

VSA Council Minutes

March 1, 2009

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.

2. Attendance

Proxies: Lathrop, Jewett.

Guests: Andrew Bennett (Student Asst. to the President), Matthew Brock (Misc), Brian Farkas (Misc), Julianne Herts (Misc), Emma Mitchell (Misc), Molly Turpin (Misc), Amory Meltzer (CCP).

3. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes from February 1 and February 8

b. Allocation of \$390 from Speakers/Lectures/Panels to WVKR

No objections were made, and the consent agenda was adopted as presented.

4. Announcements

a. Meal Plan Memo

Student Life passed around a memo, summarizing Council's Meal Plan discussion on February 8th, that he recently presented to the Meal Plan Implementation Committee. Of the committee's response to Council's suggestions, he said, "I'm happy to report that there was widespread support for all of these things". Although there was "still some split energy" surrounding walk-in costs, Student Life was "pretty confident" that the use of meal plans for catering "will be maintained for on-campus events sponsored by student organizations".

b. Advisory Group on the Allocation of Faculty Resources

The VP for Academics explained that she is part of the Advisory Group on the Allocation of Faculty Resources, a new committee led by John Chenette, Rachel Kitzinger and President Hill. The committee has met twice thus far, and is focusing on "the overall budget cuts that will be affecting faculty and our curriculum". The college has been instructed to reduce its overall operating budget by \$21 million over a three-year period, beginning with the 2010-11 school year. Current plans involve saving \$16 million dollars through a reduction in faculty compensation; the committee intends to reduce Vassar's total workforce by 10-15%, so approximately 125-165 faculty, administrators, and workers involved with Camus Dining and B&G will be affected. An additional money-saving initiative involves retirement incentives. Since older, tenured faculty members' salaries are far higher than those of younger professors, the College is hoping to encourage more faculty at or near retirement age to retire.

The committee is still “in the brainstorming phase” in terms of devising “structural changes” that might preserve funds, but it is considering tenure caps, salary freezes, and altered tenure requirements. Noyes suggested that student input feature more prominently in decisions about which professors receive tenure. Academics responded that majors committees can be made more involved in this process.

The President noted that the Board of Trustees visited this past weekend, and that it instructed the College’s senior officers to cut additional funds from next year’s budget. The Board is focused on ensuring Vassar’s long-term sustainability.

Academics also responded that she has been looking at strategies to improve advising. She hopes to enlarge “the pool of people” involved with advising and to implement “a training process for those who are advisors”, as there is “no current consensus between students, faculty and administrators about what role an advisor should have”.

5. Reports

a. Committee Report - CCP

Amory Meltzer, of CCP, reported that the committee has met once this semester and will meet five times more before the end of the school year. Recently, CCP has focused on approving all new courses for 2009-2010, separating Drama and Film into two departments, discussing Major, Minor and Thesis advising, and devising improvements to freshman writing seminar courses. Starting next year, the College will no longer offer its graduate program, and the Course Catalogue will only be available online.

b. Committee Report – CIE

The VP for Student Life read Council a report submitted by Syed Samin Shebab, CIE’s student representative. The 101 students who signed up for CIE’s “Cultural Audit” via email, campus mail and tabling have been divided into 13 focus groups co-led by student facilitators. The committee is also “planning a public forum this spring about what it would take for [all students] to thrive at Vassar”. According to Syed, “the purpose of the 90-minute focus group sessions...is to 1) directly aid the Committee on Inclusion and Excellence’s formulation of vital policy and program recommendations in our work to create a College where all students can thrive; and 2) to further empower students to assess their needs on campus by putting in place a structured mechanism for students to gain a wealth of vital insights and ideas to aid in their continuing work for positive change.” There are two subcommittees of CIE: Learning Teaching and Academic Evaluation and Admissions and Financial Aid. Admissions and FinAid is attempting to collaborate with the CDO and AAVC to connect students and alumni, especially in terms of summer employment

opportunities.

c. Exec Report – Activities

The VP for Activities reported that the Activities committee has devised “many concrete ideas” about “how to revive The Mug”, and that students can now rent “all the proper cords” to connect laptops, mixers, speakers, etc. from Campus Activities when DJ-ing. The committee will soon finalize and administer its survey on late night programming at Vassar. At its meeting this week, the committee will be looking at a new set of bylaws regarding the VSA’s system of allocating funds to new organizations.

Unfortunately, there have been “major issues” with the migration to Vassar’s new online calendar of events; some events have not shown up or “slipped through the cracks”. Though the majority of problems have been solved, Activities urged orgs to email their SARC interns if their events are not displayed on the site.

Rocky has reportedly been “getting a lot of abuse from organizations using the space”, and Activities encouraged students to restore any moved furniture and pick up after themselves when using rooms, as the VSA is “in danger of losing the space as a programming area”.

Leadership for Change “is going well this semester”. Attendance has been “great” thus far, and students – especially those running for positions - are encouraged to attend its student leader panel Monday at 6pm.

d. Exec Report – Finance

Finance presented Council with a spreadsheet displaying all VSA accounts, and claimed that “the VSA is in good financial health”. He was confident that there are enough funds remaining to cover April and May’s programming, but noted that money from Council Discretionary can be used if necessary.

e. ViCE Report

A ViCE representative reported that, though “a little slow to get started”, Thunderheist was ultimately successful. After Hours is planning on bringing two more outside performers, and ViCE Jazz will be participating in an upcoming local festival. A collaboration between Special Events and Music is also in the works.

6. Approval of Capital Budgeting

The VP for Finance moved to approve the Capital Budgeting Allocations for Spring 2009, as presented to Council. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

7. Appointment of DoS Search Representative

The VP for Operations moved to appoint Amory Meltzer to the Dean of Studies Search Committee. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

8. Declaration of Open Position – BOE Co-Chair

Operations moved to declare one co-chair position from the Board of Elections open and up for appointment. All were in favor, and the motion passed. VP for Operations explained that one senior member of Council needs to serve as this co-chair, and Finance volunteered.

9. Indictment of Sustainability Representative

The VP for Operations moved to indict Ashley Money, Sustainability Committee representative, explaining that Ashley missed three meetings first semester, as well as two to three this semester. 2010, Joss and Lathrop abstained; Student Life was not in favor, though all others were in favor, and the motion passed.

10. Amendment to Article XIII of the VSA Constitution

The VP for Operations moved to amend Article XIII of the VSA Constitution. Student Life moved to amend the proposal such that the proposed section be made an addition to Article X and the other articles be renumbered accordingly. All were in favor, and the motion passed. All were in favor of adding “Article X: Student Referenda”, and the motion passed.

11. Amendment of Article VIII of the VSA Bylaws - Referenda

Operations moved to amend Article VIII of the VSA Bylaws. Per 2009’s recommendation, “will result a censure” was changed to read “will result in a censure”. Finance moved to table the amendment for two weeks, until the Constitutional amendment just passed becomes official. Raymond, Cushing, Noyes, Jewett, Student Life, Operations, 2012, Ferry and 2009 were not in favor, though Strong, Lathrop, Joss, Main, Academics, Finance, Activities, TH, 2011, 2010 and TA were in favor, and the motion passed.

12. Amendment to Article VII of the VSA Bylaws - Elections

The VP for Operations presented Council with an amendment to Article VII of the VSA Bylaws, to be voted upon at the next meeting. She explained that, among other things, the proposed amendment would make each BOE seat a full-year position, change “all of the wording to ‘Board of Elections’ from ‘chairs of the Board of Elections’”, and eliminate write-in candidates.

13. Amendment to Article IX of the VSA Constitution

The VP for Operations presented Council with an amendment to Article IX of the VSA Constitution, to be voted upon at the next meeting. She explained that many students have been confused about “who can run for what” when attending past campaigning meetings. The proposed language modifications should clear up confusion in this area.

14. Amendment to Article I and Article III of the VSA Bylaws

The VP for Operations presented Council with amendments to Article I and Article III

of the VSA Bylaws, regarding budgeting and fund allocations. According to Finance, there is currently “no adjustment mechanism in the Bylaws for inflation or adjustment of student activities fees”, so this amendment would prompt finance committees “to go back and make [the proper] changes” on an annual basis. Finance also justified the changes to Article III, Section 7, noting that this year’s Collaboration Fund is significantly smaller than it has been in many previous years, and that a great deal of “name-borrowing” has been going on. The proposed amendment to Article III, Section 15 reflects the success of this year’s “Meet Me in Poughkeepsie”.

15. Open Discussion

- 2009 announced that 84 days remained until graduation.

16. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 8:12 PM.