

VSA Council Minutes

November 9, 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), Anabel Graff (ViCE), Nagehan Taeim (VISA), Arjun Agarwala (VISA), Samin Shebab (VISA), Jenny VanWyk (Habitat), Brooke Widman (Habitat), Amory Meltzer (CCP), Stephen Cheng (Kick Coke), Lauren Sutherland (Misc), Gerald Gilligan (Iced Brew), Shaina Horowitz (Polo Team), Katie Mancher (VJU), Rachel Glicksman (VJU).

3. Consent Agenda

The President presented Council with the consent agenda, which included the following: the adoption of minutes from 11/2/08; the allocation of \$500 from the Mid-Hudson Valley Fund to Iced Brew. No objections were made, and the consent agenda was adopted as presented.

4. Senior Officer Visit – Rachel Kitzinger and Betsy Eismeier

Rachel Kitzinger, Dean of Planning and Academic Affairs, and Betsy Eismeier, Vice President for Finance Administration, presented Council with an overview of Vassar's current financial situation. The Board of Trustees has just generated a series of new budgeting guidelines, laboring under the assumption that the endowment will regain some value by July. Current plans dictate that the college's budget for the 2009-2010 school year will be \$6.5 million less than for the current academic year.

Despite this financial strain, Vassar will not modify its new need-blind policy. The college is mindful of the fact that the economic climate has placed additional strain upon students' families, but remains committed to meeting need-based aid for its current students. According to Betsy and Rachel, substantive changes will be seen in policies regarding employee compensation and physical plant operation. Most projects involving construction of new buildings and renovation of existing facilities will be canceled or postponed. Wage raises are highly unlikely, but as the college is committed to maintaining competitive salaries for its hard-working employees, it is aiming to avoid pay decreases. Currently vacant positions will be evaluated, and those deemed less necessary will not be filled.

Senior Officers are beginning to evaluate and restructure their divisions, and the administration is working to generate ideas about how to run everything more efficiently. It will take many years for the endowment to recover from this sudden decrease, and the college welcomes student input about ways in which to trim costs on campus.

Rachel noted that one issue recently discussed is the ordering of library books, as new volumes can be quite costly, but are necessary to maintain Vassar's comprehensive collection. 2:2 and need-blind policies for international students are currently "off the table", however, and future cost/benefit analyses of the college's programs and services may result in some restructuring of its summer offerings.

5. Announcements

a. Fines

The VP for Finance announced that the Axies, HEL, Hunger Action and Vassar Devils had been fined \$25 for late submission of Org Review forms. NARSAD and Vassar Bikes have been fined \$50 for failure to submit said forms.

Amnesty International, EMS, QCVC and 2010 have each been fined \$25 for failure to submit their Org Reports. Vassar Green Party has been fined \$10 for late submission of its Org Report.

b. Tasty Tuesdays

The President announced that there will now be local vendors tabling in the College Center every Tuesday. As part of an effort to continue the success of “Meet Me in Poughkeepsie” and to help local business, these new “Tasty Tuesdays” will continue through the rest of the year.

6. Reports

a. Committee Report – Drug and Alcohol

The VP for Operations read a committee report submitted by DAC representative Max Ernst. Max announced that the committee has met once so far, and noted that incidences of drug and alcohol-related medical problems have decreased this year. In general, however, “harder drug use” has been observed this semester, especially use of LSD, cocaine and acid.

More specifically, the DAC has discussed policies regarding EMS and ID checks at the Halloween party. The committee has also been reviewing the quality of ACDC’s party menu and the costs of items therein, and student tobacco use will be examined at the next meeting

b. Committee Report – CCP

Amory Meltzer, of CCP, reported that the committee has met five times so far. It has been discussing the launch of a new Media Studies JYA program in London, as well as policies for low-enrollment classes. Regulations relevant to class size *are* in existence, but are not typically enforced; the college will now begin cutting courses that do not satisfy these enrollment qualifications. CCP has also approved new courses for Latin American Studies and signed off on an updated academic calendar. Qualitative Analysis (QA) courses, CEQs, class schedules and GPA requirements for JYA are all undergoing review.

c. ViCE Report

Anabel Graff, of ViCE, reported that the MSTRKRFT concert went very well, despite some issues with the band’s demands. She also announced that After Hours with Jason Anderson had taken place earlier that day, and that Vassar Jazz Combo will be performing on Tuesday. Film League will be showing “The Dark Knight” next week, and a musical version of Jurassic Park will be presented by NoViCE and Special Events in the near future. Vice Music is currently working on an event for the last day of classes, as well as a large event in February.

After the success of “Meet Me in Poughkeepsie”, ViCE is also looking to initiate more activities in the Poughkeepsie community. It is currently exploring the idea of renting a theater at the Roosevelt to screen more films.

The VPs for Finance and Activities commended ViCE for its efforts this year. The group has been highly organized, and has been collaborating well with groups like Vassar Greens and

the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life. Anabel urged VSA members to attend her office hours on Thursdays from 1:30-3:30 PM.

d. Exec Report - President

President Hill has reported that this year's VSA is "the most productive" she's seen in her time at Vassar. The VSA Exec Board met with the Board of Trustees over October Break, and is looking to pave the way for more student involvement with the Trustees in the future. The Exec met with Student Affairs to discuss the Amethyst Initiative and the role of alcohol on campus. The Board has been very supportive of need-blind policies for international students.

The President also sits on the Priorities and Planning Committee with Student Life, and reported that P&P is focused on modifying next year's budget. He has recommended that the college maintain all current positions and avoid filling vacant ones. Short term changes are currently being made, but longer term modifications – involving the structure of the curriculum and the ways in which the college is run – must be made in the coming years.

The VSA's resolution on gender neutral housing was unanimously endorsed by CCL, and the new policy is moving forward. The President has also been collaborating with Sustainability on carbon neutrality, and has been working with Betsy Eismeier to assess the state of local businesses, given the effects of nearby construction and the current economic climate.

7. Allocation of \$1400 from Mid-Hudson Valley Fund to Polo Team

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$1400 from the Mid-Hudson Valley Fund to the Polo Team for its November-December Friday Night Polo Game Series. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

8. Allocation of \$1500 from Council Discretionary to VISA

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$1500 from Council Discretionary to VISA for Kaleidoscope. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

9. Allocation of \$1000 from Conference Fund to VJU

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$1000 from the Conference Fund to VJU for its Challah for Hunger Event. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

10. Allocation of \$3500 from Council Discretionary to Habitat for Humanity

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$3500 from Council Discretionary to Habitat for Humanity for its Spring Break trip, in which a group of students will travel to Biloxi, Mississippi to participate in a build. Brooke Widman and Jenny VanWyk, of Habitat, explained that "post-Katrina work is still very much in progress" in the Biloxi area. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

11. Council Action 23-5: A Resolution in Support of Vassar Workers

The President presented Council with Council Action 23-5: A Resolution in Support of Vassar Workers, which will be up for discussion and approval at the next meeting. Kathy Bradford, of SCIU, urged the college to work with its employees to negotiate medical pension insurance and fair wage increases. The President explained that he has spoken with President Hill and the Director of Human Resources about this resolution, and reported that they "do not think it is unreasonable".

12. Unfreeze Premium Brew

The VP for Activities moved to unfreeze the activity of Premium Brew. The org has been working with the VPs for Finance and Activities, and has not only recommitted to its mission statement, but has also developed a plan to get out of debt. The VP for Activities added that Premium Brew “promptly submitted” its recent Org Report. All were in favor of unfreezing the organization, and the motion passed.

13. 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. It will be put to a vote at next Sunday’s meeting.

13. Council Action 23-4: International and Transfer Need Blind Resolution

The VP for Student Life presented Council Action 23-4, to be discussed and voted upon at the following Council meeting. The President explained that there are only eight institutions that are currently need-blind for international students, and expressed his desire to see Vassar become one of these leaders. 2009 felt this resolution was “premature, at this point”, and recommended that Council more informally ask CAFA to review the relevant numbers. Others felt that it would be “irresponsible” to place this kind of financial burden on the administration, given Vassar’s current financial situation. The President expressed hope that this resolution will be “a catalyst”, as it will place this issue directly on CAFA’s agenda.

12. Open Discussion

- 2009 announced that 200 days remained until graduation.
- Noyes announced that free samples of Coke will be distributed in the College Center this week. The President responded that the Kick Coke resolution has moved on to CCL, and the committee is currently reviewing it. The VP for Operations announced that she has been in communication with Triple J Vending, and assured Council members that Triple J Vending machines will remain on campus, regardless of what happens with the Kick Coke campaign.
- The President announced that a student representative to the Student Wellness Advisory Committee is needed.

13. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 9:04 PM.