I. Call to Order
Chair Best called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM.

II. Attendance
The following members were present: Chairperson Brittany Best, Vice Chairperson Ross Hardeman, Josh Aristy, John Caison, Shawn Griffin, Wes Hodgin, Derek Murray, Daniel Rojas, Michael Smalenberger, Austin Root, Conor Winters

The following members were absent: Meghan Boyles, Michael Braxton

III. Student Group Funding Requests
   a. Honor Court
      Chair Best announces that she is about to submit the bill, and she doesn’t want there to be any confusion among members. She shows the amount for publicity and telephone – a $1370.00 total. A motion was made to report favorably to Congress. The motion was seconded. The motion was passed.

   b. Board of Elections
      Chair Best explains that the finance committee has to fund the board of elections reimbursement for homecoming – this is not a choice. A motion was made to report favorably to Congress. The motion was seconded. The motion was passed.

IV. Bills and Resolutions
   a. SCB-94-153 A Bill to Increase Stipend Accountability
      Representative Root came forth to present his bill. He explained that there are three things the bill does. He also explained that there is a redundant line. The other two changes revolve around what happens to a stipend – currently, if it’s not accepted, it stays in the fund it’s supposed to go to (for example, the executive branch if it was for the Vice President). It can’t be used for whatever they want, it must be returned. A required actions form is filled out by the Student Body Treasurer for subsequent appropriations because the finance committee runs out of money quickly, and if stipends aren’t being used for that they’re intended, they should go back to the finance committee so they can be allocated to other student groups. The change says that the stipend – if not accepted – can only be donated to the subsequent appropriations budget.

      Representative Griffin asked what the difference between lines 6 and 9 is, because they both seem to involve transferring the money back to subsequent appropriations.
Representative Root explained that line 9 prevents the individual from donating their stipend.

Representative Brady sees a problem with line 9, because it appears to be infringing upon the individual’s first amendment right to make a decision for whomever they want to donate their money to. He doesn’t believe it’s fair for the finance committee to decide that for them. He moves to amend striking line number 9. This motion is seconded.

Representative Winters stated that he doesn’t believe it infringes on rights – it’s not the individual’s money if they decline the stipend, so it’s not their money to make a statement with. That person shouldn’t be able to decide where the declined stipend goes.

Representative Brady said that since the stipend can ONLY go to subsequent appropriations, it infringes on the rights, whereas it’s the right of free speech to donate the stipend to whatever charity the individual wants. He said that he doesn’t believe it’s the finance committee’s place to decide where the stipend should go.

Representative Rojas pointed out that there are restrictions to what a stipend can do.

Representative Brady said that a stipend is automatically put into a bank account, but if the individual chooses not to accept it, they won’t turn in tax forms, and they don’t allocate it, but it’s already in the allocated budget, so it’s hard to say that the individual can only donate it to subsequent appropriations.

Representative Rojas pointed out that it is basically moving money. Representative Brady agreed.

Representative Root said that line 6, if it’s not accepted, says that it’s in the budget to begin with, and the next administration decides if they want to accept the stipends. Current administration just has the money sit in the account if it’s declined. In the past it’s been put towards things that it’s not really address for. Line 9 addresses this problem and makes sure that the money goes to the subsequent appropriations fund so they’re not giving it to something else.

Representative Murray used an example of a CEO, explaining that this line would be similar to telling a CEO “you earn so much money a year, but you can only buy one car with it.” He used this example to back up his claim that it’s not Congress’s right to decide where it goes.

Representative Aristy said that the finance committee couldn’t dictate how people choose to use the money because of what the definition of a stipend is, so this line infringes on that ability to dictate where a stipend goes.
Chair Best explained that the idea is that if the individual has two hundred extra dollars after rent, the individual can put that extra money towards the donation.

Representative Brady said that if the individual accepts the stipend and wants to donate it, they would only be able to donate it to subsequent appropriations.

Chair Best explained that line 9 states that the individual cannot donate the money if they accept it, and line 6 states that if the individual doesn’t accept the stipend then the money goes back to subsequent appropriations.

Representative Brady said that if the individual accepts the stipend, it’s their money, because if they choose to accept it, it’ll be used for their expenses (the purpose of the stipend in the first place.) He said that this opens Congress up to lawsuits that it shouldn’t, because this seems like it becomes a tax if they don’t donate the money.

Representative Root explained that there are restrictions on how student groups can spend money. Representative Brady argued that that is Congress’s money; this is the individuals’ money. Representative Root agreed, but that also said that there are strings attached.

Chair Best said that when Congress gives the individual money as a stipend, it’s a category like when the finance committee gives money to other organizations for specific purposes.

Representative Rojas said that a person’s money is their money, and they have their own expenses, so they can donate the money to whomever they want to because it becomes their own personal funds. He suggests a motion to vote on the passage. Representative Brady seconds.

Chair Best declares the motion open for voting, in favor of striking line 9 for the amendment. Line 9 is stricken.

Chair Best announced that it’s time to move onto the bill as a whole.

Representative Brady asks for clarification about line 6.

Representative Root explained that the stipends that aren’t accepted stay in their account. Line 6 makes sure that if the stipend isn’t accepted, the Student Body Treasurer puts it into the subsequent appropriations fund.

Representative Murray asked that if the treasurer didn’t accept funds, would there be money sitting in the account?

Chair Best stated that she didn’t think this bill was necessarily a bad thing, because the money shouldn’t sit in an account for a whole year, so this ensures that no
matter what is happening the finance committee can use it more effectively and sooner.

Representative Aristy said that he likes the bill, and if the stipend isn’t accepted he thinks it should go back to subsequent appropriations. He said he thought the confusion is about what happens to the funds if they’re not use. He assumed that it’s the same with all student government funds that are allocated, and if they’re not used they go back at the end of the year on June 30th. He explained that line 6 is just a quick way to get the stipend back and use it rather than waiting until the end of the year.

Speaker Comparato said that if the individual waited until the end of the year and didn’t accept the stipend, it would go to next congress.

Representative Smalenberger asked if the stipend is allocated in lump sum or monthly. Representative Root clarified that it was lump sum. Representative Smalenberger asked that if once it was allocated, it went into an account. Chair Best said there is no “stipend” account.”

Representative Smalenberger asked if a stipend is allocated and in a category, but line 9 has been struck, why can’t the money have a category change and be re-allocated?

Chair Best said that the finance committee doesn’t allocate money to the treasurer, there’s no direct link, so the individual can’t take it from one account into another. Since line 9 has been struck, the money is there for the individual to do what they want with it.

Representative Smalenberger said that obviously somebody’s going to disagree with this line, because they’re not going to want to give the money back to subsequent appropriations. He asked what prevented the individual from saying that they want to withdraw the money, and then redeposit it calling it something else.

Speaker Comparato suggested integrity. She said that when the finance committee gives a student organization $600 for travel, for example, the committee expects the organization to use it for travel.

Chair Best said that there’s a system in place, so the organizations have to bring back invoices showing the money was used for travel. The Student Body Treasurer, who is expected to have the most integrity of all the treasurers on campus, manages everything, so he or she can be trusted not to just shift funds around. The finance committee can trust the treasurer to use the money for the right thing, so if the money isn’t used as a stipend the finance committee would find out, and if it’s not accepted it will revert back to subsequent appropriations.
Speaker Comparato said that this serves as a reminder to those who are deciding whether or not to accept the stipend that if they’re considering donating the money to other branches, Congress would love to have the money back to allocate to other organizations.

Representative Rojas asked what happens if an individual doesn’t take a stipend and their financial situation changes. He asked that without this bill, is the money currently available if the individual decides that the situation changes and they need the money.

Representative Brady cited an example in the past where a vice president didn’t accept the stipend for three months, but then his situation changed and he started taking it. The stipend it month to month, not a lump sum, so it would just be a matter of turning in the tax forms.

Representative Rojas asked if this bill passes, wouldn’t that money be gone? Representative Root said that he didn’t believe they’d revert back the entire amount, just on a monthly basis. Representative Rojas asked if there are provisions for that. Representative Root said that the bill doesn’t specify either lump sum or monthly, so it’s up to the treasurer whether it reverts back lump sum or monthly.

Chair Best created an example. She said, hypothetically, to assume the Student Body President didn’t accept the stipend this year, and then his rent went up and he needed it, there are provisions for that.

Representative Rojas said that the line seems to be based on either a lump sum or monthly transfer, and if the money is given in a lump sum to a student group and the individual decided they needed the stipend, then the budget would be in the red.

Chair Best said that the individual can always come back and ask, and the finance committee isn’t going to deny them their stipend, so they’ll move it from the spring budget if necessary.

Representative Rojas said that that will just mess people up between how much money Congress has between fall and spring, he just wants to make sure that the person receiving the money doesn’t get an unfair deal.

Representative Root thought that a provision wasn’t necessary, because the individual can always come before congress and they won’t be denied the stipend. Chair Best argued that giving a provision might help people rest at ease. Representative Rojas agreed that someone needs security to know that the stipend is going to be there if necessary. Chair Best continued that the individual might now know and feel insecure about the money if they don’t have the same background in finance as the finance committee members.
Representative Murray said that this becomes part of the student code until somebody takes it out, so he doesn't feel comfortable that far down the line in the future that the Congress will have to guess what the intention of the bill was. He agreed it needs a provision.

Representative Brady said that if the bill is left as it, it should say “would be placed into subsequent appropriations fund on a monthly basis.” This makes sure that the transfer remains monthly, just in case the individual’s situation changes.

Representative Murray suggested that the money be specified to go into the following semester’s account. Representative Root said that that wouldn't be necessary with this bill. Chair Best said that she assumed that every finance chair, if there was an extra $300 more to appropriate, wouldn’t hold a meeting because that small amount wouldn't cover anything, she assumed they'd know to tack it on to next semester's budget. Representative Murray suggested specifying that in the bill.

Representative Brady suggested changing the wording of the bill. Speaker Comparato suggested leaving the bill as is, but adding a clause to the bottom that says “in the event funds are needed, the person in the position can request funding from finance and finance is mandated to give it to them.”

Representative pointed out that it’s done on a monthly basis. Speaker Comparato asked if that meant they had to make a monthly decision about whether or not they wanted the stipend money. Representative Murray said that technically it’d be a monthly decision, but the decision would carry over until the individual requested a change.

Representative Aristy clarified that notification of a change would happen when the individual turned in tax forms. Until they put those documents in, they can’t get the money, so the transfer back to the subsequent appropriations fund is going to to continue until the individual declares that they want it to stop.

Representative Winters suggested that the finance committee focus in on how the person would decide if their situation has changed. Chair Best said that it’d be best to decide how the money is coming back to the subsequent appropriations fund, because it’s important to find a way to make it clear that if the subsequent appropriations fund is open the money should be used, but if it's closed it should be tacked on to next semester’s budget. Representative Smalenberger suggested using the words “most recent.” Chair Best said that in the current situation, the most recent budget would be the fall budget, even though it’s closed. She wanted to make sure that the finance committee in the future wouldn’t think they needed to reopen the budget just to allocate the stipend money.

Representative Rojas suggested that if the individual decided not to accept the stipend money, then the money could be placed into an account waiting, and if the
tax forms were turned in then the money would be ready, and if not the money is held and put into next semester’s subsequent appropriations account.

Representative Root said that a separate stipend account isn’t going to be created; the money is simply going to stay in their account. Representative Rojas suggested that money needed to be earmarked somehow. Chair Best said that it is on record how much money is set aside for the stipend. Chair Best asked for any other thoughts on the matter.

Speaker Comparato asked what if the individual wants the money for the month of January, but it’s already been transferred into the next semester’s budget? Chair Best suggested waiting to transfer the money until the end of the semester. Representative Root said that none of the money gets placed into appropriations until the end of the semester. Chair Best agreed that this sounds like a good idea, because more requests for funding happen in first semester instead of second semester.

Representative Aristy clarified that in the account the money is under the category “stipends”, just like the other money is in a category when it’s allocated. If somebody declines their stipend, then the Student Body Treasurer will know that X amount of money will be moved into the next semester each month – it would automatically go into the account, which can be easily set up with a bank. Unless somebody declares with a tax form that they want the stipend money, the unaccepted money would continue to be transferred back into the subsequent appropriations fund on a monthly basis. He suggested that the bill is perfect the way it is written, because it is the most effective and efficient way (including the amendment regarding line 9.)

Chair Best clarified that the way she understand the bill, it says that if the individual doesn’t accept the stipend, the remaining balance shall be placed into the next semester’s appropriations budget – but it hasn’t been specified for a semester basis, so the finance committee needs to decide on whether it is monthly or by semester.

Representative Aristy said that either way the bill reads, the action will happen in the same way, because money is already allocated on a monthly basis. Regardless if it’s a lump sum or monthly, it’s going to end up in subsequent appropriations.

Representative Smalenberger disagreed. He said that the phrase “remaining balance” suggests that if he doesn’t accept it on day one, the remaining balance would be the entirety of the stipend. He suggested that the phrase “at the end of the semester” be added, because what is supposed to be transferred is the money that remains unaccepted at the end of the semester.

Representative Root said that the finance committee isn’t regulating money, they’re creating a law, and he believes this issue is becoming too complicated. Chair Best disagreed, saying that she believed it was important that a finance chair ten years down the line know exactly what Congress meant when they wrote the bill.
Representative Aristy said that the problem lies in the words “remaining balance”, and if the bill is changed to read “each monthly amount”, it means that each month the amount that isn’t taken can be put back into the subsequent appropriations fund. The phrase “remaining balance” is a little more vague, because it doesn’t specify if it’s the remaining balance at the end of a month or at the end of a semester. The phrase change will reconcile line 6 with how the money will be delivered. He suggested a motion to change the phrase “the remaining amount shall be placed back...” into “each monthly amount shall be placed back...” Root suggested that the phrase “at the end of the semester be removed. It was agreed.

Vice Chair Hardeman requested a vote to report favorably to Congress. This was seconded. The bill passed with no objections.

Chair Best announced that the bill will be sent to the R&J committee, and then will be sent to full congress.

V. Announcements
Chair Best said that there are no announcements. She requested that if anybody has any changes they’d like to see added to the student code, make sure to talk to her.

VI. Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.