

PROPOSAL

On January 5, 2018 DSA President Erin Simmonds received an email from Dean of Students, Joshua Feigelson, outlining a proposal for an agreement between the DSA/GoB Preservation Committee and the Divinity School administration. The full text of that email can be found below:

Dear Erin,

Thank you for coming to meet with me yesterday. This note is to summarize our discussion, and I hope serve as the basis for a solution going forward.

First, I want to reiterate that the Dean and the Divinity School administration understand how much Grounds of Being means to our Divinity and University communities as a whole, both because of the financial resources that it generates for student life and because of the pride and sense of community so many people feel in having built a student-run business. The student community has much to be proud of.

As we have been discussing for several months, there are a few issues we would like to address. Based on our previous discussions, we believe the GoB leadership is amenable to working on them. Specifically, these are:

1. GoB will implement a PoS system that accepts Maroon dollars as soon as possible. This will make GoB more welcoming to the entire campus, including undergraduates receiving financial aid, who risk being excluded by a cash-only enterprise.
2. DSA and GoB will move their funds into university accounts by the beginning of the next academic year.
3. The Dean will appoint a faculty board to provide advice and oversight to GoB, beginning this quarter.
4. GoB will begin graduated payments for rent and utilities beginning this academic year, in line with the substantial resources the shop uses and its demonstrated ability to help sustain itself. We recognize it has been difficult to determine a precise figure for this, and are committed to getting a firm figure as soon as possible.

In addition, the administration is committed to ensuring that sufficient funds continue to be available to meet the needs of students for emergencies, programming, and professional development.

Finally, we are committed to working to help ensure that the DSA is in compliance with all legal registrations, licenses, and tax laws.

Please let me know what you think about these points. I hope we can move forward from here.

Sincerely,

Joshua M. Feigelson
Dean of Students

The DSA/GoB Preservation Committee met on Friday afternoon to discuss the received proposal. Although we recognize the forward progress this proposal represents-- a formalized offer in writing-- we offer the following counterproposal to the administration, along with our suggestions about how to proceed going forward.

DSA/GoB COUNTERPROPOSAL:

As regards the four points outlined in "Proposal," we respond accordingly:

[1] GoB will agree to the implementation of Maroon Dollars, the cost of which will be absorbed by the Dean's office, per prior conversations. As previously proposed, GoB will install one register for Maroon Dollars while continuing to operate primarily as a cash business. Maroon Dollars will be implemented this summer, to allow for adequate time to install the required new technology and for the staff to undergo the requisite training.

[2] GoB and DSA will conduct conversations with Associate Dean of Administration Sandra Peppers to determine the best possible method to either (a) integrate GoB and DSA accounts into the University's accounting system or (b) move to an open accounting system which will allow the necessary transparency to alleviate the concerns of the administration.

[3] The DSA/GoB Preservation Committee offers a counterproposal to the administration's demand for a Faculty Advisory Board: We suggest the creation of a Student-Faculty Advisory Board, comprised of half student, half faculty/staff representation. We suggest that the Associate Dean of Administration holds a permanent position on this Board (which may also assuage the administration's financial oversight concerns as noted in the second point). We also suggest that some, if not all, of the student representatives be appointed for a two-year term in order to create continuity; these student representatives will be elected by the student body. This Board would be officially instantiated through amendment to the DSA Constitution.

[4] Until a firm figure for a proposed rent has been submitted in writing with clear documentation of how that figure was calculated, DSA/GoB cannot consider paying any rent or utilities for any space in Swift Hall.

Beyond the four requests denoted by the administration, the DSA/GoB Preservation Committee emphasizes the following points:

[1] We require a legally-binding document/contract that outlines relationship for DSA, GoB, and the Divinity School. All involved parties (DSA Board, GoB management, DSA/GoB Preservation Committee, Administration, Faculty) should participate in crafting this document through open negotiations.

[A] We ask that the contract be valid for 5-7 years, at which point it will be up for re-negotiation by future DSA and GoB leaders.

[B] We call for DSA's responsibility as the administrator of the Student Life Fees account to be confirmed in this document.

[2] We call for administrative transparency regarding the allocation of the Divinity School's financial resources, particularly those which have precipitated the request that GoB begin to pay for the use of space in Swift Hall.

Per the open letter circulated to the Divinity School community on January 3, we will be hosting a **public forum on January 12, 2018 at 10:00 am in the Swift Hall 3rd Floor Lecture Hall**. We invite all faculty, students, staff, alumni, and interested members of the community to attend this meeting.

At this meeting, we plan to inform the public of our own financial situation and answer questions on the ongoing talks that have occurred since June, 2017. We will call for financial transparency on the part of the administration and for open rental negotiations. We will also invite members of the Divinity School community to advise the DSA/GoB Preservation Committee on how best to proceed with upcoming negotiations.

DSA, GoB, and the DSA/GoB Preservation Committee are committed to working with the administration to resolve the challenges we face as a Divinity School community. We are eager to work on a viable solution and are encouraged by the administration's submission of a formalized proposal.