

## Spring 2014 New Preliminary Organizations VSA VP for Activities – Stephanie Goldberg, VSA Activities Committee

### *Chabad*

#### **Applicant: Gavriella Kaplan, 2014**

**What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

The primary purpose of a Chabad Jewish Student Group is to provide living Judaism to the students at Vassar College within the framework of traditional Judaism. Our objectives include but are not limited to: educational, ritual, and social activities, in addition to counseling and spiritual guidance to individual students. Our organization is based on Chassidic philosophy, as taught locally at the Chabad on Fulton – Student Center directed by Rabbi Daniel and Dalia Sanoff. Our philosophy states that every Jew deserves an equal opportunity to experience and enjoy their heritage. All programs and events of Chabad Jewish Student Group are within the framework of Halachah, Jewish law, as transmitted by the Rabbis throughout the generations dating back to Moses receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai. These goals shall be achieved through weekly Torah (Bible) classes, monthly women's programs, lectures on various Jewish issues, and speakers for religious and cultural events. We will also provide traditional Shabbat and Holiday services, Glatt (the highest Kosher standards) Kosher dinners, Jewish holiday programs, and Shabbatons (unique weekends).

**How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

We provide a form of Judaism that is not being provided for on campus. Many students before this year, desiring a more traditional blend of Judaism, had been left unsatisfied. Our approach of a more traditional Judaism, has already been well welcomed, encouraged and embraced by many Vassar students, even though students might not be themselves traditional or orthodox.

**Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

Our group does not yet have any ties.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

Our mission is to expose students to traditional Judaism, therefore collaborating with other groups would be of great benefit. As a student group, we would look forward to working with other organizations or departments on different points of interest. For example, our women's events could be joined by both the women's studies department and the feminist alliance. Our holiday celebrations could be co-hosted with the religious department or the department of religious life. A class series on the ethics of our ancestors could be co-hosted with the philosophy department.

### *J Street U at Vassar*

#### **Applicant: Sara Abramson, 2016**

**What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

The intended purpose of J Street U at Vassar is to bring a pro-Israel pro-peace voice to campus. As a national organization, J Street advocates for a two state solution in Israel and Palestine. However, at Vassar, J Street will do more than advocate. We seek to educate students on the Israeli Palestinian conflict through open dialogue and discussion, ultimately increasing the political involvement of the campus.

**How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

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**Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

J Street U does not have any official ties to other organizations or pre-orgs.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

In the future, we plan to work with RSL in order to sponsor guest speakers. The RSL's assistant director, Rabbi Rena Blumenthal has already been working with us to become the most effective organization possible. Ultimately, it would be wonderful if we could collaborate with Students for Justice in Palestine or the Vassar Jewish Union in order to demonstrate our tenets of open dialogue and acceptance.

### *Mug Enthusiasts*

#### **Applicant: Miguel Esteban Uribe Pinto, 2017 & Paul Younger, 2017**

**What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

The Mug Enthusiasts Club (Or Mug Appreciation Society TBD) is a group intended to promote self-expression and a healthy dance scene on campus. It is intended to provide an alternative to competitive dance groups by allowing anyone who likes to dance but lacks the ability of VRDT or other dance troupes to join the club.

**How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

This group is different as it is focused on the mug as a venue and place for self-expression and dance appreciation. A non-competitive, free-for-all group that simply wants to unite dance lovers in The Mug. We want to throw events exclusively in the mug, where the sole purpose is to have fun in a safe space.

**Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

None currently.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

All class councils and organizations that desire to throw events in The Mug can ask our organization for help, promotion, and entertainment.

## *Mock Trial*

### **Applicant: Thomas Jin, 2017**

**What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

Mock Trial Organization

Our purpose is to establish an environment wherein any students interested in law, the judicial system, or drama are able to engage in those interests and develop particular skills in speaking, rhetoric, articulation, and acting in a courtroom setting. We strive to be a dedicated, personal team that will be a benefit to prospective attorneys or any students interested in law or acting in general. We intend to compete in the AMTA (American Mock Trial Association) regional competition and any other competitions that may come up.

**How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

Our group is unique in that it serves to teach the mechanics and dynamics of the exotic area known as the courtroom. This includes courtroom etiquette and jargon, articulation of ideas, thinking on your feet, etc. Our group is also an area where anybody interested in law can share an interest and develop general skills related to the field. Vassar is currently scarce in organizations related specifically to the legal field or justice system.

**Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

The Career Development Office: The pre-law advisors have been deeply involved in helping us launch our organization from the administrative side.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

Debate team, Wordsmiths, English and Philosophy departments, Drama department and theatre organizations, Toastmasters.

## *Oppression Olympics*

### **Applicant: Brittany Hill, 2016**

**What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

The purpose of the group is to provide a safe space for marginalized groups on campus (primarily students of color) by performing sketch comedy and practicing comedic writing. The group benefits this campus by diversifying the extracurricular organizations already present and providing an opportunity for students within those marginalized groups to participate in an organization focusing on comedic performance and writing that they otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to be accepted in due to the high volume of competition within the already established on-campus comedy groups.

**How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

This group is unique and different from the many other organizations and departments on campus because it seeks to unify students who are not white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgender males (a group that heavily dominates comedy and improv organizations) with sketch comedy; many of the comedy groups on campus lack diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and socio-economic backgrounds of its participants and this organization strives to make visible these marginalized groups by showcasing their comedic talents.

**Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

The group will keep close ties with the ALANA Center, organizations for students of color (primarily BSU), and the LGBTQ Center.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

The organization hopes to work with Kiese Laymon within the English department to achieve the stated purpose once they return from sabbatical to enhance our comedic writing.

**Please list some possible events your Preliminary Organization would hold and how they would contribute to the campus community.:**

Possible events for the organization include screenings of pre-recorded sketches as well as live performances.

## *React to Film*

### **Applicant: Gabriela Medina, 2014**

**What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

The REACT TO FILM (RtF) chapter at Vassar aims to leverage social-issue-based, pre-theatrical or recent release, award-winning documentaries for the purpose of exposing students to critical social issues, engaging a multi-disciplinary audience in discussions about the issues presented by the film, and inspiring peers to get involved.

**How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

RtF is a nonprofit organization that got its start in inner city high schools and has now expanded to high schools, colleges, and universities across the country. The RtF College Action Network is united by a common dedication to social activism and civic engagement through documentary films. Each chapter hosts two screenings a semester that occur on the same day at participating institutions, thereby engaging and impacting a wider audience, and encouraging collaboration between different schools. VICE Film League also screens films on campus but our events are screenings as well as panel discussions inspired from themes in the films. A guest speaker usually moderates the discussion. At our last screening for How to Make Money Selling Drugs, Professor Kiese Laymon provoked students into recognizing our roles in drug culture rather than separating ourselves from the people in the film.

**Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

RtF established a Vassar chapter during the 2011–2012 academic year, and has hosted a total of five screenings since its inception (Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom, Living for 32, Escape Fire, Blood Brother, and How to Make Money Selling Drugs). In the past, RtF Vassar has collaborated with the Miscellany News and Vassar Filmmakers. For last semesters' films, RtF collaborated with the Film Department, the Sociology Department, the Science, Technology, and Society Department, the American Studies Department, the Political Science Department, UNICEF at Vassar, the South Asian Students Alliance, and VICE Film League.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

RtF provides numerous and diverse opportunities for collaboration with other organizations and/or departments dependent upon the subject matter of each documentary. For the upcoming screening of Who is Dayani Cristal? on February 26, RtF hopes to collaborate with the Latin American and Latino/a Studies Department, the Hispanic Studies Department, and Poder Latino/a, among other possible organizations.

## *Relay for Life - Vassar*

### **Applicant: Stephanie Goldberg, 2014**

#### **What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

Relay for Life - Vassar is a group of students that are committed to helping raise awareness and funds for the American Cancer Society, as well as other organizations that raise awareness of and funds for cancer and cancer research. Unfortunately, everyone knows someone affected by some form of cancer. We hope to do our part by making students aware of issues surrounding cancer, especially those relevant to college-aged students.

#### **How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

There is no student group on campus that is dedicated to bringing awareness to cancer and cancer research.

#### **Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

Relay for Life was a subgroup of the VSA org ProHealth. However, ProHealth's mission has moved away from Relay and it's events, which is why we are applying to become our own group.

#### **What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

ProHealth will continue to support Relay for Life, even though it will no longer oversee the group/event. We have also worked closely with Baldwin and the Office of Health Ed. in the past. Previously, Vassar athletic teams, departments and student organizations have formed teams to raise money for ACS.

## *Scientific Research Literature Club*

### **Applicant: Peter Kim, 2017**

#### **What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?: Scientific literature/research club.**

This club would allow students to come together and discuss current scientific research across disciplines in an informal setting. Being scientifically literate is a useful skill to have when working within the scientific academia. This club would allow students to familiarize themselves with current scientific literature, as well as teach them methods and resources for researching.

There may be weekly meetings to discuss and engage students in current research (there's a lot to talk about!).

This club can also be a way for students to find research opportunities (for summer internships or otherwise).

#### **How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

There is no club listed on [vsa.vassar.edu/activities/organizations](http://vsa.vassar.edu/activities/organizations) based on scientific research and open discussions on such subjects.

#### **Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

No

#### **What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

Prohealth

(The scope of scientific clubs provided by Vassar is seemingly quite limited.)

## ***Vassar Alliance of Women in Foreign Affairs***

### **Applicant: Jacqueline Parziale, 2014**

#### **What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?: Our Mission Statement:**

Recognizing continued gendered inequalities in representation, power, and influence in American international policy, we, the Vassar Alliance of Women in Foreign Affairs, pledge our support to the creation, protection, and expansion of public, academic, legal, and/or political spaces for women and girls. We seek to apply Vassar's founding mission to equalize education to the contemporary crisis in female political representation. Drawing current students and alumnae alike into one community, our mission is to ensure the expansion of female representation in foreign politics and affairs at all levels by providing continued support during periods of education, early employment, and future careers. Not only do we strive to engage women in foreign affairs, but we also work to inform all people of the difficulties within the profession for women. This educational process engages all identities, and promotes both equality and an understanding of difference with the global community. The Vassar Alliance of Women in Foreign Affairs strives to connect women interested in foreign and political affairs internationally, as well as decrease the gap between professional, educational, and economic disparities between peoples.

#### **How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

While there are several groups that strive for equality for women, none portray our goal of engaging politics, gender, and international affairs. Our goal is to observe, comment on, and participate in international affairs with a specific interest in the intersection of gender and international politics and security studies. We are not an activist group and do not intend to debate local or domestic gender issues. This organization would bridge the gap between existing organizations and departments and engage new critical thought and seek progress for women interested specifically in foreign affairs. Furthermore, this group serves as a network and resource for young women beginning professional careers in international affairs, and connects women on campus to women in the broader field to facilitate their career development process. We have a substantial alumnae network to date, and it will continue to grow as we become more prominent on and off campus.

#### **Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

In November, we co-hosted a film screening of *Girl Rising*, a documentary about the education of girls in developing countries, with UNICEF, Amnesty International, React to Film, and CIEE. There was a large turnout and the event was incredibly successful. We have also been in contact with the Office of Alumnae/i Affairs and Development, and they have expressed interest in connecting alumnae in the foreign affairs field with our student group.

We also hosted a lecture with the History department in October 2013. The lecturer was Nancy Soderberg, President Clinton's Deputy National Security Advisor, and she spoke about the US's role in the United Nations and humanitarian intervention. She also spoke about her mentor, Madeleine Albright, and the role of women in the field of foreign policy.

We have started to make some ties with the Career Development Office, and have given them some suggestions on tailoring some of their events to our interests. They have expressed that they do not have a developed arena for students interested in these issues, and were enthusiastic about developing their resources available for students with our interests.

#### **What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

We would work closely with several VSA organizations and departments. In terms of student organizations, we would continue to seek affiliation with Amnesty International and UNICEF, and would additionally reach out to CARES, Feminist Alliance, VICE, and the Miscellany News. Additionally we hope to reach out to the Vassar/West-Point

Exchange Program and the Posse Veterans in the Class of 2017 and years to come. We also plan to engage the History, International Studies, Africana Studies, Asian Studies, Hispanic Studies, and Political Science departments to maintain growth and achieve our stated goals. We also hope to expand beyond the obvious groups and reach out to departments such as Economics or Women's Studies that may have an interest in or connection to a particular subset of foreign affairs.

Our goal is to extend a partnership similar to the existing partnership with the CDO to the Fellowship Office, and potentially the Study Abroad and Fieldwork Offices.

Currently, few resources exist in all three offices for students interested in international affairs, and especially for students interested in the intersection of gender and international affairs.

## Vassar Chess Club

### **Applicant: George Beyer, 2015**

#### **What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

The Vassar Chess Club and Team seek to create a space where chess strategy and tactics can be discussed and improved upon. Members will also be encouraged to participate in Poughkeepsie's local chess clubs and become certified members of the United States Chess Federation (USCF), and participate in USCF rated matches. The top four members of the Vassar Chess Club will represent Vassar at intercollegiate chess tournaments giving members the chance to participate in extremely competitive chess matches. The Vassar Chess Club and Team will also seek to encourage intercollegiate chess events between Vassar and the nearby colleges (Marist College, Dutchess Community College, etc.).

#### **How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

Despite the tremendous history of chess at both Vassar and our peer institutions, there isn't an existent organization at Vassar that focuses on chess at any level. We find that this is a disservice, and often alienates many competitive chess players at Vassar College as the majority of comparable colleges have some form of chess club or team.

Additionally, whenever we set up chessboards in either the retreat or the ACDC, many express an interest in having an organized chess club on campus where they can learn and play chess. We would like to satisfy this demand. Our group will allow competitive chess players to discuss and improve their game while also teaching beginners who would like to learn about modern chess.

#### **Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

No.

#### **What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

Since our goals are quite unique, there aren't a plethora of other organizations that we could work with.

## *Vassar Kitchens*

### **Applicant: Sarah Horowitz, 2017**

#### **What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

Growing up in a family completely obsessed with food, I have placed the culinary arts on a high pedestal. Food not only reminds me of home, but also transports me across the world, allowing me to understand cultures and identify with unique people. It bridges cultural barriers with similar flavors and techniques while simultaneously celebrating the differences between unique spices and ingredients. Remaining a fundamental sustenance everyone needs to survive, food will always be understood and appreciated by the entire world. At Vassar, cultural understanding is something we strive for, where everyone is accepted and loved for their unique differences. Cooking food is another branch that facilitates openness and understanding. This group will have a maximum of ten people come into a kitchen, make a menu, and cook and share meals together. We will cook unique foods that people crave, that people miss from home, or that people are interested about. We will cook nostalgic noshes that will satisfy the home-sickness in all of us, but also create dishes that spark our interest in unknown cultures. This is a huge benefit in itself. Through food, an elemental love everyone can share, we can comfortably introduce new cultures while sharing the culinary essence of our identity. We will bond over cooking, celebrate our own cultures, and delve into the savory complexity of other cultures. One rich culture exists right in Poughkeepsie, where this org will travel to other homes and organization in the area and learn about their cuisine while showing them our own ideas about food. This will facilitate a connection with the Poughkeepsie community while also providing many charity opportunities. We will also hone in our photography skills, where we will take photos of our favorite dishes and use these photos in order to create our cookbook at the end of the year that everyone can buy and use. Also, this cooking group can turn into a business with our online blog, where people can sign up and pay for community dinners we create and order delivered food and baked goods we design. This group celebrates the art of cooking, business, design, and creativity which bridging the gap between Poughkeepsie and the Vassar community, and even fostering deeper connections between the college's student body.

#### **How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

Unlike many other extremely specific clubs, this club encourages us to literally travel the world. Every culture has specific cuisines they love, and through this org we can visit all these culinary identities in the comforts of the Vassar Kitchens. This club is also indulgence, a way for students to luxuriously delve into their deepest food fantasies and make these epicurean dreams bake to life. It is an escape from the stress of Vassar, and also a way to meet new people and have the unique bonding experience that only cooking can provide. It is one experience sitting down at a table and eating together, but that bonding experience can become even more profound and lasting when you slave in the kitchen together creating a masterpiece you planned, then finally sitting down to a feast you created. There truly exists no experience like this at Vassar, where we cure culinary home-sickness, explore the epicurean globe, and creating lasting, intimate bonds over food. It will also encourage people to take pride in their food and what they put into their bodies, looking at food with a healthy, creative, and appreciative perspective.

#### **Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

We may eventually team up with some of the other food centered clubs such as Challah for Hunger or Slow Food for charity events and such, but in general we will be separate.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

- 1.) Challah for Hunger- Have a breakfast feast or Jewish dinner to share with a small group or with the masses
- 2.) Hunger Action- host food charity events with them, possibly pulling some home cooks from the Poughkeepsie area to teach us how to cook their favorite meals
- 3.) Slow Food- create meals that take into consideration the global and local connections, and the overall environmental aspects of our food. Possibly hold a large-scale food night with solely foods from the local farmers.

## **WOCA**

### **Applicant: Michelle Yuan, 2015**

**What is the intended purpose of your group? How does your group benefit the campus?:**

We want to provide a safe space for women of color to meet. We believe this organization is important and necessary to foster a safe atmosphere in which women of color can discuss their unique experiences and issues, and create a network of support.

**How is your group unique and different from the 100+ other existing VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

The ALANA center is a wonderful space, but a majority of the organizations that currently exist there separate people based on race/ethnicity. We want to create a space that unites female identified people cross-culturally, and emphasizes the intersectionality of identity. We also want to create a bridge between the ALANA center and the Women's center.

**Does your group have any ties to any other student group, VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, and departments?:**

WOCA is associated with ALANA organizations. Many of our members are actively involved in other ALANA organizations such as MEChA, ASA, NBSA, PL, SASA, CBS, as well as YDS and QCVC.

**What other VSA organizations, Preliminary Organizations, or departments could you work with in the future to achieve your stated purpose?:**

WOCA can collaborate with other ALANA & Center organizations, as well as Fem Alliance and the Women's Center, and VISA. There are also many academic departments we can work with, including but not limited to Africana Studies, Asian Studies, LALS, and Women Studies. We are also open to collaborating with other groups for relevant events.