

Vassar Student Association Resolution 27-10
A Resolution in Support of Coursework in Social Awareness
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WHEREAS, the foremost mission of this college is to make possible “an education that promotes analytical, informed, and independent thinking and sound judgment; encourages articulate expression; and nurtures intellectual curiosity, creativity, respectful debate and engaged citizenship;” and

WHEREAS, respectful debate and engaged citizenship necessitate an understanding of the social forces that differentially situate individuals in the world and as students; and

WHEREAS, social forces such as sexism, racism, heterosexism, cissexism, classism, ableism, colonialism and imperialism stem not just from prejudice and the individual, but also from systemic power and social hierarchies embedded in institutions including those of higher education; and

WHEREAS, this year alone a number of incidents of hate speech and hateful, identity-targeted vandalism have taken place in residential houses and elsewhere on campus; and

WHEREAS, these and other incidents have made it clear that Vassar's campus is not exempt from the hierarchies of power and structures of inequality that pervade the wider world and result in the intentional and unintentional marginalization of certain populations; and

WHEREAS, working effectively to counteract oppression within a community requires a shared vocabulary and understanding of issues of power, inequality, marginalization, and the historical power of prejudice; and

WHEREAS, “In the largest sense, Vassar seeks to educate the individual imagination to see into the lives of others. As such, Vassar’s academic mission cannot be separated from its definition as a residential community composed of diverse interests and perspectives;” and

WHEREAS, the use of Vassar’s curriculum to provide the perspective, vocabulary, and shared understanding required to challenge inequality is deeply faithful to the mission, spirit, and purpose of this College; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the Vassar Student Association (the “Council”) recognizes that this use of a curricular requirement is one crucial component, among many, of a comprehensive and integrated approach to counteracting the forces of oppression on our campus;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council strongly advocates pursuit of coursework in social awareness as informed (but not bounded) by the ideas outlined by the VSA Academics committee in the attached document; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council affirms the commitment of the student body to collaboration with the faculty and administration in the form of a subcommittee of the Committee on Curricular Policies (“CCP”) dedicated to realization of coursework in social awareness as a fully open-ended project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council endorses the presence of coursework in social awareness in every course of study as one possible goal of such a subcommittee, recognizing that (i) one possible realization of this goal is in the form of a requirement, and that (ii) in each instantiation in a course of study, coursework in social awareness must be oriented primarily to meeting the needs of the department or program in question.