

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Agenda for March 23, 2014

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

“It’s taken me a lot of years, but I’ve come around to this: if you’re dumb, surround yourself with smart people. If you’re smart, surround yourself with smart people who disagree with you” – *Sports Night*

1 Call to Order

Roll Call- Cushing and Ops are not here

2 Attendance.....Operations

3 Consent Agenda

- a. MBSA (Social Conciousness)\$2000/\$2300
- b. WOCA (Pre-Org)\$100/\$100
- c. Fernando Braga (Discretionary)\$0/\$350
- d. CSA (Conference)\$800/\$2300
- e. Run Vassar (Discretionary)\$0/\$1100
- f. Pro Health (Conference)\$980/\$980
- g. Savor (Pre-Org)\$100/\$100
- h. Vastards (A Capella Recording)\$750/\$750
- i. Christian Fellowship (Conference)\$800/\$800
- j. VARC (Conference)\$600/\$1090
- k. Archery (Discretionary)\$300/\$300
- l. Night Owls (Discretionary)\$350/\$350
- m. CSA (Discretionary)\$5000/\$5200
- n. Minutes from 3/2/14

Consider it consented to

4 Forum with Luis Inoa..... (45 min)

Pres - three weeks ago we were bringing up some ideas and concerns, so I figure it'd be nice to bring him here. If you could introduce yourself, and if you could kind of explain straight forward how you approach those things.

Luis Inoa- I am the director of Residential life, been here for 9 years. This conversation is a welcomed one because I'm trying to approach this summer as if I'm coming in new and really trying to think through the department and our relationship with students and if I was new, potential areas of evolution. House team - I think contextually, historically, it hasn't always been a part of vernacular. There were student advisors, then peer ____, and advisors were afterwards for training. The next year, we incorporated ____ into training fully. What is it that a student fellow needs... The kind of conversations that I have to have for the new exec board is important. I don't think we've figured out what to do with the officers as opposed to the things that could be offered I would say the leadership conference. Over the last years, I've encouraged VSA to look at them in a way not like the orgs. Could be that we are more upfront with the training as opposed to waiting for the conference but by the time we converse, you

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folks are out. I think we do okay with more global days. We have an identity, diversity, and fire safety day. And then there are kind of skill building things, independent on whether you’re a student fellow. If you’re seen as a leader in your house, there is a chance that students can come to you. Not just freshmen, but upperclassmen seeking advise as well.

2016 – I’m just curious as to our specific structure compared to other schools. I know that in other schools, they’re different positions. Oftentimes, they’re also seniors. I was wondering if you could speak to _____

Inoa - I think when student affairs started to develop, Vassar for whatever reason, didn’t follow. I don’t know if that had something to do with the kind of culture, particularly [it being a women’s school]. Particularly how they held each other accountable. The reason why I’ve encouraged the college not to look at the system is that we don’t want one person to be responsible for the community- we want every person to be. The potential there is to have a community of individuals that value _____. We don’t necessarily have the little “a” authority... different than documenting identity. It’s more like for the student who smokes in the room, playing loud music, gathering in a room... if no one in that space approached [them] the individual that acts that way [the fact someone isn’t addressing him] that individual is going to assume that it’s okay to behave that way. We’re struggling because we need Vassar students to step up and say this is the reason why we don’t have an RA system, because our students are empowered to act. I believe in it. The RA system almost makes them redundant. It makes officers ineffective. I like this kind of Venn diagram. The intellectual, personal, and social developments we’re still lacking... and we have programs on floors that we’re trying. There are some mixed results but it think there’s something promising... for the couple of students who reach out and say I’m struggling. I think sophomores are kind of expected to figure stuff out on their own.

Main – [how is the] selection process of student advisors and fellows?

Inoa- they just rapped up interviews, I feel like I should have a more ready response. I’m in the process of interviewing house advisors. They ask me to describe Vassar students. The first word that comes to mind is snowflakes. I don’t know if there is a type, yes we need some extroverts, introverts, individuals involved in a variety of things. Two things I’m looking for is A – they gotta love building relationships in the ways they know best. And b, student fellows even more so, I’m just looking for someone who likes Vassar with the capacity to love Vassar. I think they have to love... the love that means they can be critical. Student advisors [were trained only] when I first got here. Now we incorporate house officers. There, the same things apply... you have to enjoy building relationships. You have to like working. They put in so many hours to

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top of the things they’re doing as students. I think it’s an individual that can be an independent effective role model. Nine years here, I haven’t had any [fellows] written up. * knocks on wood * I’m not saying they’re not doing things. I’m not saying they’re angels. I’m just saying they don’t bring that kind of drama to my office and I appreciate it.

Strong- ...I think it’s sort of under the table. I think it gets kind of west side story. It becomes an issue of who does more. I know you mentioned house team training. Sometimes it can feel separated. Have you guys talked about that? Res life technically oversees the paid position, but if you could just talk about that.

Inoa- I want to say it varies by house and by year. I think the house teams that are most successful are the ones that continue to check in with each other about those expectations. A few years ago, student fellows were concerned about the amount of work putting in to house team programming. In reality, they do not have to participate, they do, they have to agree to do those things, but it shouldn’t be an expectation. Maybe that’s the ____.

Strong- I’ve heard that, and I’ve heard the opposite. Maybe if there’s a way we can clarify what’s expected and what’s not. I think a lot of the problems come from confusion. Is there a way we can clarify that?

Inoa - yes, ____.

Strong- from what I heard, I think houses expected different things from their student fellows. I think it comes into... if they see their friend is just showing up with chips and others are chairing a committee.

Inoa—it’s a bit tough because some houses just operate year to year... this is what student fellows do. I think it’s essential they have that conversation to continue the operations and revisit it. For other houses where there’s more of a distinction, this kind of conversation would be helpful. I try to be mindful with house culture. But I’m welcome to meetings with presidents. Not just for student fellows, but interns also. We used to have community fellows-house fellow interns. VSA agreed to not having someone responsible for classwork and we think they can be a support and resource for the house. We might be able to work through these responsibilities. I know y’all meet on the Sunday before this, so we could either do that then...

Strong - we’ll call you

SL - one of them is probably something you get a lot; since RAs are paid or get free room and board, can you speak about the distinction?

Inoa - to think about the scope, RA is doing safety and security work, programming, and social development. But that wouldn’t necessarily be the reason to justify not compensating. A

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few years ago the question came up and I surveyed the student fellows, and they weren’t comfortable getting paid more. I think they were wary about new expectations for them. The cutoff where it stops is I think like \$1000. When the student fellow [program] started, if I’m not completely mistaken, they were getting \$150. It started in the 70s. When I got here, the stipend hadn’t grown. But that stipend was more in the 70s... I don’t know about Vcash; Vcash would be different. That might be something that the college might look at. When I asked the question of capping, about 5 years ago, [the cap] was about \$1000 as the most I would want. The position feels closer to being a volunteer than not. [The assumption could be that] the more compensation, the more work [there would be]. But it is worth another look another 5 years later.

SL - I saw something on Facebook about room changes happening for people getting roommates they weren’t told about. Can you speak about that and communication with students... [What points] are strong and what points aren’t?

Inoa - we were trying to work under the timeline. We allowed ___ before break, but not having them move during midterms. That caused a gap... So they heard they got approved, but they didn’t actually get ___ until after spring break. We’re working with communications on our new website, revamping it. I’d encourage anybody here to give me feedback on what would be most useful. It isn’t very good looking, but there’s a lot of information. I don’t think it’s easy to navigate it. Some things that may not be in the handbook... I think the website will be huge. We transitioned to residence, which has been a headache, but moving us into tech [which is what] we need in this campus. I love what we used to do... now we have a celebration at the end of room draw. The switching of the system means we have been slow in communicating with students. Our transition into the software means we don’t know how things would be played out until later.

2015- so, I guess just like one of my things I’ve been trying to push the autonomy of res life and elected VSA. Sometimes house advisors would tell a president how to vote... And open dialogue. I think the student leader should make a decision. I guess I want to bring that point up again. The actual question is related... 4-5 house draw. Recently we got an email about a time we can draw [what’s] available, but our housing draw numbers haven’t been picked out. If you could explain that.

Inoa- this is part of that new system. It produces its own numbers. If we use what the system gave us, the first person it draws is 43. What we could do is, let’s look at what the entire list looks like. That’s what you’re trying to get at right? That essentially would give you a draw number.

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2015- yeah if that was out there, that would be nice.

Inoa- I think the way Diane and Kelly tried to communicate is you know we start here and end here, so with some math, you can see where you end up.

2015- I think we’ve just been told we have slots but we don’t know our own minutes. We do? Maybe we have to log in to get it? I’ll look again.

Raymond – thank you for coming in. I wanted to say something about do you think the program will be expanding and what other changes can be made in the house team?

Inoa- this will be the third year, with the way budgets get approved... for me it started in November, in order to incorporate the stipend, I would be putting that in for _____. The ideal would be to expand into the rest of the houses. One of the things in terms of ideas comes from the Haverford model. They have customs people, a kind of team like student fellows. A freshman gets introduced to a student advisor, multicultural awareness advisor, _____ just a collection of people. A peer educator leads them through conversations. If we implemented something like this, I don’t know what that _____ is going to be other than the likelihood it’d be identity. Thoughts about whether they should be a fellow... Encouraging upperclassmen to share [what they] know with freshmen. We’re thinking about a multicultural awareness advisor and if someone should lead these conversations. I’m looking at restorative justice circles and conferences as a way of dealing with micro-aggressions. We’ve failed some of our students. And in those same spaces, the victims have _____ to facilitate because we didn’t have a system in place to guide each party through a conversation. We’re looking at that and implementing that as a resource. I don’t know what that would look like, whether or not we could get that for roommate squabbles or disagreements. We’re certainly thinking about some things, so if you have any ideas, come to my office

TAs – I remember when I was a first year during winter break we were given a survey about our house advisor. I was wondering who sees that and what actions come up.

Inoa- that goes to the house advisors, and typically they will bring that up during spring training. It’s a bit more broadly, not necessarily to the specific student fellow. Those things get shared with the house team. Then the house advisors have options to see individual feedback, as to whether or not they seem available... serving as a resource on what kinds of programs... if they didn’t go for advice, if they would at least feel comfortable going to [get advice if they wanted it]. Then the house teams have opportunities to let me know how the student advisor is doing... most of the time encourage them to continue things they’re doing then to address where there are concerns.

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Strong – when we were talking about Dunbar, I remember the topic of roommate housemate training. I remember freshman year I was a little surprised they just threw us in there. Nobody wants to say [harsh things]. I think you’re still in that polite phase- “Oh you can use my toothbrush if you want.” I was wondering if there’s a way we could do that. I think that we [go over] a lot of emergency stuff that’s severe, but I don’t know if we [go over] realistic small ___ things. I do think there’s a lot of “my roommate stays up late, but I don’t know how to compromise.” I think we’re missing small issues that then become big issues. I was wondering if we had plans to work on that.

Inoa- we haven’t, we didn’t hand out anything before. And so, what would encourage roommates to revisit of a conversation that they had earlier? Is it simply just about a first conversation, or a series of conversations to develop a working ___ conversation? Culturally, our students don’t revisit those conversations. I think the most interesting thing, if we could figure out an early way... they may be better off by the time they are seniors when cleanliness and noise levels become [issues] not just in the room, but also in bathrooms, kitchens, ____. I think we’ve had more apartment changes than actual roommate changes. We send out ___ [saying] here are some things we encourage you to think about and work through. I don’t know if it’d catch on. I think the apartment spaces as cooperative spaces, if I could make that happen, I think it’d be ___ easier to meet ___. If you can establish those things as norms, I think it might be better. That may also be [bettered] in floor meetings. I’m thinking of some houses... ___ and we need to be better. Beyond just a roommate to roommate, it may be “how do we model beyond this?” We’re thinking about that. Again, your help would be appreciated.

Main – the last week before spring break was meeting disorder awareness week. And I know at the office of ___ I think all the student fellows were invited, but only one showed up. I was wondering if there’s encouragement from res life to encourage student fellows and advisors to attend them. Going throughout the year, I don’t think these things are ___.

Inoa – the position we’re hiring for now, the conversations I’m having for candidates are about a curriculum that’s a bit more sustained. That’s for our house team leaders and for professionals in the staff. I think it’s not necessarily about reinventing the wheel. That would be one I’m working with Renee on how to better incorporate things. [We’re] trying to figure out peer educators... could they be more involved in the houses and those kinds of conversations?

___- ___ going back to the student fellow and house officer divide, there’s that sort of culture where the houses do have programs, where I think the primary focus should be on the house

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itself. I’m wondering if some kinds of things could be held.

Act. - this is not mandatory. It’s more of traditions passing down, in terms of conversations.

Pres – we can talk about setting better standards at the beginning of the year... focus on what you want to focus.

Socos- constituent concern- one of the residents of Socos was concerned about the protocol for people entering houses. Incident – someone was at home by themselves and there was a man they didn’t know there... and they were a bit uncomfortable. And we were wondering [if there is an email set up] to let people know there’s someone entering a house [and not] be concerned. They kind of just come in unannounced.

Inoa – students sometimes read their emails, sometimes they don’t, but it is a matter of communication. We could be upfront about that to make sure attention [is given]. There are times, not passing the buck, but where we are the liaisons for buildings and grounds to communicate with students, so when they don’t communicate with us, there’s going to be an issue. We’re working with them. When we don’t know, we expect students to have issues, and we’ll take those issues to the appropriate people. Then there are times when it’s on us. We don’t kind of spell it out. In this case, the houses close, meaning someone will come in for respective ____.

Noyes- is there a reason as to why students who live in housing have to leave at 9 am? It seems like a lot of time _____. Is there a reason and can it be changed?

Inoa – I know if we say 12, that’ll mean 5. We say 9 because we know we have stragglers. For a campus that prides itself on free decisions, sometimes it feels like a free-fall. We were like, let’s make it on Monday, but how would the weekend look like without worrying about Monday classes? Even this year, the biggest care was that at some point and time, we’d be the spring break destination because [people could think] they’re relaxed here. We have parameters of things in place, but there is a concern, that when we stay open... what we attract. But just a couple more hours- that’s something we can work on.

Pres- [there are students] who don’t have cars, and their parents come to pick them up, so [the parents] need to leave at midnight. Just [recognizing] a couple of extra hours would help a lot of students.

Noyes- in council there’s often discussion about demographic of people and whether it’s accessible and I was wondering if student fellows... demographics of students, even on a male to female ratio.

Inoa – I don’t have a strong sense of it. Again the collective of house team feels like it balances some of those things out. But is there a sense that there are more white females that make of

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the student fellow demographics? I could probably say yes, without looking at the numbers. Is there a reason why more students of color weren’t taking up this particular position? For the most part, I would say there are other positions that are being taken up. If I look at the collection within the house team, I feel better. But I certainly feel we can be better for student fellows. Broadly talking about the house team as a whole... to promote all the positions, not just student fellow, to go to the centers to talk about the experiences and benefits.

2016 – why this year did res life decide housing would be closed over spring break? Just kidding. {it wasn’t open last break}

Inoa – what was different, [last year] we placed everyone in Noyes.

2016 – do you feel that certain students don’t apply because they feel they can’t have the position with a work-study position? Because I know that ___ got that sense.

Inoa – I don’t know; if I have to make an assumption, probably. The reason we have a bit more success with student advisors is because they are paid positions. There’s concern a little bit about burn out... that’s on the student advisor and I know that’s part of the experience for the presidents. I don’t know for sure. But that’s the reason why I think it’s nice that it’s simplified. The crux of the position is building [relationships] with freshmen, programing aside.

2016- if you could explain under what conditions res life officials or employers of school can enter a room and what they can do. I think I’ve heard about what the appropriate conduct is.

Inoa- it feels like that’s a land mine. I’m trying to think under what conditions they’re in. [An instance of when someone enters is when] the fire alarms [go on], and buildings have to be evacuated, to make sure the houses are being cleared. When we close, we will enter a room.

When, I’ll say, I’m proud of our student culture... there’s a bystander intervention... students feel more comfortable doing. [If there is a] growing number of students who are trying to be Al Capone drug dealer on campus, we get word that someone is dealing drugs. Someone is going to enter your room to search. If there’s a reason to believe there’s a health and safety violation the college will enter. If it sounds like it’s a party, someone will knock on your door and ask to come inside.

2016- is there a protocol for that?

Inoa- I think it’s listed in the handbook. Ideally if Kim were here, she would say yeah... But it’s expected that the student open the door. There’s a section in the student handbook about rights and responsibilities. And I want to say there’s a room entry part.

Pres- thank you so much for coming in.

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Council Agenda for March 23, 2014

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5 Reports

a. Activities(7 min)

Ac - all of our pre-orgs are in good standing. We have pre-org community reps that update us every week. Activities has been talking with orgs we may have had questions for. We’ll have our end of semester pre org reviews. We’ve been collecting constitutions, hopefully before annual budgeting. The storage space project is good and almost done; thank you Rebecca, Carolina and Casey. We spent hours cleaning out the ___ office. The orgs who will be moving in... some of them have been contacted, some we’re working more with the roc to do more coordination. We still have yearbooks, if you would like any, I will be taking orders. We take vcash. If you want one, [inform me of your] name, quantity, year of the book you want, and whether [you will be paying] cash or vcash. House presidents, if you could let me know if you have any yearbooks. We want to have the yearbooks in the houses in the MPR, so we can get you those books, no payment or anything. Leadership conference ___ will be starting soon. We’re hoping to have more org group leaders involved. If you’re interested, let me know. Traditions community is still being figured out. The Krieger lecture- Gary Shteyngart will present the lecture... campus event with more information. To clarify, Terry Quinn and I have been talking about expectation... for houses, so I’m going to be sending out a blurb.

Jewett - for the constitution, you said by April 1st, but it says on the annual budgeting the 6th

Act- it was just so we don’t get I last minute [ones].

Jewett- how much are the yearbooks?

Act - last year’s are \$15, __ are \$10, and the ones before 2000 are \$5

Davis- when is the next closest available time of students to apply to be student orgs

Act - that would happen with the next round...

2017 - I think helicon and squirm share a space. How regulated are the spaces available to orgs and... whether or not org leadership is notified of the actual space, and what happens if you lose a key?

Act- if you lose it, anything that has to do with the houses [you can get another key from] the roc. If it’s the third floor of the college center [you can contact] Michelle Ransom or me. We notified the orgs that had spaces and almost all of them knew whether they were... If they have questions, they can talk to me. As for the fire

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inspections, I get those notifications, and I send them to the orgs so they know what to remove. This way there not fined.

TAs- wireless vcash machines- is that a thing yet?

Fin - last I heard over break they were doing a software thing. I don’t anticipate them being able to leave college center.

Davis. - ... they can’t leave the college center

2016- I think it may be worth contacting ____ {regarding the yearbooks}

Act - they have a bunch and we have more to give them.

2016- is the money made going to us?

Act - it goes to the operating budget.

b. Finance(7 min)

Fin - the annual budget application is now open and live, and April 6th it’s due. Tell all of your friends. Fund levels are not particularly useful because I need to transfer ____.

THs - sorry I missed a lot of meetings, is it going to be like ____ last year’s?

Fin - the current plan is to make offers to orgs... we’re going to follow a similar model from last year’s.

c. Constituent Concerns..... (7 min)

Main - for exec, how far in advance do we know who is coming to [the VSA meetings] our constituencies?

Pres- usually the day before, but as soon as I know, I’ll let you know

2016 - this has come up a lot in vsa in forums especially... administration saying it works in certain way... When a student is EMSed and taken to hospital, they have to pay for the ambulance. That’s a disincentive for ems. But I had a constituent email me they just got the bill for the ambulance, and it was only covered \$400 out of \$900.

Suffice to say, this student probably will never call ems again. I think we need to sit down and talk about whether we have a system... afraid to call because of their financial situation. We should value the health of our students. As something I’ve said before with mental health, but especially this.

Pres - I’ll reach out to people who put together a health insurance package.

Davison - may be a little early, issue with breach and security, big humongous thank you to activities who emailed ____ who got the job done minutes later

Act - let me know ____, I have a good relationship with Anna Belle and she’s rather responsive.

TAs- can you explain the preliminary org certification process?

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Act- they’re a lot of them in different, we need to change the name to levels, but, semesters. They won’t be full orgs until next year. And we have a bunch other ____.

2015 – primarily there’s a big bulk at first level. The vast majority, to be quite honest, the actual reality is that most of them will fizzle out. The current number is [around] 106, not as much as we used to have. And we were able to manage that.

Act – there are a couple that are kind of already fizzling out. It’s a lot right now, but we don’t have as many orgs, so we kind of have the same number in total

Socos – I think it’s important to keep in mind responses we get... Compared to other schools, we have a more strict policy on establishing pre orgs.

Noyes- there are orgs that say don’t require financial assistance...

THs- TAs was saying, though I agree, usually when they fizzle out they’re not taking from funding... doesn’t hold that when you lose an org, the money is still there. I think the system should be stricter. It doesn’t mean we’re gaining the money back.

Pres- this is the first year we’re trying the preliminary org out. There was and is not the assumption that as soon as you’re third level, you’ll become an org. It’s not an easy thing. This is just to provide you with resources. It’s more about spaces and preliminary organizing and getting support from VSA.

2015 – if you want to be involved in [a] conversation [like this], come to an activities meeting because it’s awesome and we talk about it a lot.

6 VP for Student Life Amendment.....Student Life (10 min)

SL – we’ve already talked about this. We made a couple of changes, including, taking out “groups of students.” We’re voting on it. Any questions? {none}

Motion to pass amendment. All in favor, motion passes.

7 Open Discussion

2014- there are 62 days, 13 hours, 39 minutes, and 15 seconds until commencement, and we still don’t have a speaker.

Strong- if you don’t have anyone, I’m free.

2014- in twelve days, we have 50 nights, April 5th. Vice is running a student DJ contest. Enter if you want to be one of the DJs at 50 nights. Seniors please check your emails and do the survey; it’s in everybody’s best interest.

Pres- I’ve been at trustee meetings where they use data.

Strong – do we know when we will have a speaker?

2014- no one has said anything to me. I had a dream the other night where it was my mom.

Act – 3 weeks ago, somebody left this book in council.

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TAs - {knows who has lost the book}

Raymond – student bill of rights- Cushing is bringing it to council next week.

Lathrop – on April 5th Lathrop is hosting an art market – student produced market. It’s during family weekend so [family/adult] sized budgets. [If you would like to sell something at the market or have any questions, you can email] lathropmarket@gmail.com. I sent blurbs to the houses. [We will be selling] some goods; patches are very popular, fun things- like I like squirrels.

Strong – Dinosaur patches...

Lathrop – maple syrup and maple products. They {seller} didn’t make it. They just bought it cheap.

SL – we talked a little before break on the _____. I realized the last time it didn’t pass was because it was sent before break. So if any of you would like to see the letter, I’m sending it [to you]. Let me know if you have feedback.

Acad. – I need one friend for the CEQ survey, at least one. They have a pilot CEQ, and they want non-VSA people. If you have acquaintances, people who have free time [encourage them to help].

2017 – freshmen 15 is April 30th

2015- what’s the free item?

2017 - I don’t know. I think free shirts. We’re trying to make Beyoncé shirts.

Davison – Main’s event is on Friday

Main – we’re having classic Hollywood- crepes, cocktails in the Villiard room, [with a] jazz combo or two. I’m done.

Strong - I want to say there’s a lot of great footwear [here]. My break sucked, but it makes me happy to see you all. I missed you!

201_ – thank you to student life for sending the letter. I think it’s important to explore other [things] that aren’t accessible.

Pres- elections filing starts this week. Just be prepared. Don’t panic, it’ll be fine. April 27th is going to be our last meeting. If you have things you’re trying to do, do them now. [If you would like to pass an] amendment for instance, you only have 4 of those weeks to do so. This is a good time in our lives! I’m happy. Another thing, how many of you were you at the dialogue relating to Israel? I heard a lot of feedback. They’re interested in continuing this conversation and they don’t want us to feel like our ideas aren’t being heard. If you have ideas or specific ideas, let me know. I know that they are open. They want to make it better. They don’t want to close it off.

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION
Council Agenda for March 23, 2014

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

“It’s taken me a lot of years, but I’ve come around to this: if you’re dumb, surround yourself with smart people. If you’re smart, surround yourself with smart people who disagree with you” – *Sports Night*

The End - 8:30 pm