

**Report to the Vassar College Board of Trustees
Vassar Student Association
February 2018**

VSA Sesquicentennial

2018 is the Vassar Student Association's Sesquicentennial! January 11 is the 150th anniversary of Vassar students' declaration of autonomy, and February 3 is the sesquicentennial of the approval of the first students' association's constitution.

To commemorate this historic opportunity, the VSA plans on undertaking a variety of projects that include, but are not limited to:

- Reaching out to past VSA Presidents and compile a book/collection of their reflections in collaboration with the Office of Communications and OAAD
- Organizing, in collaboration with the Office of the President and the Engaged Pluralism Initiative, a discussion on 'what it means to be a global campus' on March 28, 2018
- Collaborate with the AAVC and other relevant offices to use this as a fundraising opportunity and/or host a dinner for VSA alums in May 2018
- Organizing a visit to yet to determined museum in Harlem in February 2018 as part of Black History Month
- Sponsoring and lending greater support to vital all-campus programming such as All College Days, and the International Dance Festival.

VSA Senate membership changes

Since November 2017, eight members of the VSA Senate, including the Vice President, have resigned. We have successfully filled two of these positions and are in the process of filling the rest. The VSA remains a committed body that strives to best represent the Vassar student body.

New Projects

PoC Health Day

The Committee on Equity and Inclusion and Health and Wellness are collaborating to organize a day with a focus on mental and physical health/wellbeing for students of color on campus.

Dorm Beautification

Through the Dorm Beautification project, residential houses will work together with the VSA Committee on Equity and Inclusion in order to create a visual representation of affirming statements for different groups on campus.

Day of Wellness

The Committee on Health and Wellness is organizing this campus-wide day of wellness for around finals time as an opportunity for students to pause and stay in touch with their health and wellbeing.

Completed and Ongoing Projects

Advocacy

As is expected of a well-functioning student association, the VSA continues to advocate for students through and outside of the various forums it has available, including the various joint committees of the college, and meeting regularly with President Bradley and other senior administrators. Some of our focus areas have included the need for an Asian-American Studies department, the future of the need-blind admissions and financial aid policies, DACA, the health services on campus, proposed changed to the residential life model, the proposed summer institute and inn, and the need to strengthen institutional support for marginalized groups on campus.

Mental Health Fair

The VSA Committee on Health and Wellness held the first ever Mental Health Fair on December 7, 2017 in collaboration with other health offices on campus. It is a campus wide event meant to push people to take care of themselves through finding their own activity that works for them.

What To Do If List

There are many on campus resources that are beneficial for the health and wellbeing of students that both the VSA in the past and the College as a whole do not advertise in a timely and effective manner. The VSA Board of Residential Affairs has created a *What To Do If* list that will highlight some of the common scenarios students find themselves in and offer the immediate action needed to be taken in order to resolve the issues.

Black Panther

The Committee on Equity and Inclusion collaborated with Campus Life and Diversity to send 60 students to see Black Panther this past Saturday

Identity Org Dinner

The Committee on Equity and Inclusion organized a dinner for the leaders of identity organizations as not only a celebration of the work they do, but also as a moment to collect and synergize.

Project.Period

Project.Period was started by the VSA in Spring 2016 to provide free menstrual products to those who need them. Boxes of these products are placed in bathrooms in dorms and academic buildings. There is now a long-term structure in place to ensure the continuity of this project with a dedicated budget and student network. The project has moved to decomposable period products that are affordable and sustainable. They will be restocked every 3 weeks with multiple rounds of stocking already accomplished.

NYC Shuttle

The NYC Shuttle project was started in Spring 2016 to provide access to Vassar students to New York City at extremely low cost (\$2-5). Trips are scheduled monthly and are daylong. This project is ongoing and has been met with success.

VSA Website

In line with our commitment towards transparency and accountability, the VSA is replacing the current and outdated website with a new one. This project is near completion.

Support for Student Organizations

There are now 145 student organizations on campus certified by the VSA. The Organizations Committee of the VSA is undertaking a full audit of all current student organizations for the purpose of maintaining an up-to-date and accessible roster of all active student organizations for the student body. To aid this process, the VSA Senate had approved a pre-org freeze for the Fall 2017 semester.

Procedural changes

In collaboration with the Campus Activities Office, the VSA has also modified its procedures regarding the funding of speakers and events on campus and the way these events are registered with the college.

It is also looking seriously at the future of the Judicial Board, senior housing area positions and a few positions on the VSA Senate.

Areas of focus

The VSA would like to highlight a few important areas of focus:

Financial aid and admission policies

This continues to be at the forefront of student concerns regarding the future of the college and ignites strong passions in defense of our financial aid policies. The VSA would like to make this explicit and ensure that these student voices are being heard.

Asian-American Studies

The trustees can assist students and the VSA in advocating for a proper Asian-American studies course sequence and department. This is an urgent need especially since this is the largest minority group on campus.

Programming space and policies

This issue has been brought up and recognized by almost every relevant constituency of the college – students, administrators and staff. There is an urgent need for spaces that can host big all-campus events till late in the evening and to ease up on some of regulations concerning parties, maximum occupancy of spaces and alcohol use.

International Students Alum Association

Having such an association would go a long way in not only providing support for current international students at Vassar, but helping these folks keep in touch, be a resource, stay connected with the college and extend support as when needed. Given the fundamentally different experience that international students have at Vassar, its significant size, geographic breadth and depth of resources, having such an association would have manifold benefits.

VSA 150

You could assist us with getting in touch with past VSA Presidents and active members as well as extend support, be it through ideas or resources.

The VSA is optimistic and energized about its work and hopes to best serve students at Vassar. We look for support, and guidance from our alums as we, together, chart the next phase of Vassar's history in making the college accessible and equitable for all members of our community.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the VSA Executive Board,
Ashley Hoyle '18 (Vice President), Tamar Ballard '19 (Chair of Equity & Inclusion),
Takunda Maisva '19 (Chair of Residential Affairs), Joaquim Goncalves '18 (Chair of
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Anish Kanoria
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