

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Minutes for November 4, 2012

"We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance character, and character, hope."
-Romans 5:3-4

- 1 Call to Order
 - The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.
- 2 Attendance.....Operations
 - All here.
- 3 Consent Agenda
 - a. \$500 from Discretionary to Merely Players
 - b. \$478 from Capital to Polo
 - c. \$345 from Discretionary to Polo
 - d. \$2,800 from Conference to HEL
 - e. \$600 from Speakers to Business Club
 - All adopted. Operations made a note that the Minutes from last week are attached to the agenda for review per request.
- 4 Forum with Betsy Eismeier, Vice President for Finance and Administration and Marianne Begemann, Dean of Strategic Planning and Academic Resources.....(45 min)
 - Betsy has been working in this sector for a couple of years and Marianne has been working since last January. She asked that we run information by her before putting any quotes out there.
 - Moody gives Vassar a credit rating every year. They have generous support from alumni, research funding, strong national demand and thus are highly selective. Vassar lacks economy of scale, we depend on student charges/state appropriations. They don't have state funding which is good and bad.
 - 53% of operating revenue comes from students' parents. This statistic includes financial aid. 32% comes from endowments (use of financial assets). 9% comes from the annual fund and private giving.
 - Vassar got a good investment return, above average, compared to other peer institutions of similar or superior relative wealth over a ten year period. Below 7.5% investment return, on average, over this period.
 - Vassar had an above average spending rate at almost 6% (about 5.8%) over the last ten years. We spend at a high rate despite the recession, compared to peer institutions. The goal is to get Vassar annual endowment spending rate down to 5.5% and eventually to 5%.
 - There's always a stream of money coming in from alumni that adds to growth.
 - Vassar grew more slowly in terms of compound growth, lower than average compared to peer institutions over the last ten years.

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-Priorities as we move forward are access and affordability (financial aid), program quality and sustainability (compensation and staffing), stewardship of the campus (science facilities, deferring maintenance, shared challenge of daily maintenance).

-The distribution of family income of financial aid recipients: Almost 50% of our students come from families making less than \$120,000. On average they pay around \$14,000. 39% are paying full. 60% are receiving financial aid. Average pay is \$30,528. There's a bit of a public relations problem with the “sticker prices” of colleges when in fact a lot of schools are widely offering financial aid. Trying to communicate that they are trying to be affordable and provide access—getting this message out there—uses a lot of income from the endowment. It is an important goal to maintain this kind of makeup in the future. The “shopping sheet” is a type of plan they will send out to prospective families explaining the financial aid package.

-Their operating expense/income every year is \$158.2 million. 63% goes towards compensation; most of expenses go towards people because education is about people. 28% goes to supplies and expenses.

- \$99.4 million is spent on Compensation: 30% goes to faculty, 19% to administrative salaries, 19% to staff and service wages, and 29% to benefits, 3% go to other salaries (students, etc.)
- Health insurance is a big issue, pressure from peer institutions. Health insurance is the biggest one, and they have a very strong package here. Retirement benefits are another big category; social security, contribution to metro north, etc. are all part of valued compensation for employees.
- One big change after the recession was finding a way to shrink employment on campus. They went through some layoffs during 2009/2012 because that was one of the only ways they could maintain control of the spending that they have.

-In order to reach their annual investment target, they borrow money. They want to use more of their operating budget to support capital projects instead of borrowing money. She feels that improving bathroom stacks, windows, etc. is very powerful. There will probably be a pause on residence hall fixes in the near future at least with major renovations, but hopefully in the next two years they will do bathrooms in Strong and Raymond. A lot of these dollars are spent on things that aren't seen.

- Student Life asked if after a period of a few years this kind of spending would drop off if our campus reaches a certain level of modernity. Some renovations, like the work on Ely and Rocky will last at least 50 years, whereas buildings like the apartments always need constant maintenance and they get beat up. We'll never get rid of having a 200 year old buildings.

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- The Misc. asked a question about debt. They explained in incomprehensible (to me) economic terms. Something about debt being spent down over a period of years.
-The science program will support interdisciplinary work within the sciences all together. Sanders will be renovated, New England will become a space for psychology, dry lab spaces and faculty offices, Olmsted will be renovated, and a wet lab building attached to Olmsted will have heavy duty research and teaching spaces for chemistry, biology, genetic science, etc. There will be new paths, new plantings, etc. There will be quite a bit of utility work between the president’s house and the chapel. The passage through Olmsted is closing, the new building will be a handicapped accessible pathway from north to south campus. Mudd will be demolished. \$36 million of deferred maintenance.
- Someone asked when Mudd was built. A lot of the solar activities, “cutting edge” energy aspects have not worked since the day it was built in the 60s.
- TAs asked about the multidisciplinary spaces. They contracted an architect to create a report after talking to faculty and students. They don’t have the results from that study yet. They will begin to match dollars available with space needs. The interdisciplinary programs will be in the Old Laundry Building for several years until the end of renovation.

-Jan-Jun 2013: The small white house on the other side of Raymond from South gate will be the site for construction management and field offices. They will put up fencing around the site for the new construction so that the passageway for Olmsted will be open. They will place a temporary way of crossing over the stream that trucks can drive over later in the spring semester. Olmsted parking lot will be closed. Storm water management zone will be created next to the Chapel used for runoff, cleaning etc. In the spring of 2014 they will close off the Olmsted passageway and within a year it will be done. More employees will be parking in North and South lot. The sidewalk has been built between South lot and campus.

-Challenges of Daily Maintenance: photos of fake blood splattered on walls, on cubbies, in bathrooms on Halloween night. Left to a custodian by himself on duty; he asked how we can call this a community. Often this is taken as a personal affront to many of our maintenance staff. The manager of custodial services said it’s not all about Main, but every weekend somewhere on campus there are issues like this.

-Activities thinks that the custodial staff shouldn’t have to clean that type of offense. The staff are professionals and feel responsible for the floors etc.—keeping the room safe. They have to clean it up. How can you hold students accountable?

-2013 talked about how they did discuss damage in debriefing of the event, they want to know how to prevent this in the future. He will be sending a letter of apology to B&G recognizing that it’s not ok to destroy spaces that way and to expect them to clean it up.

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They've talked about how large events are branded and how to change this. They want to let Main know how to be accountable to their house and report people disrespecting it. They didn't have anyone officially stationed on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floors for Halloween night so that might need to be changed. He thinks from day one of being on campus, students need to talk have more discussions around these issues.

-Joss noted that he's had success with not having damage in his dorms this year. He thinks that staff's voices need to be heard more clearly through the administration to the students. He thinks it's important to raise awareness, like maybe send those pictures out to the campus body. Betsy noted problems like urinating in bottles and leaving them around in different spaces. She thinks that this is a question of some students being ill and needing help. She had no idea that this type of thing happens and is totally shocked and at a loss for words. Marianne wondered if there's some type of lack of community feeling that stands for something. She's heard other institutions have a feeling of standing for something.

-There was a motion to extend time 20 min and it passed with all in favor.

-Jewett talked about including maintenance staff in the community.

-2016 thinks that showing students what is happening might be the issue. He feels that the people vandalizing these spaces aren't the ones that live there. He feels that one thing that Vassar has that other schools don't have is the ability to swipe into other buildings. At other schools you can only go into your own dorm. This creates more accountability in dorms of who is coming in and out.

-Raymond wondered if there was an email sent out after destructive weekends of how much the repairs are going to cost so that students realize there is a cost to these actions. The fact that Main will have to pay for these damages needs to be publicized to the whole campus. Betsy thinks that they are discussing whether to solely charge Main.

-2015 was at Smith this past weekend and had signs in their dining hall about not stealing plates. Honor Code is another thing that many other schools have that Vassar doesn't. We have student conduct, but no honor code. From an EMS perspective, she thinks that maybe giving people a means to clean up their own vomit might make them. After a student signs an RMA they are contacted through Baldwin or D.B. Brown to follow up.

-THs thinks that it is the job of each student to hold each other accountable, especially coming from the House Teams about cleaning up your own vomit, not letting things be damaged. She also thinks people should put a face and a name to the people cleaning their bathrooms every day. Betsy said last fall they made an effort to get custodial teams into the houses. They tried to put pictures of the teams in each house, their names, and the phone number of the supervisor. The pictures she was sent were from Thursday night. She does think that the things that happen in the common rooms and spaces are provocative and

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that there’s a pattern developing that disturbs her. She understands parties and cleaning up after them, but not recent actions.

-Phil thinks that these actions are severe abuse and students need to be held accountable by charging people in the dorm, shared among everybody. Marianne also feels there’s an unwillingness to enforce a rule. Often we don’t want to be the one to enforce a rule. We think it’s a person’s right to do whatever they want. She thinks it’s important to support each other as a community.

-2013 thinks it’s important to know when we’re a community. During the day we’re pretty good, but during the night and weekends people seem to lose this perception.

-Academics likes the idea of raising awareness about specific events that are happening. Even though we have pride and a sense of place at Vassar, we lack a sense of space, pride in our spaces. He thinks maybe publicizing these images in public parts of Main might create outrage and help improve ownership of space.

-Activities encouraged House Teams to have a conversation this week about dorm damage. Tapping into the house team member on every floor of every building is a good way of enforcing rules. He also thinks training on these types of issues at the beginning of the year would be helpful.

-There was a motion to extend time 5 min. and it passed with all in favor.

-Joss asked about the CWA. Betsy noted that a group has been meeting. There are conversations going on about structure. We’re not quite at the end of negotiating. They hope they can get the contract settled soon. They have a strong commitment to this employee group and they represent very important positions throughout the college. They’ve tried to be fair in terms of pay and benefits, but there’s one little aspect that they’re trying to change. In general, employees are eager to work here and we have good retention.

-2013 asked about athletics and how Marianne’s office works with them. It’s confusing to say the least. Athletics and Physical Education report directly to the athletic director. This doesn’t include Rugby, Rowing, or varsity club sports, or VSA club sports. There’s a faculty athletic representative and a few other members that meet and talk about issues of probation, satisfying NCAA regulations. It’s less organized than it might be.

5 Forum with Vassar College Emergency Medical Services.....(30 min)

-Jess Metlay is the captain of EMS and is a senior. Two other members came to present. They’ve been under the number of calls compared to other years this year. They’ve had 43 calls in September as opposed to something in the 50s last year. She wants to caution that numbers aren’t the full picture. Doesn’t mean things aren’t happening. Oct.: 34 calls as opposed to 33 last year. Halloween the day of Sat. had a total of 12 calls which is a pattern that has continued the past few years. Usually during the party hours.

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-Activities asked about how having fewer 10-2 events this year has affected EMS. 12-3 is when she would expect to get most of her calls so having events that encourage drinking might cause there to be more calls or that don't foster drinking might cause less calls.

-Jewett asked if they get more calls from certain dorms or from parties. She can't really answer this because often you'll get a call from a dorm, but the cause could be from another place.

-2015 asked about a certain weekend with a lot of calls and no programming. She likes to note that just because people call doesn't mean they go to the hospital. Often towards the beginning of the year people call more because it's the first time they've been drinking or dealt with a drunk person. She thinks that if there's nothing to do except party there will be more calls. Calls can mean anything from a wrapped ankle to trauma, it's not always drinking. On their website they post the breakdown for each month of what category the calls fall in each month.

-Academics wondered if there are more calls stemming from Senior Housing or Villard room type parties.

-2013 thanked them for doing an awesome job on Halloween. He commends the work that they do as nonpaid students. Do they ever find difficulty running into people they met on call in other situations. The idea is that you try not to “know” the person that you talk to on a call, forget the name immediately after. People tend not to approach them after a call.

-Academics asked about changes in EMS training, the number of hours and decreased enrollment. It is twice a week 6:30-9:30 and has been increased an hour. The actual workload hasn't increased that much. They have 12 students this year and it's been a lot higher in the past (almost double), so this is a concern that they're working on. It's the first year of these changes so they're still talking about it.

-Student Life asked what info is online and shared with what offices. They publish based on a month to month basis. She sends info to health services, Baldwin, broken down by disposition. They don't distribute any other information. Certain people receive reports of the calls. They don't report calls' details online.

-Operations asked how they feel we can better support programs throughout the year. She thinks we can always work on programming, make sure students know how to help a friend, etc. She thinks giving this information out during orientation is a lot of information to put into freshmen's heads. Continual programming during other years, house climate, and other areas need to be supporting this program.

-Lathrop asked about a \$1500 charge in the hospital and the Good Samaritan policy. She acknowledges that financial burden is a huge thing. Sometimes the health insurance may cover this fee, a larger issue with health care. Does she think having that charge is a

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deterrent from people calling. She likes to think that no, but she's sure that's been a concern for some people.

-2015 added that it's important not to mix the message about calling EMS. The charge shouldn't be talked about too much because someone's life is way more important.

-THs asked if going to the hospital is covered by the Vassar Health Care Plan. Vassar insurance covers \$3500 of the \$5000.

-Student Life thanked them for the service they provide to the community.

-2016 asked about the fact that a lot of international students are nervous about being EMSed because it might cause problems with their Visas or Green cards. International support might know more about this, she is unsure.

-Jewett made a motion to recess for 5 min. This motion failed with a majority.

6 Executive Board Reports

a. Student Life..... (7 min)

-He went to the Seven Sisters Conference and got a lot of good ideas about student climate. Chris Roellke encourages us to bring a resolution to Council about security reports. Hook Up will be meeting this week with Randy Cornelius charting their course for a campus wide survey. There's another campus climate forum coming up. A few specific ideas: bathroom newsletter style papering on issues of vocabulary of talking about race, oppression, activist movements. Not something that requires a huge amount of effort. A holy grail of Mt. Holyoke and their orientation committee discussions.

b. Academics.....(7 min)

-We have a functional network of majors committees. Use them: disseminating/gathering information, the more we talk to them the more institutionalized they will become.
-Re-prioritization of academics committees. Scheduling and curricular agendas. Talking about a social consciousness coursework requirement, lots of components, interest in offering a critical whiteness class.
-Newsletter, misc. projects, consensual relationships policy.
-Next Meeting Dean Chenette will definitely be here. He sends his apologies for last time. Prepare for this conversation.

6 Student Space Update.....President (5 min)

-Focus groups took place this weekend. Over 60 people participated in 6 different groups. They had really good conversation in all of the groups. They started broad and became narrower. Probably for the rest of the semester they will focus on consolidating, analyzing, and interpreting information. Hopefully they'll get more concrete information soon.

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- 7 Seven Sisters Conference Debrief.....Operations (15 min)
- Student Life, 2015, Cushing and Operations attended. They learned about the history, had discussions about women and leadership, women’s education, etc. Most of them have a Senate. Bryn Mawr is self-governed with huge forums. They had differing ideas of being governed which was interesting to here. They learned great general things about working together as Seven Sisters; Operations sits on the Board and the idea is to be able to use each other as resources for problems that come up, information, etc. Maybe in the future they can have different types of programming to work together. She’s really excited about it. Next year the conference will be here. She’s getting help from the girls that planned it the last two years. She thinks they can have some good conversations about gender.
 - Cushing talked about his breakout session about being a student of color in leadership positions. A student from Bryn Mawr narrated a change over her 4 years from an all white executive board to an all students of color board. They talked about encouraging students of color to run. They talked about the idea of how students of color think they are perceived by other students on campus.
 - 2015 went to a breakout session on social justice. They talked about different orientation programs and starting new conversations. Made her rethink her role as someone in a Seven Sisters School.
- 8 Open Discussion
- 2013: 208 days until commencement. Still waiting to finalize Halloween numbers. They think there were at least 1500+ people at Halloween. Now Senior Class Council will be working with the CDO and supporting athletics by working to advertise and promote each teams senior days.
 - Joss talked about the Women’s empowerment forum that happened Thursday. A lot of people were interested in looking at the composition of VSA in terms of women and hook up culture.
 - Cushing reminded everyone to vote tomorrow. He also made a motion to adjourn.
 - The meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m. with all in favor.