

Subject: Re: Read

Date: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 11:19:41 AM Eastern Standard Time

From: Hannah Nivar

To: Isaac Stephens

Edie Olmsted of the Roosevelt Institute described SGA's reaction as an organization to the COVID-19 testing question as "classist" and "transparently racist." She didn't name names, but I include some info individuals or SGA as an organization may want to respond to. Namely:

- Senator [REDACTED] describes opening the testing center to surrounding communities as an "undue threat" to students during the 2/1/21 meeting.
- Same meeting, [REDACTED] suggested allowing Boston residents into Cabot would "[make] the campus a hotspot."
- I include general information summarizing comments from other student leaders, particularly suggestions that Roosevelt would have to figure out the "logistics" before proposing the idea (which I assume is the university's job) and that it wouldn't be feasible to test people other than students & staff

To take quotes from individuals during a debate period where all perspectives must and should be evaluated is misleading regarding properly representing what the association stands for and our responsibility to adequately explore all perspectives.

Regarding the COVID-19 testing question, I made certain to speak about how logistics were not to be included in a referenda question or proposal. The purpose of the question is to gauge student opinion on an important topic. If such a question were to be answered in the affirmative, it would be necessary for Northeastern's administration to determine the logistical details of doing so. Even though students may contribute to shaping how this is accomplished, the individuals that spoke in support of having greater logistics misunderstood this process. However, that was addressed. Whether students took that into consideration upon voting can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. It is important to remember that voting association members were selecting their top five referenda questions based on a series of requirements. There are multiple reasons that they could have not selected this question whether that be based on feasibility, what they believed to be a pressing matter for students, etc. The senate body was split on their opinions and through ranked voting, this question was not voted as top choice despite a decent amount of support for this initiative.

It is evident that no member of the association is an expert of epidemiology; thus, Comptroller Abdoulaye's response an opinion influenced by their experiences. Other individuals held and expressed different beliefs that were contrary to Comptroller Abdoulaye's point. Either belief is to be listened to, respected, and taken into consideration.

To say that the entire reaction of the association was "classist" and "transparently racist" is inaccurate considering that the surrounding communities of Northeastern comprise a wide array of individuals of all socio-economic backgrounds. The idea that the organization can despise all kinds of people is simply hatred of all persons. I would accept that claim far more easily than accepting that the association is either "classist" or "racist".

Josh Sisman of YDSA pointed out what he sees as a "huge detachment" between SGA priorities and working class needs. He said he had to convince a bunch of people in the Feb. 1 meeting to put the meal plan and MBTA proposals over one to "abolish SAIL." He also discusses the opposition (which I understand to be procedural) to the luxury dorm question, and I have a quote

from you included as part of the context: “Hannah Nivar, SGA’s executive director of communications, said in a January 21st vetting meeting that the question was ‘leading’ because it ‘[made] people think that right now [Northeastern housing] is not inclusive.’”

SGA is responsible for prioritizing student concerns. If members of the association's body have heard students complain about SAIL more than their dorming circumstances, then that is what they should be voting for. Further, a large consideration of the SAIL referenda was feasibility. I personally advocated against the MBTA referenda considering that UMass-Boston attempted to raise the student discount for T-fares to 15% last year and was rejected. According to the Boston Intercollegiate Government, many other schools have also struggled to increase discounts for students in the Greater Boston Area. Thus, the idea that Northeastern might be able to raise that discount to 50% is unlikely. There are many facets to selecting referenda questions and while it may be a frustrating process, it was completed with great efficiency and respect this year.

During the vetting process, members of leadership must review the fairness of wording for each referenda question according to the following (which can be found on page 9 of the [Bylaws](#)):

"The Fairness of Wording standard shall be determined using the following guidelines:

- The question must not be leading.
 - A leading question is defined as a question put or framed in such a form as to suggest the answer sought to be obtained.
- The question must not contain an appeal to morality.
- The question must be as specific as possible, providing clarity regarding the potential implications of the referenda, if passed."

The luxury dorm question upon being first submitted is as follows: "Should Northeastern University withdraw construction plans for the new luxury dorm and guarantee that all new student housing units will be affordable to ALL students while still returning their leased properties to Boston residents?" Simply put, the capitalization of the word "all" makes it seem as if the housing is not fair to students. This might cause students to be more likely to say yes to the question. I would vote against the question in that form again if necessary.

All the Best,

[Hannah Nivar](#)

Candidate for BA in International Affairs and Political Science

(minors in Spanish and Law & Public Policy)

Northeastern University Class of 2024

From: Hannah Nivar [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, February 15, 2021 9:34 PM

To: Casey Buttke [REDACTED]; Ekaterina Kuznetsova [REDACTED]

Subject: Read

Edie Olmsted of the Roosevelt Institute described SGA’s reaction as an organization to the COVID-19 testing question as “classist” and “transparently racist.” She didn’t name names, but I include some info individuals or SGA as an organization may want to respond to. Namely:

- Senator [REDACTED] describes opening the testing center to surrounding communities as an “undue threat” to students during the 2/1/21 meeting.
- Same meeting, [REDACTED] suggested allowing Boston residents into Cabot would “[make] the campus a hotspot.”
- I include general information summarizing comments from other student leaders, particularly suggestions that Roosevelt would have to figure out the “logistics” before proposing the idea (which I assume is the university’s job) and that it wouldn’t be feasible to test people other than students & staff

All statements from SGA members do not embody the belief of the association as a whole. To address what the entire association believes, one must request a statement a member of leadership. To take quotes from individuals during a debate period where all perspectives must and should be evaluated is misleading in regards to properly representing what the association stands for.

Regarding the COVID-19 testing question, I made certain to speak about how logistics were not to be included in a referenda question or proposal. The purpose of the question is to gauge student opinion on an important topic. If such a question were to be answered in the affirmative, it would be necessary for Northeastern's administration to determine the logistical details of doing so. Despite the fact that students may contribute to shaping how this is accomplished, the individuals that spoke in support of having greater logistics were simply wrong. However, that was addressed. Whether students took that into consideration upon voting can be evaluated on a case by case basis. It is important to remember that voting association members were selecting their top five referenda questions based on a series of requirements. There are multiple reasons that they could have not selected this question whether that be based on feasibility, what they believed to be a pressing matter for students, etc.

Unfortunately, we are in a global pandemic. It is safer to keep a smaller community of individuals and opening up the campus to welcome more members of the community inevitably does increase risk of spreading COVID-19. If the University has the responsibility to keep its students safe, then it would be an "undue threat" for students to experience increased exposure. This is not the viewpoint of the entire association but rather one senator who is speaking on behalf of their constituencies.

It is evident that no member of the association is an expert of epidemiology; however, Comptroller Abdoulaye's response clearly is based on an opinion. Other individuals held different beliefs. Either belief is to be listened to, respected, and taken into consideration.

To say that the entire SGA was "racist" and "classist" is inaccurate considering that the surrounding communities of Northeastern comprise a wide array of individuals of all socio-economic backgrounds. The idea that the organization can despise all kinds of people is simply hatred of all persons. I would accept that claim far more easily than accepting that the association is either "racist" or "classist".

Josh Sisman of YDSA pointed out what he sees as a “huge detachment” between SGA priorities and working class needs. He said he had to convince a bunch of people in the Feb. 1 meeting to put the meal plan and MBTA proposals over one to “abolish SAIL.” He also discusses the opposition (which I understand to be procedural) to the luxury dorm question, and I have a quote from you included as part of the context: “Hannah Nivar, SGA’s executive director of communications, said in a January 21st vetting meeting that the question was ‘leading’ because it ‘[made] people think that right now [Northeastern housing] is not inclusive.’”

SGA is responsible for prioritizing student concerns. If members of the association's body have heard students complain about SAIL more than their dorming circumstances, then that is what they should be

voting for. Further, a large consideration of the SAIL referenda was feasibility. There are many facets to selecting referenda questions and while it may be a frustrating process, it was completed with great efficiency and respect this year.

During the vetting process, members of leadership must review the fairness of wording for each referenda according to the following (which can be found on page 9 of the [Bylaws](#)):

"The Fairness of Wording standard shall be determined using the following guidelines:

- a. The question must not be leading.
 - i. A leading question is defined as a question put or framed in such a form as to suggest the answer sought to be obtained.
 - a. The question must not contain an appeal to morality.
 - b. The question must be as specific as possible, providing clarity

regarding the potential implications of the referenda, if passed."

The luxury dorm question upon being first submitted is as follows: "Should Northeastern University withdraw construction plans for the new luxury dorm and guarantee that all new student housing units will be affordable to ALL students while still returning their leased properties to Boston residents?" Simply put, the capitalization of the word "all" makes it seem as if the housing does not effectively do so. This does not mean that it does or does not. However, students will be more likely to say yes to the question. I would vote against the question in that form again if necessary.

All the Best,

Hannah Nivar

*Candidate for BA in International Affairs and Political Science
(minors in Spanish and Law & Public Policy)*

Northeastern University Class of 2024