

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Agenda for Oct. 21, 2011

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

"Do vegetarians eat animal crackers?"
-Author Unknown

- 1 Call to Order
 - The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.
- 2 Attendance..... Operations
- 3 Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval of minutes from 10/21/11
 - b. \$250 from Speakers, Lectures and Panels Fund to VARC
 - c. \$1700 from Community Fund to Democracy Matters
 - All adopted with all in favor.
- 4 Executive Board Reports
 - a. Academics (7 minutes)
 - They are looking at honor code and the way professors deal with disabilities in the classroom.
 - She talked about the prison course and the need for more extensive conversations with the faculty.
 - b. Student Life (7 minutes)
 - CCL has not met very many times yet. They want to allow a comment period for CCL to answer questions from students. They've been focusing on occurrences of discrimination, and alcohol and drug use. Student Life is sitting on the Committee of Excellence and looking at the how the Cultural Audit has been used. He is also working on student orientation and proposing an activism requirement. They also are hopefully incorporating some sports games to encourage athletics.
 - CDRC started this month with in house events and the town hall meeting. They will be having a peer review trip and this week they are hosting focus groups. Their research consultant (Charlie's mom ☺) will be arriving this week. They are still looking for people for the dining review focus groups and they can sign up online.
 - The Dean of the College Review is a way for us to give input into that position and they're still deciding how we want to take part in this. If anyone is interested in being involved then contact Student Life. They have been looking at issues of sexism. CLRG audit is an interesting document that he suggests everyone read.
 - Activities asked if he anticipates any suspension of Roelke's contract. There's a lot of confusion about what Student Life's role is in this process so they're still working this out.
- 5 CDRC Trip De-brief..... Student Life (20 min)

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- They left on Monday to Middlebury and moved on to Mount Holyoke Wednesday and then Bryn Mawr on Thursday. They attended a Senate meeting at Mount Holyoke which was an “engaging experience”.
 - Jewett said that Middlebury was his favorite. They have an entirely different approach to dining than Vassar does. Everything you served yourself, very clean and welcoming, so they’re trying to take a lot away from that.
 - 2012 talked about being more in control of dining at these other place and more choices. She liked the self-serve because it allows students to make their own food and control portion sizes. Students cleaned up after themselves.
 - Cushing talked about the simplicity at the other dining halls, compared to Vassar. Real Panini presses!
 - At Middlebury, you don’t know how much money goes to dining. You hand in money and they do with it what they will.
 - 2012 also commented on integrated cooking/dining spaces.
 - Student Life summed up how they learned a lot about how important physical spaces are. They learned that Vassar is ahead on many issues like local movements. Their visit also helped look at other campus spaces. It was very obvious that Vassar is lacking in a central student space. They got a good vocabulary for what to demand. Our student government is a lot more together than the ones they observed.
 - On the weekend of November 10th, we now have a spot at the Seven Sisters Conference. The past few years we haven’t been invited. We are this year and we’re going to invite them here too!! Yay!
 - They didn’t talk about EMS, but they are in touch.
 - The plan was that they were going to meet with administrators, but they decided this was too much and wouldn’t actually be productive.
 - They took detailed notes and Jewett will be compiling it into a report after Wednesday.
- 6 Forum, VSA Restructuring President (45 min)
- They will be having a forum on VSA structure. The Board of Trustees is very impressed with what the VSA has accomplished this year. However, although the VSA does a good job maintaining things at Vassar, they don’t have time to look at larger scale things like creating relationships with other campuses. President is looking for ways to change the structure to include this without taking away from what they do now.

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- 2014 talked about making it look different from last year. It should *principally* be a student process. It can be changes to how they operate, not the structure itself. He thinks a big part of this should be educating people on how the VSA works
- Finance talked about taking the process from last year and using what they learned. They need student input throughout the entire process of changes and everything needs to be very transparent. We also need to start early, like now, if we want to make changes. The difficulty of doing this is that it will take away from Council's already limited time; who will be stretched too thin and who would actually have the time to do this?
- Operations talked about creating a sustainable result. She feels that the VSA is a moving and dynamic body and that this shouldn't be something they're only doing this year. They need to incorporate accessibility, peer review, and evaluation into all their processes.
- President thinks the first step is determining if this is something that the student body wants to do right now and she thinks a forum might be the best way to do this. She thinks it's important to keep the people that are at Council, but not on it, involved.
- Student Life talked about how after visiting other schools he feels this is less important than before. He doesn't think that they should expand the number of people on Council. He didn't agree with appointing cabinets. He doesn't think that the Constitution should be fluid, but that it innately should be a little broader so that there's flexibility. He talked about having people that aren't in the government process being in charge of restructuring. He talked about fixing the governance. He also brought up the idea of an intercollegiate Conference on governance.
- Jewett thinks that maybe these conversations should be started in the house teams and smaller groups before they're brought to Council.
- President talked about her sophomore year and how students reacted strongly to the proposal of a point system because they thought it was already going to be enacted.
- Socos thinks that instead of House teams and student leaders, that there's a lot of value in asking the students that aren't as involved.
- Academics is worried that the student body has a short attention span for these things. She thinks the conversation needs to start from the beginning with the students.
- Town Students talked about having continuity in VSA and looking at past Councils and what they've looked at so that we're not bringing up the same issues.
- Davison talked about finding out how to get people interested without the drama component.

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- Noyes thinks that they'll get more voices involved by talking to freshman and making sure everyone knows how to get involved.
- 2015 talked about educating the student body on the current system before changing it.
- Cushing thinks that they need to iron out the smaller issues because from what they saw on the trip, their overall structure is really quite good.
- Town Students stressed that we need to make the process very planned and formalized.
- 2014 discussed how we need to bring an idea to the students before they'll simply start talking about it. He doesn't believe in looking at other schools' failings and basing our success on that.
- Davison talked about how this year we're doing a good job because the right people were elected. We should look at other school's failings to learn how we can improve.
- Student Life brought up Bryn Mawr's system of voting on campus wide issues once a semester. He also touched on how getting people involved is a little like pulling teeth, especially with dining which is supposedly a hot topic. He doesn't think we need more committees.
- Cushing stated that he thinks we need to protect what we have now after seeing other schools.
- Joss asked if this is the place to bring up conflicts in terms of house team/res life positions. President said that if this is affecting our efficiency and positions, then yes.
- Jewett asked why creating committees and focus groups isn't a good idea. He thinks this system works well.
- President thought that a task force could potentially work well.
- Davison talked about making sure there is a space for people to talk about this.
- Operations talked about where each sector of VSA needs to be talking about this. She suggested a "what is the ideal student government" forum.
- Town Students thought that the structure of this Sunday Council is very important to look at.
- 2014 thinks that many of these conversations have come up because we're a residential campus. He commented on how being a residential campus is very important to Vassar.
- President said we need to think about timeline, goals, and next steps now.
- Operations talked about trusting each other's opinions and not doing everything in the absolute open.
- 2012 almost threw a coup at Middlebury hahahaha

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- 7 Bylaws concerning BHP: Article V, Section 6(C).....Davison (10 min)
 - This will change it from a chair to co-chairs.
 - This motion passed with all in favor.
- 8 The Alcohol Task Force
 - They have been meeting regularly and they're getting together a list of people who will be involved in the focus groups. There will be 6, with 12 people (2 from each class) and 2 control groups. They are also getting 40 students to keep a journal-ish thing to look at the situation. It's a closed committee. They'll fix the typo!
 - The motion is to adopt the charter of the alcohol task force. This passed with all in favor.
 - ATF
- 9 Open Discussion
 - 2012: 210 days until graduation. She met with the ABC board and she stressed how awesome we are and how proud she is to go here.
 - President talked about the Tanenbaum scholarship and keeping up with awesome alums.
 - THs thanked everyone who participated in Volunteer for a day at Vassar. He thinks a lot of people came that don't usually come to campus, but he thinks there could have been more outreach done in different areas, like the City of Poughkeepsie and The Alana Center. He thinks that a large part of the community was neglected in this day that was about the community itself.
 - President thinks working with Opportunities Community is a good way of fixing this next year.
 - Main brought up some issues about workers on campus. Recently, a grounds supervisor was forced into retirement because he doesn't have a degree in horticulture. The people Main talked to were really upset about this. Betty and her helper in the copy center: her helper was taken away two years ago and now they've replaced her printer with a less functional one. Town Students thinks that staff issues should definitely be considered in the restructuring process and thanked Main fro bringing it up. 2014 suggested someone from VSA finding out more about the employment process and historically if students have had any voice in this. President said that this is an exec duty. Noyes suggested talking to administrators about this to make sure we have the facts straight. Socos pointed out that it is important to keep talking to the workers so that we know their perspective. Student Life wants to know how you approach this because we're the ones that complain to the administration and this is part of why they make these decisions. We are losing control of

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the results if we keep putting more and more pressure. THs talked about having conversations directly with the B&G staff. Talk to Student Life if you want to talk about this more! President highlighted Student Life's point that we need to have thought about solutions when we bring up problems.

-2012 talked about assigning student grants and community and using resources that people don't know about. Halloween is on Saturday!! \$5 for seniors and \$6 for underclassmen. Prices go up at the door. Pizza will come earlier that night. There will be a chocolate fountain, a fancy photo booth, a costume contest hosted by Terbear, and the party goes until 2 a.m. The Fun-Run will be at 11. She also talked about how she hopes the task force will create another buzz about alcohol because the numbers are worse this year than last year.

-2015: They're first event will be Friday, 2015 and 2013 are hosting a Mug Night called Blacklight Mugnight.

-Raymond: The haunted house is in Rocky on Friday and it'll be cool!

-The meeting was adjourned with all in favor sometime around 9 p.m.