

VSA Council Minutes
February 8, 2009

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03PM.

2. Attendance

Proxies: TAs, 2010.

Guests: Andrew Bennett (Student Asst. to the President), Matthew Brock (Misc), Brian Farkas (Misc), Julianne Herts (Misc), Emma Mitchell (Misc), Molly Turpin (Misc), Danny McBee (Food Committee), Maureen King, Ray Parker, David English, Arielle Major (BSU), Allison Bloom (CCAC), Cat Mehocic (Misc), Jay Leff (Hip Hop 101).

3. Meal Plan Discussion

Maureen King, Ray Parker and David English attended the Council meeting to discuss the current status of the meal plan, review recent changes made and address potential areas for improvement. Ms. King acknowledged that adjusting from last year's point system to the "all you care to eat" structure has been "a challenge for some students". She did announce that the walk-in price of meals has been slightly reduced this semester, and noted that students seem to have responded positively to this change. Ray Parker claimed that the relatively new "Faculty Associates" program has also been well received, as it enables sports teams and language groups to eat together in ACDC.

An issue last semester was that many students did not appear to be using all of their guest meals, but Campus Dining expects students to utilize these meals more frequently this semester because they are better adjusted to the new system. Mr. Parker explained that the VSA and student organizations will soon have to make some adjustments, however, as state law will prevent students from donating points to student organizations after this academic year. THs, Student Life, and Activities were all concerned about the effects of this change, particularly for organizations like Operation Donation that depend heavily on point drives. Ray explained that, as the idea of the "closed system" school meal plan is to "feed the individual", students are not charged a tax on their food. He elaborated that students' meal points have been used for "a wide variety of inappropriate uses in the past", and that such practices violate tax regulations; if point drives were to continue, the college would be forced to tax students on *all* of their meals. Activities suggested that perhaps only catering orders be taxed, as this option could provide a "middle ground" that would allow point donations to continue; 2011 recommended that Campus Dining investigate other colleges' point drive systems.

Maureen King explained that the convenience store plans changed slightly over the break, due both to financial constraints and concerns with asbestos within the intended store site. Campus Dining is currently working to "figure out the minimum amount of work that needs to be done in that space", but is also considering the possibility of redesigning Java City such that it more closely resembles "a C-Store". King concluded that the timeline for making improvements to the plan is rather "extensive", and explained that she views this year as a learning experience that will allow Campus Dining to tailor the current plan to better "meet the needs of students".

Council members raised a variety of questions and concerns in response to the presentation. Noyes was concerned that Java City only accepts Declining Balance points, and recommended that some sort of "meal equivalency" option be established. He also suggested that

healthier to-go options be made more accessible in ACDC. Joss echoed this sentiment, and also stressed that more of certain “basic” food items (e.g. “chicken cutlets”, “condiments”, etc.) should be available at all times. Cushing expressed that many of his constituents feel compelled “to eat too much” because of the high price of walk-in meals, and suggested that this price be lowered slightly. 2009 agreed that the walk-in price of meals should be reduced, explaining that many seniors avoid ACDC because they find it too expensive.

4. Reports

a. Food Committee Report

Danny McBee, of the Food Committee, explained that the committee has been working with Maureen King to make positive changes to the current meal plan structure. A recent topic of discussion has been ways in which to improve options and operations during lower-traffic times at ACDC. The committee will convene on a weekly basis this semester to tackle this issue and other student concerns.

b. CCAC Committee Report

Alison Bloom, the committee’s representative, announced that CCAC’s new strategy of dividing into subcommittees has proven quite successful thus far. Subcommittees that have been recently formed or are in the process of development include: Training/Orientation, Communications, Academics and Education. One of the committee’s priorities is “getting more word out [about its operations] to the student body”; along these lines, Rachel Glicksman, another CCAC rep, has suggested that the committee establish a bulletin board listing various activities and events associated with campus activism.

c. Exec Report From Operations

The VP for Operations reported that new elections software has recently been secured, and that an elections survey will soon be sent out to students. Nine V-Cash swipe machines have been installed in campus vending machines, and ten more are “coming soon”; Main suggested placing instructions beside these card machines. Operations noted that one of her goals over the coming weeks is to create a master committee meeting time schedule. She also hopes that, as of next week, VSA Today will resume its regular distribution schedule; due to issues with the meeting’s recorder device, publication and distribution has been delayed. SAAC will likely begin reporting to Council beginning next week. Operations is also looking at disability issues and associated projects. She encouraged any students who might be willing to host Vassar alums to do so.

e. Exec Report From Academics

The VP for Academics announced that the evaluations for major and pre-major advisors have been developed, and that the committee is currently focused on CEQs and thesis evaluations. Discussions have recently focused on long-term faculty cuts and their effects on the curriculum. Additionally, Academics has been investigating majors committees to ensure that all departments have them. 2011 suggested creating an online database that displays all professors’ office hours.

5. Allocation of \$9500 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to BSU

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$9500 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to BSU. This allocation would support a visit from Suzan Lori Parks, the first African American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in drama. Arielle Major, Black Student Union Treasurer, explained that the BSU is “trying to encourage more conversations about African American individuals in theatre and the arts”. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

6. Allocation of \$9500 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to Hip Hop 101

The VP for Finance moved to allocate \$9500 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to Hip Hop 101 for its “Throwback Jam”. Jay Leff, of Hip Hop 101, explained that the jam is “an outdoor event on the quad” that features live musical performances and speakers. 2009 abstained from voting and THs was not in favor of the allocation; all others were in favor, however, and the motion passed.

7. Addendum to Article VII of the VSA Bylaws: Student Referenda

The VP for Operations presented Council with an addendum to Article VII of the VSA Bylaws: Student Referenda. The President endorsed the referenda, and explained that he sees the need for *more* student referenda on campus. 2009 didn’t understand how “a minority of the students on campus could make a decision on an issue”. He asserted that “some parameters” should at least be established. Operations noted that the participation threshold for last year’s election was 63% of the student body. 2009 moved to amend the addendum to replace “40%” with “at least 50%” of the student body”. Student Life supported this change, claiming: “it makes sense that at least half the student body participates”. 2012, SoCo, Cushing, Ferry and Operations were not in favor of 2009’s amendment, though all others were in favor, and the motion passed. Operations suggested that Council members further consider the addendum throughout the week and submit her any comments or suggestions. This issue will be voted upon at next week’s meeting.

8. Open Discussion

- 2009 announced that 105 days remained until graduation.
- Student Life encouraged Council members to behave respectfully and professionally at all future meetings.
- Carson Robinson, committee rep for DAEC, explained that he was present to answer any Council members’ questions. He has not yet attended any of the committee’s meetings, but elaborated on his application and his reasons for wanting to get involved with DAEC.
- Andrew Bennett encouraged any students interested in transportation issues at Vassar to contact him, as there will soon be a committee convening to discuss this topic.
- Finance reminded Council that the deadline for Capital Budgeting applications is Sunday, February 15th.
- The President wished a happy birthday to the Miscellany News.

9. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 9:02 PM.