

A Proposal Concerning Work-Study Compensation for VSA Executive Board

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I. SUMMARY

After communicating with members of the Vassar Campus, including discussions within Campus Climate and the Student Life Committee, there is a clear and present issue of accessibility with respect to VSA Executive Board positions. In order to encourage accessibility of these positions, which already require a significant time commitment, this proposal outlines the offer of a work-study allowance to accommodate members of the VSA Executive Board who have the financial obligation of a work-study. This work-study allowance set by the Student Employment Office will help make the VSA Executive Board a more accessible opportunity in campus leadership for students regardless of socioeconomic status.

II. REASONING

The reason to consider work-study compensation for VSA Executive Board members addresses the issue of accessibility equally alongside the large time commitment for the work of a VSA Executive Board member. The goal of this proposal is not to offer compensation or give the impression that VSA Executive Board members are being paid for their work. Furthermore, this proposal does not seek to marginalize the commitments of student leaders of various on-campus organizations. Instead, it is intended to ensure students with the financial obligation of work-study can have the opportunity to serve on the VSA Executive Board, and that certain aspects of their work while on the VSA Executive Board can be counted toward their work-study allowance.

The duties of a VSA Executive Board Member can require anywhere from 15 to 30 hours per week, and include a variety of tasks beyond student committees and council meetings, such as clerical tasks, meeting with administrators, and research. While some institutions offer scholarships or salaries for students who take on key leadership roles within student government, or even hire junior administrators to assist in these tasks, the VSA maintains a philosophy of civil service and does not compensate members of any student government or organization. In addition to this, the College's Financial Aid policies regarding merit-based scholarships do not permit awards in return for positions in student government or any reasons beyond demonstrated financial need..

While the goal of this proposal is not to consider any specific VSA or other leadership position as more valuable than another, it acknowledges the time commitment of VSA Executive Board positions. This proposal also acknowledges the importance of accessibility to these positions: the VSA Executive Board is responsible for representing the interests of the entire student body. therefore election onto the board should neither be intentionally nor structurally discriminatory. Current concerns regarding accessibility challenge this aforementioned philosophy.

Since the receipt of a work-study allowance for VSA Executive Board is for financial aid purposes, no VSA Executive Board members or candidates should be obligated or required to disclose their receipt of a work-study allowance for their service, nor should it be considered a factor worth addressing in elections

or during campaigning.

III. QUALIFICATIONS & BUDGETING

The offer of work-study compensation for VSA Executive Board members is not intended to represent compensation or payment for services rendered as a VSA Executive Board member. It is instead intended to assure the accessibility and opportunity of running for and serving as a VSA Executive Board member for those who currently hold a federal work-study allowance.

In order to qualify for this program, a student must already have the demonstrated financial need that includes a work-study allowance in their financial aid package as issued by the Office of Financial Aid. Students working through a non work-study program do not qualify to receive a work-study allowance as members of the VSA Executive Board. Only the Office of Financial Aid can determine a student's qualifications, with respect to the College's need-based financial aid policy.

As with current methodology, the work-study itself will be managed by the Student Employment Office, which is located within the Office of Financial Aid. Students will record hours considered acceptable for work-study compensation through either online or paper timesheets, which are then approved by a designated officer. The establishing of an officer to review timesheets can be determined between the VSA Executive Board members receiving a work-study allowance and the Student Employment Office.

Work-study allowance amounts are based on the rules set forth by the Student Employment Office, and are detailed in the following table:

Class Year	Maximum Hours per Week	Maximum Allowance
Freshman	8	\$1,750
Sophomore	9	\$1,960
Junior / Senior	10	\$2,180

With respect to Student Employment Office policy, a VSA Executive Board member may not exceed either recording the maximum hours per week or receiving the maximum allowance listed for their class year. Once a VSA Executive Board member exceeds their maximum allowance, they are no longer permitted to record hours and receive work-study compensation for duties as a VSA Executive Board member.

A member of the VSA Executive Board may not record hours spent in council meetings. Members of the VSA Executive Board however are encouraged to record hours spent in committee meetings, office hours, handling clerical or administrative tasks, doing research, or meeting with administrators.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Based on this reasoning and information, this proposal recommends the following:

- A declaration of support by the VSA in the creation of a work-study allowance for VSA Executive Board members through a VSA resolution.
- The communication of this proposal and its VSA support to all related administrative offices regarding the creation of a work-study allowance for VSA Executive Board members, including the Office of Financial Aid (including the Student Employment Office,) the Office of Student Accounts, the Joint Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid, the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, and the Dean of Strategic Planning and Academic Resources.
- The goal of implementing this work-study allowance for the incoming 2013-14 VSA Executive Board, as well as promoting it for the 2014-15 VSA elections.

In conclusion, this proposal outlines the importance of accessibility for the opportunity to serve as a member of the VSA Executive Board alongside an equal importance of maintaining its status as civil service, and not a paid position. This proposal hopes to improve this aspect of accessibility through the offer of a work-study allowance, and seeks the recommendations as previously stated.