

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Agenda for February 16, 2014

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

“Deliver me from writers who say the way they live doesn’t matter. I’m not sure a bad person can write a good book. If art doesn’t make us better, then what on earth is it for.”

-Alice Walker

- 1 Call to Order
Start - ~ 7:06
- 2 Attendance.....Operations
Not present – Opps, TS Proxies – Jewett, Noyes
- 3 Consent Agenda
 - a. ASA – Discretionary.....\$400
 - b. Minutes from 2/9/14
Consider it consented to
- 4 Forum with Ed Pittman, Director of Campus Life and Diversity..... (45 min)
Ed – 82, came back 1990. Thanks to vsa for inviting me and for cosponsoring for all college day. I’m the associate dean and we have four admins who work in the office... we coordinate Vassar first year program. We try to bring a sense of community and bring diverse perspectives such as spring orientation. We work with many different offices... it’s a collaborative initiative. My office under leadership of... Alana Center, LGBTQ, Women’s Center, Religious & Spiritual life offices. I think those four areas really encompass a range of diversity and inclusion. We don’t see it in terms of just the community but what we do to bring others who often don’t see themselves in to the discussion. It never gets done. The moment we do an initiative, it doesn’t mean [okay]. Given the challenges on campus, we want to make this a campus where every student feels like they’re in a safe community. A lot of work comes from crises sometimes. I’m the coordinator of the BIRT but there are other administrators. We meet when there’s a report, so not every [one] calls for a meeting. But when [one] rises to the threshold where it’s a threat to the individual or campus, we do. Example - sustained initiative that came out of urging of students Spring 2000, [involving] a racial incident from a comedy skit involving the use of the “n” word. Students said, “What can we do to sustain these conversations?”. Jan. 2001 - began founder’s day. We have a large committee to think about what we can do to bring the community together around dialogue. Along with that, we plan four to five conversation dinners each year around a particular topic that was generated by students, faculty, and staff. Because we have it, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. It’s not reactionary, but also throughout the year we plan dialogue. We ensure that the student voice is there. Last Spring we decided to see what we could do to bring that student voice back. Alejandro has done a lot of good work. We hope that all college day gives us another impotence to do that. There’s a series of discussions on Tuesday, 1:30, then 3:10, then closing dialogue. {other question posed} – how does it touch upon each community that the office representatives and every student at Vassar? There is a short-sided view that if you’re white and

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straight, diversity doesn’t fit into the situation. We know that that’s not true. Every person can see relevance to their experience. All College Day is one of the bigger examples of what we do. SL – the last event of All College Day is also going to be the why gender neutral bathrooms forum, 5:30 in Rocky. [You can ask] any questions on why we’re moving that direction. Please attend to show the VSA’s commitment. I am not an expert, I’m not pretending to be an expert about trans-politics but I’m there to be VSA’s voice. I want to acknowledge the privilege of speaking as a cis-gendered man

TA – are there many talks on having a students issue center?

Ed- I know that Luz does work with transitions, and in her job description, there is a discussion that is relevant. I’m not aware of any specific proposals.

Pres – I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about... evidently there have been boased incidents... what are some other things you’ve seen students do in response to some of them [and what can we do]?

Ed- I think that [it is good to have] the student voice that’s ready to take ownership and to challenge others in campus. The campus climate committee of Spring 2013 really brought a lot to the table. When students collaborate with administrators... that’s always positive. Challenge each other- not that [incidents] always happen from students. Sometimes they could be from off campus; it’s not always the assumption that the student made that action. But I think the voice of action is always critical from the students. The other piece we talk about is education and I think that happens in a very organic way. Any time you can sponsor a program through your house, that also contributes.

Pres – at the end of last semester there was the privilege campaign... [what is that status of that?]

Ed - we’re going to plan this semester and launch it in the fall. BIRT decided we wanted to take the time to plan it and connect it to other projects. [We are] looking at those as connected pieces so we could get more [out of them].

Soco - is this the first year BIRT is in the form it is in?

Ed- the form has been there for the last 5 years. This year we thought about making it more visible. Visibility is important... [We are] working on making the website interactive...

Raymond – is the dialogue center out of your office; how did it come about?

Ed - Actually from the education department... The social justice inclusion fund is being administered. The good thing is it’s one more vehicle where dialogue takes place... having multiple venues to reach out.

Pres – thank you so much for coming in.

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Ed- Come to All College Day... thanks again for your support.

5 Executive Board Reports

a. Activities(7 min)

Act. - Yesterday we had the activities fair and that was very successful... about 100 orgs came. Two weeks ago we had the spring leadership conference, which was fairly successful. Overall this semester, we approved 12 preliminary orgs. There are some more on the agenda. All Founders’ Day committee chairs have been selected. Thank Goodness It’s Vassar... if you are interested in hosting [contact_]. 2 big projects [for activities] - org storage space, and orgs concerns.

2017 - I went to the Alana center leadership conference and I was wondering if, some orgs said they weren’t invited, this was true.

Act - that is not true. [Sent out email]... I have all those emails and all those emails received it.

Main - you have done a great job

b. Finance(7 min)

Fin. - I don’t have very many updates. This next week is going to be a doozy. We’ve got the annual budget app fund [that] is still in effect. We worked a little bit last weekend on the structure and we’re working on a draft. I encourage anyone with questions to come talk to me. All fund levels are more or less the same. There’s this great little section in the bylaws... we have an extra \$3500. Come to us because the finance committee is DTF - down to fund!

6 Approval of Pre-OrganizationsActivities (10 min)

Act - 2 new pre orgs, you can see the descriptions. So based on the recommendation that Activities was comfortable with... So we’d like to give them a go at first semester status

Finance - reminder- org you must apply [for fund]... \$100 for first [semester] and 200 for 2nd and 3rd.

Approving - All in favor, motion passes.

7 AmendmentsOperations (20 min)

Pres - first I’d like to look at the amendment we brought up last week.

Raymond - it wasn’t changed. A concern Danny brought to me is that it made it sound like...

SL - I read this and was like this doesn’t change anything. Instead of house officers [not being able to run], it just shifts things ____.

Raymond - the clause at the end says you cant run for... ____

Main - if you’re a student fellow, you can’t be on a class council!

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2015 – to clarify, I think more importantly you can’t be simultaneously

Strong – how would this affect in situations like Danny where he was running?

SL – I think the change is that I was able to hold my position until I was elected. I think it means I would’ve had to resign. Which is a large incentive not to run.

2016 – you talked to Luis Inoa about this. Did they discuss this with res life people? There are student fellows which sometimes hold two positions. I wanted to know if that was discussed. My VP is also a student fellow.

Raymond – I talked to my house advisor about it and she was in favor and Inoa was too. I don’t know about anyone else

2014 – from an elections perspective, we can decide who is eligible and who isn’t. What Max is asking... what happens now to people who are holding both? It says, “Run for or hold.”

Raymond – I don’t think we can retroactively do anything. If we want we can edit it.

Strong – can you speak a little bit to why you’re proposing this now?

Raymond – this came out of the special elections when policies weren’t very clear... this is a clarifying policy

Pres- is there any concern in the case where they are committed to both things?

Raymond – the feeling in ops was we wanted to open up leadership positions.

Finance- if someone is appointed to class council, that’s okay?

Raymond – specifically VSA elected positions. The senior class council has other positions

Fin. – the whole situation came off as a language problem.

2016 – I might be the only person thinking this but I don’t think we should vote on this now especially concerning student fellows holding two positions. If it’s not a conflict of interest. I don’t think we should necessarily say they’re not allowed _____. I think it’s merited I think it’s unfair to do that specifically within the student government. That’s why I’d just like to talk to other students. This is a big change and there needs to be more a student discourse

2015 – VSA elected positions in the constitution... it says how a position is filled... its referencing... so like senior class council

SL – my understanding is that this is something that res life has kind of wanted. I think that’s a good point that we should have more conversation [about]. There’s a time management kind of concern for larger positions but in terms of class council, positions and being in class council.

The conflict of interest is arbitrary. I think it’s more the time management thing that should be focused on. That’s the reason I resigned.

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2014 – that’s one of the most important things... it’s not so much as a conflict of interest, but it may impair the work. This is something we can regulate. From a certain perspective, one person should not be a president of many orgs and student fellow.

Raymond – this was an attempt to clarify policies that may or may not exist. I’m going to table this to ops and board of elections and whoever else is interested

All in favor to tabling.

8 Amendment concerning preliminary budgets

2015 – there was a restriction that some [orgs] may not have a budget. It’s better that we manage that money under VSA itself {regarding pre-orgs with money}... Activities works close with the orgs... we still want that relationship with them but we want them to manage their resources.

Finance – Activities and I talked about this... it gives us a lot more flexibility I think ____ will be made rarely. This is not something that pre orgs should expect.

2015 – one of the reasons why they weren’t giving funds... [because of] changing numbers... it gets confusing. There are 100s of org number changing. It’s an issue.

Pres – tabled to consult your constituencies.

Cush – before we start talking about this, it’d be good to lay out what’s happening and why it’s happening. Nothing is set in stone. This is a discussion... a set of ideas few of us were talking about... this is a discussion so it’s not necessarily happening. We looked at the list of things that VSA is in charge of doing. We listed out things that every one does and split [them up].

Splitting SL position and activities position. This looks really thick because we change names.

It’s pretty self-explanatory... Hopefully it’s not something too contentious.

Pres - we’re just going to have a discussion. It’s going to be a discussion in committees and there will be a public forum. In case any changes are made, we want to give our constituencies a chance to hear about it. The earliest 2 weeks [to vote on it].

2015 – in terms of the idea of redistribution, I guess I’m neutral. A change as big as this... ____ talking to a lot of people. To get this passed... ____ get students to vote. In terms of the constitution, it should be scaffolding and the language almost restricts what people can be doing. The VP for Student Life and diversity position, technically the way that it’s worded, would be that they’re not allowed to represent straight white males which is a little problematic. I don’t think we should write the group out. I don’t necessarily think we should do it for this election cycle, it just seems like we’re moving really quickly... we should talk...

2016 – I would like to commend ____, talking about restructuring. I think that there are a lot of good ideas. I’m a big fan of redistribution, as a socialist. I have a couple of issues, not with the resolution, but more how to move forward. I think we shouldn’t set our sights for this election

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cycle. I don’t want to rush major changes. I’m a fan of referendums. It might look like we’re trying to make positions for ourselves right before an election. Perhaps the best way to do this is with the forum. I think maybe we shouldn’t focus on the proposal but on the issues and see if students have ideas. A student on my council brought up a senate system, which was proposed in ’11... other liberal arts colleges have done [this]. Perhaps other schools have tried and failed / succeeded... [we can learn from them]. Thank you to the people who brought this.

Pres- I think this is great. I was wondering about creating two new committees... you also need people to sit on them. I had a couple of ideas on how to fit it in. We should consider which [ones] need committees. We threw out that two Student Life position, [although they] do different things, but they can co-chair the student life committees. We don’t want to require you to sit on three committees. I’m interested in looking at the committee structure. There’s an unequal amount of work. I also kind of like the idea of making sure that students have a greater voice in this. One thing we talked about a little bit about having a poll associated with elections next year, some kind of proposal to get wide student feedback. I do think you get at some very important issues.

Sherman - I want to remind council that there was a VSA review committee charter that used to address concerns here. A lot of the goals were to communicate with students. There have been conflicts in council and it’s been put on the backseat. It’s important for council to be communicative about ideas. The goal of that idea was to be communicative. I just want to remind this council it feels rushed now, but this has been discussed since last May. It’s trying to push for progress.

Socos - I had also expressed concern, about what exactly the campus resources committee did. I thought it was a little vague. The other thing, which may be too specific, I had the same concern as 2015... [regarding] representing some students instead of all of them. Possibly replace it with “concerning issues for all students, particularly ___ to...”

2014 - as 2014 this is really awesome and I really want to commend you. As board of elections board chair, in order to have something as a referendum... I recommend ____, we’d have to go through CIS and the timeline for this is out of our control... I know we haven’t decided about this... Filing for elections begins right when get back [from Spring Break]. We would have to decide if we want a referendum, like now. Under section now 2 in ops... committee struck a lot of things about appointments and I wonder where they went.

Cushing - we’re simultaneously working on appointments. Maybe putting on board of elections instead of us...

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2014 – even if this does not pass through this election council, 2014 has been concerned about is the working with the specific committees for events. Regardless if it passes or not, those two committees can still exist for next year. I would urge those ____.

Cushing – part of the reasoning behind putting this in action sooner rather than later is that our experience is that sometimes good ideas are brought up, agreed on, and then they disappear, nothing happens. Putting some kind of impotence on this amendment would make it happen. Concerns about publicity and student influence... we have a meeting in the rose parlor this Friday. I paid for [posters]. I want your help advertising this. Our idea for filling committees, we were thinking if we had the rest of the campus involved ____.

2016- something I started on ____ this year was restructuring class council was that the house teams each sit on each committee. We were talking about making that a thing. The committees are all a lot bigger this year.

Davison – I love this; I think it’s brilliant primarily because this is an effort to streamline something we are trying to achieve. The only way to be really effective is if ____ just defining the rules. We have to go through *how* they can do these things, achieve the goals. I think it’s brilliant.

2015 – in terms of the committee, one thing we talked about was that people who sit on joint committees... the position is you meet like once a month. That position, the importance, and transparency could be increased. There are ways that that can be fixed. Juniors don’t have time to sit on committees. I have all of the calendars, and they don’t have time. Concerning – work-study for exec. positions may be jeopardized. We can theoretically get these enacted next year.

SL – to directly respond to work study, yeah I know. Part of the work-study proposal is trying to get a promise if there are adjustments in positions, it’d still work. Not every position will be on work-study every year necessarily. There is a lot to be logistically worked out. I think it’s a great way to respond about turnover. For ex., alcohol task force was assembled to look at alcohol culture, but nothing was done with the that the next year. By splitting things, we can move forward and not have to lose time. I think that’s a great way for things to get done. I guess I don’t know how this’ll be received. I don’t see the harm in doing a trial and error thing.

Theoretically if this was done, I don’t think it’s bad to make adjustments. I think sometimes we get a little too afraid of things being permanent forever. I’m not really afraid in terms of the VSA structure... people aren’t just always going to forget that.

Finance – if you would like to be reimbursed for the posters... bring me the receipts {talking to Cushing}... what do two extra votes on council mean for an exec that already has some hierarchical and power issues, by the nature of the positions? That’s something I don’t see

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addressed in this. Secondly, the role of exec on admin. meetings _____ basically that I don’t need to be there ever. That’s something else to think about, do people need to be going?

2017 – if you need help with poster... I think that’s a good idea {referendums}, the only problem is a lot of students don’t know [what they’re voting for/are informed].

2014 –we did have a referendum and there wasn’t a lot of turn out, and it did not pass. A lot of people thought it was because they didn’t know what it meant.

SL - I think a large part of the meeting on Friday is going to be explaining the issue. A large part of students may not care necessarily. Also, I think that in terms of a referendum, it could be issue. Part of vsark committee was to formally address why students aren’t/are interacting. Are they going to interact with a referendum? The council that students may not be crazy about, a structural issue, may not reflect the same opinions of students next time if this is passed and it’s a different council structure.

Raymond – can the Misc tweet 3pm forum rose parlor on Friday? Finance exec board, we talked about getting rid of entire exec voting power, something to consider. Looking at these changes, they seem like big changes to us because we know how they work. To the rest of student body, it’s not. Foreseeing changes for us is saying “oh no!” This is about internal issues. I understand the concerns with the timeline. The last two days have been very stressful. We always do so much talking about so many things and I think we should pursue some action. I strongly urge us to vote on this in two weeks and give it consideration.

Pres – I like the trial and error idea – concern... if we’re creating or getting rid of positions, those are things people signed on to... if we create new positions that are vague, writing as we go what exactly they’re doing [would be better]. That’s a good thing and we should remember that. I think for the concerns- programming committee... I like what it’s doing, having done VP for Ops... it shouldn’t be an elected position. It shouldn’t have been me [doing Tasty Tuesdays]. Those tasks and responsibilities in particular, I guess I don’t see that needing to be the people sitting in this room. Maybe it could be a separate committee that enjoys programming instead of trying to represent ___ while planning Tasty Tuesdays. For the forum... I like bringing this proposal, but the first question we should be asking is “What do you want the VSA to be doing?” They may say we couldn’t care less. Just, starting from the bottom as opposed to telling them how we want to solve it. I liked 2016, your idea specifying who would fill the committees and asking class council... We need to specify who’s going to be doing [what]. I’m worried a committee won’t be specifically populated. I’m actually more included to make more representative positions. I think more students would want to do... things we should consider...

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Davison – related to the timeline, I’m usually one to do something under a minute... my girlfriend doesn’t like that but whatever. Even if we decide its something to try for a year, it should be a really well defined idea. I agree with what Deb said, some positions probably don’t necessarily need a VP but could be board of elections.

TAs – why did you both choose to switch the succession hours to VP of SL to Ops? Questions about program committee (part c)... how would that work with finance who funds events? Are these standing committees... I’m curious to see as to why these committees aren’t interested in other vsa numbers.

Act – to answer the question about _____. Whatever events are approved, they would apply for funds. I’m the one who approves them along with _____. These committees would be open to everyone. These are just subcommittees. We like the Founders’ Day structure. Senior class is involved heavily in two specific events

Raymond - shift in succession was because we were thinking VP for Ops is literally VP of student government so it would make sense to fill in if the president couldn’t...

Socos - _ maybe better fit for __ There will be one representative from each house and one from each class council... I think they’re not parallel. Either we should ____ people that were elected or anyone from constituency. We were talking about getting more freshmen involved – fall elections for freshmen reps...

Act – this is something I’ve already discusses with campus activities - calendar, too much programing, many orgs trying to do the same event. Maybe they could go to this committee first...

2016 – I think that to me and my position, a referendum is of pivotal importance. I take a fundamental issue with the structure of government being changed by the government itself. It was strange for me that we didn’t have are referendum process. In my high school everything happened in a referendum. I appreciate what people said about that timeline. I’ve often been very frustrated with our ability to agree and not do anything. This is not a simple change we all agree on. I don’t think this is something we would aim to have done by the next cycle. I really do think it will come off as we’re trying to add more positions for ourselves. What Danny said about trial and error is important, but we also don’t need to reinvent the wheel. We can analyze other schools’ different structures. Perhaps we’ll find we want to move to a different system.

We’re one of the only colleges that has a system position. We would have the largest exec board [compared to] any other _____. It may not be something everyone thinks. If the last referendum failed ____ - that’s our job. There has to be some kind of prerogative to make student educated.

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2015 – can exec board ask ___ – we keep dancing around the audit question... That’s one of those things like... “we’re going to do it” then “do we want to do it?” Personally I think that’s something council needs to do. I still think there needs to be a strong commitment to ___. Audit somebody?

2014 – for the programming serenading and Halloween particularly... the programming may change at some point. Admins will likely not want us to do either. Maybe having a bare bones committee structure may be a good idea. That gets complicated when it comes to budgeting. If it’s taken out of senior class council, it’s going to change our budgeting. If it’s out of our hands, where does that money for serenading come from? Personal example, having a budget for Halloween first day of class is unreasonable. About the fall elections, I think that’s a good idea, keeping that as a back door. It’ll make such good changes to improve what we have now and to approve something during the election cycle. The forum thing, I think I agree with 2015 that a referendum is essential. If that’s infeasible, we have to have a series of forums in spaces that can accommodate more people. We should have another one even if we are doing a referendum. We need to do a lot basically. Nothing suggests that ___ student isn’t going to vote no to everything. It’s going to have a lot of biased data.

SL – in terms of the form when we’re there, please remember that if students are there and we’re there, we carry a certain amount of voice. Nobody in this room is better than any students you’re representing. Be cautious of the privilege you hold as a council member.

Fin – what’s been missing in this conversation is how this affects other exec board positions. Secondly, I do think that what 2014 was saying if we actually want to do these events is important. Every year we complain – do we want to create the scaffold or do we have to do these things?

Act – it says at the discretion of _____.

Fin – my thought is by putting it in the constitution, we’re giving some kind of commitment

2014 – _____ there’s going to come a time when we’re no longer going to do Halloween or Serenading. I might recommend... the bare bone structure. If we have a standing council it may be helpful. That person could form the actual committee with people...

Fin – I’m taking this great class on _____ theory

Raymond – forum Saturday 3 after bill of rights meeting. If you’re not on Student Life or Activities and you have concrete changes to this, please contact Steph or us.

Pres – thank you guys so much for this. I feel like we’re all excited for this.

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2014- on Friday night, I did not sleep. That was the longest amount of time I’ve been awake- for 40 hours. Using Connor’s longest day... 58.5 of Conner’s longest days until commencement... roughly 107 days, oh no we just had 100 days... Shout out to ____, ____, ____, and vc sound system. 50 nights is coming up on April 5th. We’re still working on senior week stuff. I would like to point out – sent email out to org leaders. If an org is interested in hosting an event, we can find a spot for senior week. [The org should] include [the number of] non-senior people that are working on that event. ... Hosting an art show for senior week. If seniors are interested in submitting art, start thinking about art and creative stuff.

Academics – sent all of you student seminar apps, please send them out again. Teaching / being in student seminar ____ tweet Misc please. Shout out to 2014 for awesome 100 nights.

SL – sincere thank you for everything you do on a daily basis. Thank you for all you do, everybody appreciates it. If you represent a body of housing or proxying a house, please raise your hand. Can you put your hand down if you have your [poster].

Strong – I dropped it in a gutter _____....

SL – if we could have those posted in common area... Last thing, just a note about the office as a shared space. We had a lot of these posters on my desk, general issue of using mine and Shruti’s desks [for food because they are the closest]. These posters were printed by Elizabeth Shrock {spelling} by their funding. Some were covered in coffee. They were supposed to go back to her. Be conscience of the office as a shared space. Those are our desks... there is stuff on them. It does interfere.

Shruti – I like cream cheese, but not on my files.

Davison – plug for Tewa, Jewett - Seven Deadly Sins on Saturday, 10 pm. Going to be fun... I’m DJ-ing.

Pres – email from Wendy Freedman director of counseling, process of hiring two new permanent counselors, not clear if additions or replacements. They are grateful for VSA and our support so they invited us to come to the interviews. I’m going to send out an email with the times. Just respond if that’s something you’re interested in doing. They will be, not this week, but the week after. I’m super excited that we are being included. I will find out if [they’re replacements or additions]. We got a lot of positive response from our letter. Eve responded that she had submitted an official proposal to get a post doc for counseling, Wendy, DB [were also grateful... haven’t hear from Cappy.

Strong – thanks Ruby and Ramy and Steph for all you do. To all the rest of you who never get shout outs, thank you, thank you TH[88] and [44] {NT not sure about the numbers} for helping dig out car.

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Raymond – going to send out blurb - raise pinky to promise to send out blurb

2015 –sold 63 crushes

At large – when you email your constituencies, you can send them the link to Seven Deadly

Sins FB event.

End – 8:40