

## **VSA Council Minutes**

*December 6, 2009*

### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05

### **2. Attendance**

### **3. Consent Agenda**

#### **a. Approval of the Minutes from 11/29**

2011 called the bluff of the Notetaker and the VP of Operations, noting that the notes were not actually up yet. The President glared at the Notetaker. The minutes were not approved.

### **4. Announcements**

These were skipped and absorbed into the Operations Report.

### **5. Special Guest: Committee on Inclusion and Excellence; Lisa Collins and Katie Hite**

Professor Collins began by saying that this was the end of their 3rd year as a committee, which is mandate drive and an ad hoc task force. They work on policy such as giving Poughkeepsie High School students a fighting chance to get the education they need and make sure that their apps are reviewed like all others. They are also looking at allowing transfer students and community college students to have a chance. On November 19th they authored an open letter to Cappy wanting to re-affirm their support for need-blind. (Knock-knock, council. Knock-knock.) Currently the dean of the faculty has been altering course releases, but he has pretty much let them do their thing.

Professor Hite brought up a recent Cultural Audit on which the committee had been working. The Audit sought to answer: "What would it take for you to thrive at Vassar?" The questions were very broad with focus groups. Raymond, who sits on the committee, noted that they would be using the House Fellow program to spread the survey to the rest of the community, followed by the rest of the world...or at least moodle.

The session leaders were trained by an important individual with the last name Dressler. The sessions were "extraordinary" and seemed to be headed to the right place. Unfortunately they didn't want to share too much, as the results are apparently rather powerful. They weren't sure if Vassar could handle the truth, yet. Maybe soon. Mostly the results seemed to be about alienation and isolation on a campus that prides itself on autonomy.

Ferry noted that in Ferry, a house of about 20 students who live co-operatively, 80 percent of them felt isolated at times and felt lost on campus. 2010 agreed that the school has not done a great job of reaching out to their students. Strong noted that she has often had these feelings and it was great to meet people who felt the same way. It was incredible.

Noyes thanked them for being active, and noted that she too has felt a bit lost. As an international, she really wishes that she had hung out with the internationals more her freshmen year, however, now that those fleeting days of innocence have drifted into the realm of memory, she is forced to associate with her current circle of friends. She then encouraged them to allow

VSA officials onto the committee.

Main was curious about their stance towards international students, noting that things like loans are often unequal. Hite responded, saying that it is in discussion and the issue has been raised to the admins.

2011 felt that the upcoming retreat with faculty should have a student voice just to add perspective, he then volunteered himself--sort of, it was more of an implication.

Lathrop agreed that a lot of people feel lost, she herself decided to run for the VSA simply because she wanted a way to interact with the student body. She noted that Vassar has very little pride for things like Sports and Fraternities and Traditions. Vassar needs things to bring students together.

The THs agreed, saying that as a senior the conversation about commitment really hits home. She especially liked the word "commitment" as it connotes responsibility and action, not passivity. All too often at this school, she explain, it is possible to be passive and not critical.

Academics thought that this was great: she is definitely looking forward seeing the rest of it. Currently the Academics committee has been looking into developing a peer advising group to look into each other questions. She also encouraged them to work through the student fellow program. Perhaps they could do some fireside chats just like good old FDR, god bless him.

The TAs recalled the noose incident, as well as language of ladies, as an example of event driven conversation. She hoped that in the future these conversations could happen before the events. She also recalled having Freshmen conversation dinners her freshmen year and wondered if these could happen again; they were nice.

2012 wanted to know how many of these people who felt isolated stayed inside because they wanted to stay inside.

Cushing! agreed saying that a good portion of her dorm--this notetaker excluded--likes to stay in and has developed close ties with their fellow groups. These groups would be a good place to have conversations.

Raymond noted that the theme was really, really broad and that they have to be careful with the document. Before they release it, they want as much input as possible--which is always a noble goal. They will be doing many fireside chats and working with the HFIs.

## **6. Exec Board Reports**

### **a. The President**

According to the President, she has had an "interesting" couple of weeks. Most of the time has been spent responding to the actions that council took a few weeks ago. Currently it is moving forward. This year she has been harping about alternatives and right now they have a great opportunity to look at some administrative offices. The faculty issue is done, and now they are looking at offices and will be looking at a JYA admin review.

The athletics proposal passed unanimously through athletics and is now going to CCP. The room entry policy has proved to be a royal pain in the ass and CCL wants VSA to re-look at it. She thinks she will send it to BHP, as she sure as hell doesn't want to look at it again. The last admin review was the library, they are moving the media cloisters downstairs so that they can turn it into more of a student driven space and put shelving upstairs, yay!

Also: midnight breakfast is back with a passion.

Lathrop wanted to know if council was serving breakfast. They were not.

Raymond wanted to hear the results to the VSA survey, the Pres said that she would be uncomfortable releasing it, but they will make a summary that goes to council members.

Main wanted to know what the gift was, she wasn't told.

### **b. Operations**

Operations announced the Senior class gift: a section of the endowment for financial aid. This is of the first student generated endowments and the largest class gift made by students, anywhere, ever (adjusted for size...and things.) The community needs a project, or so he claims, this is something everyone likes. The goal is \$15,000

2011 wanted to know if the name could be changed to make it a bigger thing. He was told that no, the CDO will not do that.

Academics suggested throwing a VSA gala. Strong wanted to email her dorm.

Cushing! wanted to know how to donate. She was told to go to the CDO!

2012 likes it.

Lathrop suggested getting people from each house to help.

## **7. Admin Review: JYA**

Academics started by saying that this department is silly and that it should totally be a part of the Dean of the Faculty division, not the Dean of the College. Also, there are a LOT of things wiggity-wack about the summer programs that need answering.

Jewett raised a story about getting half of his program cut, it really sucked.

Noyes raised concerns about the incendiary tone of the quotes, especially since they have no names. Strong countered, saying that the letter wasn't strong (get it?) enough.

Joss went to China and it was amazing. As a Chinese major with a JYA deadline, there is a lot that she has to still do. She wondered if there was a way to keep a list of approved programs rather than have to do this searching thing every year.

2010 was for that. Also, she didn't like some of the quotes.

Cushing! felt that this was a bit too much of an attack on a certain unhelpful someone.

The girl on the side who chimed in disagreed because that certain unhelpful secretary in the JYA office is really unhelpful.

## **8. Certification of Vassar Haiti Project**

Activities moved to certify the Vassar Haiti Project as an organization. Raymond explained that it had started as away of getting art sold, they bought from artists at a high rate, sold it for a bit more, raised some money. They have build a school, and are now looking towards getting them some water.

Joss said something about getting frequently attacked by hurricanes, unfortunately this notetaker missed it.

The condensed arguments were as follows:

Finance, The President, 2011, 2010 raised concerns over the budget of the organization, they also noted that the org had existed for this long without a being an org and they could do just fine.

Raymond, Activities, Joss, 2011, 2012 felt that this was a strong, self-supporting org that deserved

to be able to reserve space and could be denied budget.

2012 wanted to reduce everyone else's budget to give more money to them.

They voted, finance was opposed.

## **9. Open Discussion**

2010 informed council that there were "lots of days left."

Main said thanks for Moulin Rouge.

Joss said thanks for putting the hole-punch on the correct side of the paper.

Pro-Health jumped on the speakers list because they had been denied money to plan a trip to...Haiti! Currently the school doesn't have a public health program and this would be a good way to get there. They asked for \$500.

Condensed arguments:

It wasn't fair to give so few people such a large amount of the budget: Davison, 2012

There isn't much money left: Finance, Joss, Main

This is a great program/They are an organized organization that really cares about what they are doing: Activities, Academics, 2011,

They should go with Vassar Haiti Project: President, 2010  
(counter, no they shouldn't: Raymond)

We shouldn't be funding international humanitarian trips: 2012 (The notetaker found this one ironic, considering item number 8)

After a long, heated discussion over these points in which Cushing! was forced to warn people to watch their tone, the motion came to a vote. The vote was the closest vote that this council has 12-8-1. It would require 14 to pass.

Council apologized to each other.

The meeting ended at 10:30