

VSA Council Minutes
November 16, 2008

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:06PM.

2. Attendance

Guests: Andrew Bennett (Student Asst. to the President), Matthew Brock (Misc), Brian Farkas (Misc), Julianne Herts (Misc), Emma Mitchell (Misc), Molly Turpin (Misc), Harrison Brody (Misc), Erica Seigneur (MICA), Jeremy Bright (MICA), Alex Bello (MICA), Katrina Mateo (MICA), Adam Greenberg (CIRC), Ashley Money (Sustainability), Erika Noll (CHOICE), Huadi Zhang (CCET), Todd Densen (MICA), Max Ernst (DAC), Leslie Hamilton (Act Out), Anabel Graff (ViCE), Allie St. Jules (ViCE).

3. Consent Agenda

The President presented Council with the consent agenda, which included the adoption of minutes from 11/9/08 and the allocation of \$187.50 from Collaboration to CHOICE. No objections were made, and the consent agenda was adopted as presented.

4. Committee Chair Visit – Katie Hite and Lisa Collins

Committee chairs Katie Hite and Lisa Collins explained that they have been empowered by President Hill to examine ways in which students are thriving at Vassar and to devise policies and procedures that encourage excellence. As part of CIE, a joint committee of students, faculty and administrators, they have recently developed two policy recommendations. The first of these recommendations, a statement supporting the admission of undocumented students, has already received great support from both the VSA and the administration. The second recommendation, which favors increasing access for community college and transfer students, reflects the committee's belief that it is "extremely difficult to enter Vassar" for those who are not first-year applicants. CIE felt that, as a college, "we weren't being equitable" in terms of entry-point access. The committee is hoping to follow in the footsteps of many peer institutions by initiating a series of "cultural audits" during the second semester. These audits will consist of small focus groups of students, led by administrators, and will involve discussions of student life on campus. Several potential student facilitators have already been contacted.

5. Announcements

a. Commencement Memorandum

The President presented a memorandum, drafted by Exec after its discussions with President Hill, regarding Commencement speaker selection. He explained that the college hopes to establish a more competitive process for bringing in speakers. Cappy has suggested that the VSA generate a proposal of this nature so that she can introduce various ideas to the Board of Trustees and ultimately "move this issue forward".

6. Reports

a. Committee Report – Sustainability

Ashley Money, a representative from Sustainability, explained that the committee has met once this past month. She explained that there are usually two meetings per month, one of which

is open to the general student body. The committee has been working to complete the Vassar Sustainability Report, and kicked off the dorm energy challenge at 12am on Sunday. The challenge will continue until December 14th.

b. Committee Report – CIRC

Dan Savage, of CIRC, noted that the committee has met twice thus far this semester, once with the Board of Trustees' Investment Responsibility Committee to review the intended divestment from companies operating in Darfur. He explained that CIRC does most of its work in the Spring, and will begin meeting more regularly when proxy voting begins.

c. Committee Report - CCAC

Allison Bloom, a rep from CCAC, explained that the committee has met twice so far. Discussions have focused on what the committee has accomplished in the past, as well as its goals for the future. A primary concern has been the community shuttle and the extent to which it meets student needs. The committee has also been assessing senior projects and the representation of VSA community orgs on the "Get to Know Your Own Neighbors" website. CCAC has also begun evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the "Good Neighbors Program", and is hoping to devising means of encouraging discussion among students engaged in community action.

d. Committee Report – DAC

Max Ernst explained that the committee has expressed concern about increased use of cocaine, LSD and acid on campus, and is exploring the ways in which ACDC coordinates its party menu. As of DAC's October 27th meeting, Health Services had reported the highest incidence of drug and alcohol-related issues among members of the Class of 2011. The overall rate of medical calls relevant to substance-use, however, has decreased this year. Tobacco use will be discussed at the next meeting; DAC has observed that many students have "little knowledge" about the sanctions regarding smoking near buildings. Max announced that Chris Roellke is looking to become more involved with the committee, and may generate a special sub-committee in the near future.

e. Committee Report - CCET

CCET's representative, Huadi Zhang, announced that the committee has met five times this semester, and has been devising a proposal for a new committee on academic technologies (CAT). He noted that CCET is currently a "problem-solver", but that its members would like to formulate a committee that is more policy-oriented. The new proposed committee will simplify its membership and ensure representation from different academic areas.

7. Allocation of \$1000 from Council Discretionary to Act Out

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$1000 from Council Discretionary to Act Out for the Marriage Equality Rally in NYC. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

18. Allocation of \$1200 from Mid-Hudson Valley Fund to ViCE

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$1200 from the Mid-Hudson Valley Fund to ViCE for its screening of "Quantum of Solace" at the Roosevelt Cinema. Representatives from ViCE

explained that a bus will be made available to take the first 100 signups to the cinema. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

9. Endorsement of Transfer Students Policy

The VP for Student Life moved to endorse the Transfer Students Policy, as presented by the Committee on Inclusion and Excellence. This policy represents an incremental expansion of need-blind admissions, and is a means of increasing access for Community College transfer students. THs was opposed to Student Life's motion, though all others were in favor, and the policy was endorsed.

10. Council Action 23-4: A Resolution in Support of Vassar Workers

The President moved to approve Council Action 23-4: A Resolution in Support of Vassar Workers, as introduced at the previous Council meeting. Raymond inquired about whether the document might reference to the sort of healthcare benefits that might be made available to Vassar workers. The President explained, however, that there is not yet enough information available to discuss such benefits in the resolution. Ferry moved to amend the first resolution to read, "...fair wage increase and fair benefits." 2009 and TAs criticized this language, expressing concern that the term "fair" might be too subjective. With input from 2010, Ferry modified his amendment to read: "...fair compensation package." All were in favor of Ferry's amendment, and the motion passed. All were then in favor of the President's motion, and the resolution was approved.

12. Open Discussion

- 2009 announced that 193 days remained until graduation.
- Raymond expressed concern about the robbery that occurred on campus this past Friday night. He recommended that the administration tighten perimeter security.
- Jeremy Bright, joined by five other representatives of the "Keep Coke" campaign, presented a resolution urging Council to overturn its recent approval of the "Kick Coke" resolution. He and the other campaign members expressed support for the continued sale of Coca-Cola products at Vassar, and they showcased 300 signatures from Vassar students and employees who were also opposed to "kicking" Coke. The "Keep Coke" resolution specifically requests an open forum discussion of the issue, and asks that the VSA Council repeal its November 2nd decision on the "Kick Coke" resolution until it obtains a relevant referendum from the student body. TAs, 2009 and Joss, among others, defended the Council's earlier decision; they cited the high volume of student responses collected and analyzed by Council members, and explained that each member's vote ultimately reflected the opinions of the majority of his or her constituents.

2011 moved to call to question. Noyes, Raymond, Student Life, Strong, Cushing, 2010, TA, Operations, Finance, TH and Jewett were not in favor; SoCo, 2009, Academics, Activities, 2012, Ferry, Joss, 2011 and Lathrop were in favor, and the motion failed. Noyes then moved to table the resolution until the Council's next meeting; 2009, Cushing, SoCo, 2010, TA, Academics, Finance, Activities, 2012, TH, Ferry, Strong, Joss, 2011 and Jewett were not in favor; Noyes, Student Life, Lathrop, Main and Raymond were in favor, and the motion failed. After further clarification and discussion among Council members, Joss moved to re-consider tabling the issue. 2009, 2011, Ferry, 2012, Activities and SoCo were not in favor, though Raymond, Strong, Cushing, Noyes, 2010,

Academics, Student Life, Operations, Finance, TH, Joss, Jewett, Lathrop and Main were in favor, and the motion passed. The “Keep Coke” resolution was thus tabled until the November 23rd Council meeting.

13. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 9:49 PM.