

Vassar Student Association Resolution 28-2

A Resolution in Support of The Barefoot Monkeys and Fire Spinning on Campus

Principal Authors: Hollace Francy, Hannah Root, Michelle Lessard, Gregory Loscalzo, and Michael Prentice-Glasgow

WHEREAS, the Barefoot Monkeys as a VSA-certified organization have one of the largest active member bases on campus, have grown at a significant rate over the last few years, and they have performed 5 organization sponsored shows and more than 15 collaborative shows over the past academic year, and

WHEREAS, the Barefoot Monkeys are a valuable asset in regards to attracting new students from diverse walks of life, and are advertised as a truly unique aspect of the Vassar community by the admissions office and nationally recognized publications, and

WHEREAS, the safety procedures taught and practiced by the Barefoot Monkeys, and approved by the Vassar Administration, are substantially more stringent and comprehensive than practiced at many national fire arts conventions, and

WHEREAS, the Barefoot Monkeys have a demonstrated record of safe spinning on campus, and established policies to ensure the consistency of safe practices in the future, and

WHEREAS, all members of the Barefoot Monkeys understand that there is an inherent risk, while minimal, of injury while practicing fire arts, and as fully informed consenting adults, do choose to take this risk, and

WHEREAS, the members of our troupe fire spun an estimated combined total of 1,900 times this academic year without sustaining any serious injury that required hospitalization, and

WHEREAS, representatives of the Barefoot Monkeys have been eager and willing to meet with various members of the Vassar administration to have conversations about continuously updating their safety waivers and protocols for fire spinning in order to minimize any potential risks and liabilities, and

WHEREAS, the Barefoot Monkeys were prohibited last-minute from allowing non-students to spin fire with them as per their established training and safety guidelines, at their annual convention to which many professionals and teachers were invited, which was detrimental to the organization because it impeded the sharing and promotion of circus and fire arts culture including the learning of safer fire spinning techniques, and

WHEREAS, there is a disconnect between the risk management division of the college's understanding of the Monkeys' safety practices and procedures and the practices themselves, and

WHEREAS, the Barefoot Monkeys have been informed of decisions that limit their fire spinning opportunities without having been given clear reason or rationale for the limitation, and were blocked in their attempts for redress before or after these decisions, and

WHEREAS, representatives of the Barefoot Monkeys have been excluded from some conversations which determine the policies related to practicing their fire arts, especially with regards to the limitations on fire arts that are currently experienced, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Barefoot Monkeys receive the increased support from the administration that they need to continue to learn and practice the fire arts in a manner that is equitable and consistent with the treatment received by all organizations, as will be accomplished by the establishment of a guest-waiver system and with more accessibility to, and transparency of, the conversations held by the Administration and risk management division of the college regarding the Barefoot Monkeys organization and its practices.