money into spring term’s budget and ways to better stick to these guidelines -reviewing some budget items in the fall perhaps to give offices/groups warning of potentially not funding for next fiscal year -attitude of budget committee to the student body -perhaps eventually swapping funding w/ school for certain things (this seems out of our reach, at least for right now, maybe?) -talking about the possibility of not funding the same events every year -tightening our guidelines so...
that we are not able to fund as many events, thereby saving money. I think addressing these concerns is imperative. I think the current emergency funding situation is contributing to the overall conduct issues in BC and Senate in a stressful time, and is also leading to BC taking up most of the time at senate meetings. This is leading to senators doing less outside projects and generally getting less done. We need to make changes to our funding process because the current process is simply not acceptable or sustainable.

- (Disapprove) I understand the rules of why we make certain funding decisions. Please try to keep all meetings professional. Groups have recently said that they hate going to budget committee because they feel bullied and "blindsided" by rules and procedures. Make everything clear, and keep body language positive and non-confrontational.
- (Strongly Disapprove) "See: "Do you have any feedback as to how V.P....can be more effective"
- Also - one simple piece of advice: Don't be an asshole. Don't. Be. An. Asshole.
- (Disapprove) Some Committee members are unprofessional. The procedures often frustrate guests and applicants, because they are unable to respond to members’ assumptions as members call to question.
- (Disapprove) students are coming to you to access money that they rightly deserve. therefore, just because they ask for too much doesn't mean we should be mean to them. they deserve the chance to make requests and not be penalized for not understanding the system.
- (Disapprove) "The campus response to Budget Committee has been strongly negative lately and shows an alarming trend since students do not want to make requests as they do not want to face the committee. Also, in terms of 'effectiveness' I think they (well, all of us) need to be much more careful about allocating funds next year.
- (Approve) "They do good work and CSA should listen to their recommendations more often. One concern is about how sometimes very unprofessional and insulting comments are made about certain requests, and they show up in the minutes. I think this gives a very negative image of CSA."
- Approve
- Approve
- Neither Approve nor Disapprove
- Approve
- Approve
- Approve
- Approve

Do you have any additional comments not addressed in this form?

- I think that I need to do a better job of coming to meetings prepared, and checking in with my peers as well about what matters to them on campus. Maybe there should be some sort of written contract where senators acknowledge that they're granted a lot of responsibility in making decisions, and need to make sure they're ready for that when accepting the position. Overall, I've enjoyed being on senate this term. It's really been a learning experience.
• In the past week, I have been made treasurer of two different clubs because most want to avoid Budget Committee. I volunteered because I feel familiar enough with how things work, but was elected unopposed to these posts.
• Is there any rules on behavior in Senate meetings?
• It was very helpful for you to create this survey. I think it is a very excellent practice and should be done at the end of every group's first term in office.
• Sometimes we need to fund things even when they go a little bit "outside" the guidelines. I'm not advocating for $2000 to a one-person trip to a conference. But if we will lose significant social/political capital on campus by shorting a group $150, it's not worth the fight.