Illinois United Student Senate Forum

By Brenda Torres
Editor-in-Chief


The governor of Illinois, Bruce Rauner, was invited to attend the panel but was not present. Still, someone from his office was in attendance and was invited to sit with the panel, but chose to remain in the audience.

The event was a panel where Student Senators from the different universities that were present had to the opportunity to ask questions of the Senators and Representatives. Since 2015, Illinois has had a budget stalemate. Therefore, the majority of the questions were related to efforts towards passing a budget.

Linda Coleman, Student Senate Secretary, thanked and welcomed everyone that was present and welcomed Student Senate President, Justin Smith to the stage.

Smith gave opening remarks, “I’m so glad that all of you came here today because whether you realize it or not you coming here makes a statement to understand that Illinois is a body. This event is a collaboration amongst universities, as well with our state reps., and state senators. Thank you for coming, we are all one body, the state of Illinois is a body.” He continued to say how a human body works and compared it to Illinois.

GSU President, Dr. Elaine P. Maimon, thanked the student senate for all their efforts putting the event together, and expressed how proud she is of the students. She also expressed her feelings regarding the elected officials that were presented, “What an amazing group of friends. I think we have to recognize how hard the friends of higher education fight for us in Springfield,” said Dr. Maimon.

Furthermore, Dr. Maimon mentioned the recent state that has become a tuition free state, New York, “If you’re watching the news, you will see the state of New York has shown that it is possible to have 4 year tuition at no cost at community colleges and at public universities.” “We need a resolution that will restore stability to higher education and social services,” stated Dr. Maimon.

Lester Van Moody, gave the introductions of the state representatives and senators.

Senator Pat McGuire came forth and spoke on what efforts are being made in Springfield for a budget, “Recently two remedies came forth in the chamber in which I serve, the Senate, and another in the House. The remedy in the Senate is called the Grad Bargain. It’s a bipartisan compromise. Included in that is supplemental appropriations for the current fiscal year. That would release hundreds of millions of dollars to higher education. The governor condemns that. The house last week passed a similar bill, the Lifeline Bill. It is a stopgap budget, that would release a half million dollars, to higher education. The governor condemns that,” stated McGuire.

Mychael Vanarsdale, graduate student in Student Life, moderated the panel. Vanarsdale asked the legislators what their vision was for higher education. Rep. Will Davis was the first to answer and stated, “My vision, for higher education for the state of Illinois is appropriate funding.” Each legislators response was similar.

Next, Vanarsdale invited a student leader, Student Speaker for Student Senate at Northern Illinois University, Christine Wang, to ask a question to the panel. Wang stated that Northern had a senate forum as well. She continued by stating that their guests legislators stated there is a lot of talk on the necessity to focus on K-12 over higher education.

Wang asked, “How do you propose balancing K-12 and higher education?” Rep. Al Riley responded with, “If anybody is making distinction between K-12 and higher education?”

Senators Murphy, also answered and stated that the state needs to figure out what their priorities are, “Higher education should definitely be the number one priority. We don’t need to look anywhere past what we already have. We know in Illinois, two thirds of our largest corporations pay no tax. That’s $67,000,000,000 over the past five years.” Murphy continued by stating that if we an have educated labor force, corporations will come to the state.

A few more questions were asked from GSU and CSU and the event continued with a social action representative, Erin Steva, Midwest Director for Young Invisibles. Steva discussed how students can continue to fight for their higher education. They will be going to Springfield April 28 to rally on the steps of the capital.

Rachel Gattone, GSU student in the Communication Disorders program, concluded the panel with a musical performance on her guitar. Gattone performed a song composed by Justin Smith, “We Have No Budget.”
Dear Students,

It's that time of the semester where we wish we could stay awake for a week and finish our final projects. We know that it's not possible to stay awake for a week. Therefore, we need to figure out a way to finish this semester successfully.

Perhaps, the first step is to look at our syllabus and create a schedule that is both healthy and manageable. It may seem impossible, but maybe a schedule will help you stay on task and feel accomplished when checking off an assignment.

The next step is probably eliminating the social activities. You may start to miss your friends, so possibly have study groups or have lunch together.

Take advantage of the library. The GSU library has many places to study. They will be having a Library Jam April 24-29, offering tutoring and massages.

We cannot forget to eat. Make sure you eat nutritious foods. Maybe eating makes you sleepy, so why not have a light meal like yogurt, granola bars, and fruit. Don’t forget trail mix--brain food!

You must also stay hydrated, so drink lots of water. Maybe stay way from coffee. Coffee will allow you to stay awake and alert, but it can also cause your anxiety levels to get higher than usual.

If you are struggling in a class, keep your professor in the loop. Don’t show up in their office the last week of class. Talk with them now!

We have two weeks left. Let's make the best of it!

Sincerely

Brenda Torres
Editor-in-Chief
Mel’s Corner

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Most of all, I wouldn’t want them to just hurry and make a decision because they have tickets for the game or a date on Thursday or even that they just want to go home. When George Zimmerman murdered Trayvon Martin and the jury found him not guilty on all counts, all I could think was, “What kind of people were they? Where do they find these idiots from? Do they pry through Jaguar Connection. You will receive an invitation to join the club through Jaguar Connection. I hope that I am providing a foundation for others to think of my mentors, Dr. Lori Glass, the GSU Social Work Department, and Governors State University as a whole for providing a foundation for me to carry forth my ancestors’ legacy, and giving me the tools to continue to transform myself.

Feature

Servant Leader: Ameenah Rashid

By Donnica Gordon
Associate Editor

Ameenah Rashid is a graduating senior in the Bachelor of Social Work program where she maintains a 4.0 g.p.a. She is also a dedicated servant-leader advocating for social justice as president of Generating Hope whose mission is to “provide support, mentoring, and resources to students and their families who are formerly incarcerated and who are seeking or currently enrolled in higher education.”

Rashid has taken full advantage of the many leadership development and academic opportunities offered at GSU including participating in the Student Leadership Institute and the CEO Leadership Training Program, as well as working as a Research Assistant to Dr. Vickii Coffey in the G.U.I.D.E. cancer research project. A member of the Phi Alpha Social Work Honors Society, Rashid was recently named the Outstanding BSW student for the College of Health & Human Services.

The Phoenix spoke with Rashid about her work, her service, and her future education and career goals.

The Phoenix: As the first President of Generating Hope, what led to your interest in work around mass incarceration?

Ameenah Rashid: I come from a family that mass incarceration has affected: my uncles and my brother. My brother was in and out of correctional facilities most of my childhood. And that probably should not have been the case as I understand it now. He probably needed mental health treatment vs. incarceration. My family’s experience with incarceration led to my interest in this work, and Dr. Glass and Generating Hope helped me to understand that there is something that I can do about it.

Phoenix: What are your plans upon graduation?

Rashid: I will be pursuing graduate studies at the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration where I was blessed to receive the Dean’s Distinguished Leadership Award. My concentration will be Clinical Social Work. I look to do research in the area of mass incarceration, particularly it’s affects upon women and girls who are showing up in the research at an alarming rate. My short term career goals include working in direct practice with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated populations in agencies that provide re-entry support, and eventually obtaining my LCSW to be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. My long term goals include opening an urban wellness center where I will be able to offer alternative healing modalities addressing historical trauma, generational trauma, intergenerational trauma, and doing a lot of work around bringing people closer to understanding how they can heal themselves.

Phoenix: You’ve had a nontraditional path to higher education. Please share a bit about it.

Rashid: I’m a mother of four children. I started my career with a 15-year stint in the mortgage industry where I supported disenfranchised and marginalized populations in obtaining the dream of home ownership. I found safe and affordable programs, and provided education on responsible home ownership and wealth building for underrepresented populations such as African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, people with lower incomes, etc. This unknowingly prepared me for social work.

As a result of the economic downturn in 2007 or 8, I found myself needing to switch careers. At the time, I was also facing life challenges, and sought out a Life Transformation Coach. This was a profound and life changing experience that sparked the desire in me to help others heal and transform their lives.

In my desire to switch careers, I knew I needed to go to school. But there was one thing that had been stopping me, and had been hanging over my head for 15 years. I did not have a high school diploma. So, I got my GED in 2011. I entered Prairie State in 2012 where I maintained a 3.9 g.p.a., and came to GSU in 2015.

Phoenix: What drives you to continue to pursue higher education?

Rashid: What drives me is the desire to absorb and acquire all the knowledge that I need in order to help myself first so that I can be in a better position to share knowledge and help others. At the same time, I want to inspire my children towards higher education. I believe my ancestors endured tremendous hardships for me to have these opportunities to learn, and it would be a disservice to them—Frederick Douglas, Harriet Jacobs, Phyllis Wheatley, and others—to not obtain as much education as possible. That’s what drives me. Those ancestors. I can’t let them down, and I won’t let them down. I will seek and speak knowledge from the cradle to the grave.

Phoenix: What impact do you hope to make in the world?

Rashid: I hope that I am able to impact the world by showing up as a person who is unafraid to stand in their authenticity — showing up that way and also by helping my people heal from 400 years of trauma that is still very present today.

Phoenix: What are your future research plans? What research areas would you like to focus on?

Rashid: Future research will involve questions around how to dismantle the system of mass incarceration—which is an extension of slavery—and its devastating effects on society at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels.

I’d like to thank my mentors, Dr. Lori Glass, Dr. Vickii Coffee, the GSU Social Work Department, and Governors State University as a whole for providing a foundation for me to carry forth my ancestors’ legacy, and giving me the tools to continue to transform myself.

Ameenah Rashid. Photo by Donnica Gordon

The Gaming Club

By Dana Solatka
Staff Reporter

The Jaguar Gaming Club was established on Sept. 9, 2016. It was created by David Thomas and Aaron Magee.

The goal of the club is simple. Any member of the GSU student body may join for a place to game and network without judgement or fear of participation and competition with peers. They achieve this goal through “staying in tune to the wants of the students want to do and play,” wrote club president David Thomas. He continued, “without building relationships with members and the student body there would be no reason to do events.”

Thomas is a Senior graduating in the summer of 2017 working full-time as an IT Specialist. “I have a deep passion for gaming and a greater passion for gamers,”

Club Spotlight

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Mr. & Ms. GSU

Commemorate Earth Earth Day 2017

By Dana Solatka
Staff Reporter

On April 13th, Mr. and Ms. GSU hosted an Earth Day event near the main entrance of the university.

During the event, students were given the opportunity to decorate a pot and plant a flower. Approximately sixty flowers were potted.

“We wanted students to come down here plant their own flower pot and picking a flower” stated Mr. GSU JuJuan Day.

He continued, “the event was in honor of Earth Day. Even though Earth Day is orefically next week [on Saturday, April 22], we wanted to do something before the semester was out.”

Day further elaborated on why the event was being held, “Around this time, students are dealing with stress because of finals, so why not have something you can [use] to have your stress levels reduced?”

When asked if Mr. and Ms. GSU would like to hold another event like this, back to school to further his education, “You get married you have children, they become your life,” continued Mr. Walker.

In 2009, Mr. Walker enrolled at Prairie State and took a writing class and fell in love with it. Each semester he would enroll in one class, until he decided to enroll in more classes. He was the Student Trustee and wrote for the campus newspaper at Prairie State. Mr. Walker also has another daughter in the Masters program, Katharine, “For my daughters and me, for us to attend college together, just an indescribable experience,” he said.

Sharita shared her feelings on attending college with her father, “It's a great feeling. I definitely think that its good that he wants to continue his education. When we were younger, my siblings and I, obviously he couldn’t do it then, but definitely he worked. He did everything he could to take care of us. Now that we are all grown, he has been able to come back and fulfill his goals. Its nice sharing the school with my father.”

“I think part of my legacy, I want for it to be told that education has always been important to me,” stated Mr. Walker.

Mr. Walker shared his thoughts on Sharita, “She’s always been a leader, not only in school or in academics, but in church too. She is a role model. She’s my Shero.”

Both of them can agree that Mr. Walker’s father impressed upon them the value of learning. “He instilled in all of us the importance of education. One thing he always told me is ‘No matter what I do stay in school,’” stated Sharita.
Fostering Campus Inclusion Through Listening

By Brenda Torres
Editor-in-Chief

The Inclusion Team at GSU is sponsoring a “Listening Wall” in the Lakeside Lounge. There is a table with Post-it notes for the campus community to answer the questions listed on the wall. According to Dr. Maristela Zell, Professor of Social Work who is apart of the Inclusion team, “The listing wall was an initiative to see what can we do as an institution, to help ourselves, to help our students, faculty and our staff. Are there policies that need to be written or rethought, policies that need to be changed?”

The questions are:

•How do you increase more meaningful interactions between faculty/staff and students?

•How do your program of study or workplace welcome you and individuals of diverse social identities (e.g., race gender, faith, sexual orientation, ability, age, socioeconomic status, etc.)? How about the leadership?

•Share a time when policies, practices, and procedures at GSU did not protect you or help you due to your social identity (e.g., race gender, faith, sexual orientation, ability, age, socioeconomic status, etc.)?

•How can we create community that affirms equity and inclusion for all individuals from diverse social identities e.g., race gender, faith, sexual orientation, ability, age, socioeconomic status, etc.)?

On the left side of the wall are detailed instructions. Below the questions are the comments that the campus has left. Asked about the plans for the responses placed at the wall, Zell stated, “What we are hoping to do is really get a pulse with what’s going on in terms of whether they feel included, whether they feel they belong to the campus. Belonging is a very important characteristic for success.”

The team will compile the data, conduct an analysis and talk about it at the upcoming symposium on April 28.
Keeping Viruses and Hackers Away From Your Stuff: A How To

By Dana Solatka
Staff Reporter

As you probably know, computers are used for everything. Gotta write a paper? Better type that up and pay your 10 cents a page to print, or else your professor won’t accept it.

Have to discuss something for a class? It’s on Blackboard. Want to just face your anxiety and check your final grades? Those are in your GSU portal.

Want to be entertained? Just look something up on Youtube or Netflix. And of course, online shopping exists.

Need I say more? This is all good and well, but how do we keep our personal information safe?

No, your credit card number isn’t magically stolen by some master hacker computer wizard akin to The Matrix’s Neo. No, no, no. Real life is much more simple than that.

Hackers can often guess your password.

Nina Golowski from the Huffington Post says the most common password, making up 17% of 10 million passwords, is “123456”.

Oh how hard it must be to get into some random’s account if you have their email, can guess their password is 123456, and change all the passwords to their other accounts.

You see, a lot of this “hacking” problem comes from people who use insecure passwords such as “123456”, “qwerty”, “password”, or “111111”.

A safe password is the first step to having a safe computer. So how do you make a good password? I mean, I could write the usual “one special character, one number, and a mix of capital and lowercase letters” but everyone knows that.

So now you have the basis for a good password, how do you turn it into a great password?

Well, make it easy to remember. Your favorite word and then a number.

Your favorite hashtag that has trended in recent months and a number thrown in there.

Your password could be #Lived2Fast for all I know. It could also be SweetPeasRul3.

(Dear reader, please do not use these passwords. They are just examples and are compromised.)

And now here’s the kicker: viruses. Contrary to popular belief, Apple computers can get viruses. Can you be so do well? Accordin to them? Yes, but that is not an invitation to completely wreck your $1,000 MacBook Pro.

Regardless of the type of computer you have, do not click on every single miscellaneous ad or pop-up you get. Unreliable websites are a primary source of viruses on your computer. If you go to pretty much any website that promises a “free anti-virus”, you will download a virus.

Preventing viruses is really easy.

1. Don’t go on weird sites.

And when I mean weird, I don’t mean weird as in the dark-side of reddit. I mean weird as in you wanted to download this one Britney Spears album but you didn’t want to buy it from iTunes or Amazon so you decided to pirate it and now you’re on some weird music blog in all Japanese but you think it’s WordPress but you can’t tell because everything is in Japanese.

Yeah, it’s better to pay and support an artist than to get sent to the online-version of the 10th circle of Hell.

2. Get an AdBlocker.

As much as I love supporting creators, a lot of websites have malicious advertisements. Yes, this includes whatever website you clicked on to try and get that last bit of research for your paper. Get an AdBlocker and turn it on whenever you’re about to do something you usually wouldn’t do on the internet. This will save you and your PC from those weird “congratulations! You are the 500th visitor! Claim your iPod Shuffle™ now!” pop-ups.

3. Get an anti-virus.

It’s the most basic step people forget to do. Depending on your internet provider, you might just get one for free (I know Comcast gives its customers Norton). While I am not an antivirus wizard, the IT people here will be more than happy to help.

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The Farmers Market from 2010

By Matthew DiGrispino
Library Intern

Since 2010, Governors State University has always had a Farmers Market to allow local farmers to sell their produce to the students at GSU. According to OPUS, GSU Spirit (Special Program Initiative Review and Implementation Team) has been the primary group that has sponsored the Farmers’ Market. Some of the produce that has been sold at these Farmers Markets includes fresh fruits and vegetables, herbs, flowers, and homemade breads.

The article also states that Jill Stanley, the market manager, introduced it as a way for GSU to engage in the local community. The article continues by saying that University Park didn’t have a local produce provider, which lead to the creation of the Farmers Market in GSU. Till this very day, the Farmers Market continues to help GSU students by providing them with fresh produce that they generally don’t get very often.
The Tempest: A Review

By Melanie Fitch
Staff Reporter

To be fair, I have not read, or seen, anything by Shakespeare in years. I wasn’t sure if I would understand what was going on, so I was prepared to check “Cliff Notes” after the performance. But as it turned out, most of it came back to me.

The Governor’s State Theater and Performance Studies group was originally supposed to have the performance in The Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park, but the weather was tempestuous, so they had to move it indoors.

I must say, however, the cast did an excellent job. Considering the last-minute switch, the way that the effects and the props were used was very creative. They juggled the gender of a few main characters, somewhat, but it didn’t negatively affect the performance in my view.

Another thing I thought about was the language. Even if you have never had to struggle to understand Beowulf, exposure to English literature can quickly teach you that English as we know it today, did not always exist.

The fact that these actors could learn their lines and perform them in what amounts to a foreign language was fantastic, in my book. One thing I really appreciated was their making sure the humorous parts didn’t get lost in the effort to perfect the dialogue.

Although I was really looking forward to the Drama in the Garden, the Experience in the E Lounge was nice as well.

The Variety Show at GSU

By Fredrick Tremble
Intern Reporter

On Friday, March 24th, GSU held a very different event. The event was the Variety Show. The Variety Show is a show that has a lot of different performances from different people. The Improv Club did an amazing job with their performance. Especially Nakia Driver. There was also performances by a few drag queens which were fantastic.

Then Nakia Driver and Mya Shelton performed a scene from a play called “The Tempest.” The way both of them portrayed their characters was very impressive. It made me feel like I was in a different world. After there performance Improv Club performed a skit about going on a blind date. It was an eye opener. The last performance was by GSU’s dance team, “Fatal.”

They did a tribute to Prince and it was spectacular. Very heart touching. While they were dancing, they had a projection of Prince on the wall in the background. It made me feel breathless. Overall all the performances were great. Also make sure you at the next Variety Show!
5th Annual Student Leadership Awards

Thursday, April 27th
Noon-3pm
CPA Stage

➢ Rising Star
➢ Freshman of the Year
➢ Outstanding Undergrad. Student
➢ Outstanding Graduate Student
➢ New Club/Organization of the Year
➢ Program of the Year
➢ Civic Engagement Fellow
➢ Elaine P. Maimon Award
➢ Outstanding Support Staff
➢ Outstanding Advisor
➢ Outstanding Club/Organization

RSVP online by Friday, April 21, 2017

View a full description of categories and RSVP
WWW.GOVST.EDU/JAGUARCONNECTION