

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Agenda for April 13, 2014

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

“Those who don’t believe in magic will never find it” – Roald Dahl

- 1 Call to Order
Start: 7:00 pm
- 2 Attendance.....Operations
Proxies- 2014, Davison, TSs,
Absent - 2016, Cushing, THs, Finance, Ops
Late / arrived after being called – Jewett, Lathrop, 2017
- 3 Consent Agenda
 - a. Gabe Ross (Disc).....(0/1500)
 - b. SJP (Pre-org).....(175/175)
 - c. Phil Majors (Disc).....(550/600)
 - d. WKVR (Collab).....(20000/20000)
 - e. CHOICE (Speakers).....(1200/2500)
 - f. Minutes from 4/6/14
Socos – allocation for WKVR not 20000, it’s 2000
Considered consented to
- 4 Forum with Ben Lotto (45 min)
Ben Lotto – My name is ben lotto. The reason Deb asked me to come here is because I’m going to be starting as Dean of Studies in the fall, actually in the summer starting July 1st. It’s a position I’m very excited about. I have been Dean of Freshmen for 4 years and I’ve been in lots of meetings for that office. It’s an absolutely vital office for students. I’m sure many of you know this. The Dean of Studies ... main office, advisors for class, transfer credits, domestic study programs, also oversees career ____, study away, fellowships and pre health, accessibility and educational opportunities. Dean of studies also sits in committees. The main ones I’ll be chair of are committee of student records [which looks] at records of students who struggle... also chair of [the] academic panel involving cases of academic integrity. I’m also on the curricular committee. I bring a lot of experience both as a professor and as someone who watches lots of studies progress. I’m really excited about it. It’s always been a well functioning office. [It was] very visible that that was a good place to turn ____. I’m very honored to take on this [role]. I think you invited me here ____ the concept of what you were interested in doing, but I’m also interested in hearing you... Let me throw that open, if anyone has any thoughts or concerns.
TAs – what sort of problems have you heard of that the dean of studies has encountered and what do you want to do to change that?
Lotto – first thing that comes to mind, it seems to me that the volume of students that come through main office [go more towards the] career development office, JYA, Accessibility ____,

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Fellowship ____... those are offices that seem to have gotten busier. In my time here, 21 years, I really want to take a look at those offices. But I want to hear from them how they’re doing, whether they’re feeling overwhelmed and what kinds of solutions [there can be]. Within the office itself, I’m walking into an office that has a great reputation with faculty and students. [It is a] fairly privileged position. My two main things in regards to the main office are to continue to nurture that relationship so I can continue... and others to work well, and be as open and transparent about what we do and why we do it. [It is] hardest when we’re applying a rule saying no... again it’s a very vital thing. The student may not be happy about it, but at least they will understand.

2015 – oftentimes there can be rumors about different offices. I’ve heard complaints about the office being sometimes intimidating to certain students’ situations. For me, I think that’s an important aspect of the college. Any plans regarding ____ plans, especially related to generally from what I gather, fairly mixed or negative perceptions.

Lotto – my door is open to any student who wants to talk to me about any concerns, individual or general. If there is this perception that the office is not being fair, being inconsistent, students not being felt heard, I want to know about them. Again I think this goes back to the transparency issue. Students don’t always go away happy from our office. There are times we say no, but the way I look at those decisions... I’ve used this language. Our job is really to weigh the needs of the one against the needs of the many. If I give every student what they want and say yes to all, then I’m not being fair. On the other hand, there are individual situations that are the exception and important. What is important is to make sure the student is heard that then either the individual advisor or, we meet as a group every week to talk about tricky cases, we work on that together. Again the goal is to get back to the student with whatever decision it is and to explain it in the context, again, so that they feel heard.

Sometimes when I’ve made a decision in favor [of something], I’ll say “I’m doing this, but let me also say that this was a close call...” I try to give the whole picture. If you’ve heard anything specific, come talk to me at any point offline.

Pres – I want to follow up a bit about that too because I also heard missed reviews, generally it’s a bit of... When students go in maybe they feel heard, but they don’t necessarily feel listened to. I’ve talked to many people... having experienced... triggered anxious experience, done in a way... I hear you, less so that they understand how frustrating and scary it can be. My interpretation is that there are policies that are great when dealing with death in the family, but some progressive issues like behavioral health. Maybe dean of studies office is a little behind. Something I’ve heard... maybe more interaction with the counseling service, and more with training. I’m part of TLC... I feel like maybe there’s just a bit of a disconnect between

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administration and what students are going through. That’s just the perception I heard from my [peers].

Lotto- first of all, the dean of studies and dean of freshmen sit on student support network. I know that has a mixed reputation, but that’s a point of contact because the director of counseling sits there. So if there is some concern, that’s a point of contact where every week I and others are sitting in a room with the record of counseling. When I was dean of freshmen, the councilors knew me better probably than they wanted to. It’s sort of a funny relationship because of the way privacy works. It’s an unequal relationship for a generic student coming to see me. I can talk to the councilors, tell them I need advise about this... If that student has seen them, they can’t even tell me that conversation has happened. We talk to the student about this, if I’m going to go talk to a councilor. I’ve gone through many trainings, not as many as you. And one group that’s been helpful with regard to progress... Scott Louis, a consultant who works for _____. [I have] done multiple trainings with him, two day Title Nine investigator training... he helped us when we were getting the student of concerns group. Those are the contacts we have. That being said, I’ve been keeping kind of a bullet point list, and I’ll put that on there that these concerns were raised generically and what kinds of conversations can we have not around specific student, but be thoughtful on mental health and academic issues. That is a tricky dimension that I don’t know we have a [handle on it].

Pres – I mean, our country doesn’t.

Lotto – I don’t know if there is a... that’s something worth looking into.

Pres – they gave me a shit ton of money to do many things. How would you like to better acknowledge things your office has done, like fellowships... so that it becomes less of an intimidating space? ...yay, now I can do an internship.

Lotto –I don’t know that I know a lot about them... I do think Lisa Kooperman in the fellowships office does a tremendous job in terms of identifying fellowships and promoting them. She’s done such a good job, that I think its overwhelming. I was on the fellowships committee 15 years ago, and I think the number of fellowship has probably doubled. I know she worked tirelessly and that students know about them, but not only... Mock interviews so that they’re prepared. The dean of studies does have a handful of funds, academic enrichment funds that students can apply to. There was, what was the John Joyce publication? Somebody must know about it? So, he tried to put together a publish...

Socos - navigating Vassar Student Association

Lotto – thanks, it was intended to provide a simple list of the resources, but there are so many resources, it is overwhelming, so...

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Pres –our generation really likes Buzzfeed quizzes, so maybe [have a quiz that asks] are you a current student? It’s listed like that in the website, but so bunched up, that it’s hard, maybe making a website more like Buzzfeed?

Lotto – I know [the website] went through a haul. I don’t really know that it looks like. I haven’t looked at it lately. The one I think... IGF is very well publicized. There are some everybody knows about, [some no one don’t know about], then a few that are in between. That’s been something about a lot of things in Vassar... If somebody could figure out the magic solution, that would be tremendous.

Pres – [I have] four more days in office so I’ll work on it.

Lotto - don’t know about... office

Pres – ...joke

Josh – I recently went through an academic enrichment grant... observation, in that process... handled under the dean of studies, number of other resources that are similar... transfer credit policies, also transferring from high school in terms of AP credits, course work you take in a college environment, specific scenarios not talked about... floating in dean of ___ office but there’s no office below it publicizing it. My professor didn’t know of such a grant so we called back and forth...

Lotto – the academic enrichment fund has a funny history. It used to be administered I think through the president’s department. I don’t really understand why it was under the dean of studies personally, so I’ll take a look at that. We all know each other, so if you were going to the fellowship office, I hope she would refer you to [the correct office].

Josh – [it] is one more step. There are also very vague... grants because it’s been passed around so much.

Lotto - I think others have done something very similar to that. I’ll certainly take a look at that and why these funds are administered directly where as they seem like grants. There must be a history and rationale. I think it’s a great suggestion to get better ____. With regards to transfer credit policies... are written in a catalogue and there is a ___ person in the dean of studies office. But if you’ve had a difficult situation, hopefully it’s been resolved. It’d be treat to tell me that offline. That I’m much more familiar with... rules and regulations, how they’re handled as a dean of freshmen. This is maybe not the right forum.

Josh – ...just more about the publicity.

Aca- this is sort of a loop back to training, partly feed... One thing I’ve heard, for all aspects of administration, just more sexual assault sensitivity training... [There is an] evolving demographic of students whose needs are very different [and change with time]. What sort of

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training do you foresee to deal with these issues- if not additional training, what kinds of other strategies?

Lotto – in regards to sexual assault matters, we receive regular training. I will certainly encourage slash require people to get those trainings regularly. As dean of freshmen, I did the training, Scott Louis and Lisa Kooperman... having her as a resource was tremendous. We have Elizabeth Schrock, Renee _____. I feel pretty comfortable that we have a pretty good training... [It is] vital for students... And that is a shifting landscape and I think it’s my job to keep on top of that. Even just in the last years, it’s evolving. Title Nine is _____... I don’t want to do it in response to legal issues. I think we want to do it to be ahead of the curb. In regard to shifting demographics, I think our challenge is our faculty and administration. It is our job to meet the students where they come from. The best thing I can say is I don’t know what specific training my cover it, but I’ll keep my ear on the ground. It goes back to _____ about listening, hearing carefully, and understanding when these other factors are in play- sometimes hitting the pause button and consulting colleagues, just to be very deliberate about it. I do think that any student that comes no matter what their background situation should feel like they’ve been heard. Even if the decision doesn’t go their way, [there should be] communication that is... in a sensitive way real challenge.

Socos – [this is some] feedback from students. One of the complaints is, not just the answer they wanted, but simply just not having the follow up. Someone said they sent an email _____, and [the reply was to] make an appointment. Then they didn’t and there was no follow up. As much as it’s a student’s responsibility, at a small school I think it would be good to follow up and have face-to-face interaction... Navigating Vassar as being a great project. The problem is with students... As you said, we’re only here for four years. It is possibly a great project for students to work on... I think that there is a demand. Maybe [this is] something for your office to [take over]. I urge you to consider working on that.

Lotto - part of that was students taking over _____. I’m not dismissing what you’re saying, but I do think there’s a lot of truth that is not always as uniformly available, not as accessible. And that’s something that’s going to be on my mind all the time. By _____ publications, a lot of these come back to uneven information and lack of access to information. I think that’s an absolutely vital thing. So the issues on follow up, I know I’m personally manic about that sort of stuff. I’m very much a detailed person. To figure out how to loop back to a student without it becoming... there’s kind of a funny balance. As one example, I’ve heard so-and-so is not going to class... nothing comes back, so I reach out again. Nothing comes back. As dean of freshmen, I’m dealing with freshmen. I may reach further and ask a student fellow. [The student may be playing video games]- ok. The student is in their room and never comes out -

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that would provoke different responses. I do think there is that follow up question about how to find students that are in distress and how to act appropriately. You’re emerging adults. How to navigate that... It’s a tricky one.

Pres – thank you so much for coming in, all of the questions weren’t to you [directly] because you haven’t been in the position yet, but these are things that come up all year.

Lotto – interactions ___ are high stakes. It’s really important to get that feedback even when negative, so that it’s on my mind and I can pass it... make sure they know that’s the reputation that is out there so that they can take the steps to be responsive and communicative. If any of you want to follow up, feel free to come talk to me for the rest of this year, any time. [Even when it is negative], I’ll be happy to talk about whatever is on your mind.

5 Reports

a. Activities(7 min)

Act – The storage space project absolutely... complete now, but we’re still looking at spaces, especially at the ___ market. We’re trying to find a permanent location. Hopefully it will be resolved before the end of the year. The VSA organization yard sale was yesterday and it was a success. Thank you Socos and Activities committee. Founders Day is fast approaching. The merch is here {Strong twirls and shows the merchandise}. There’s going to be pricing starting tomorrow. There will be a Vcash machine so look out. Leadership conference and programming committee meeting, ___ end of semester reviews... application- 8th and Sunday 4/20 is the closing date so pre-orgs get those in. Activities and I are talking about getting a drum set for orgs and student ___. The one in the mug is not usable. I’ve been talking to the music department and campus activities about getting a new drum set for us and rehearsal space... and an idea of a recording studio. That’s a project we’ll have more information on.

b. Finance(7 min)

Pres- it’s in your packet
2015 – also fun note, activities and finance have access to see everything finance has done so far for annual budgeting, under history and ___ finance view.

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

Pres – there is a new fro-yo place on route nine. On Mondays there is all you can eat for \$3.50, across from Barnes and Noble. You’re welcome by the way.
2015- small thing, there was a bathroom sign hung on the LGBTQ center, like over the sign which was kind of... I am like really? I don’t think its necessarily a big deal, but I

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figured we should say something when we see those things. And of course I kind of trolled Facebook. [A picture of it is] on Facebook..

Pres -we can follow up with that

SL - Joss laundry room is still not fixed and there fixing it, but it sucks.

6 Campaigning Funds Amendment.....Operations (15 min)

Socos - when we were giving the candidates meeting spiel, we reached the point where we were supposed to say [if you need] help funding to contact _____. We said to contact one of us [because we] thought it was a conflict of interest for VP for Ops. So we wrote this amendment to contact _____ instead of ops.

Pres - we will vote on this next week.

7 Open Discussion

Pres - desertification with activities

Act - three orgs that activities and I committee recommend to be decertified - the Nordic team has been inactive for 4 consecutive semesters. The bylaws say after 3 semesters it should be [discontinued]... a Vassar public Art, polo team mismanaged funds for a good number of semesters and put themselves in a deficit, and they along with finance and activities and I think [it is time for their decertification].

Jewett- does polo know?

Act - I’ve reached out to all of them, no response form Nordic. Vassar public art tried to get it going, but the person who tried to get it going said it was stopping and polo team said they were done.

Pres - [we can] do this as a block since we don’t have questions or comments

Noyes- can we do them individually?

Pres - any abstentions for the decertification of the Nordic team?

No abstentions for the Nordic team. All fall in favor decertifying the Nordic team.

Noyes abstains for the polo team. All else fall in favor of decertifying the polo team.

No abstentions for Vassar public art. All fall in favor of decertifying Vassar public art.

Pres- {directed to 2014 proxy} never mind you do you. There are a couple of days until graduation. Wait- I can do it. So like 42 days left.

Jewett - 4/19 is the spring concert. Tell your constituents to come... performance from Hype, Charles an alumni, and Danny Brown.

SL - a fun thing from Student Life committee... [There will be an] all campus study break on Monday 4/21, a munchies study break. It’s not what it’s going to be called. There are going to be fresh baked chocolate chip cookies, crepe machines... hopefully it’s going to be in the rose

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parlor. And then, we are planning a forum to open up a dialogue on the Title Nine process and the training officers go through and people... runs into a lot of problem in the past. People have felt that they have not... [We are] working on a forum with individuals who wrote about it for the Misc. [We are] planning for it to be on the 24th in two Thursdays. This Friday is an administration holiday. We want to make sure all administration we need to speak to are there. We are working out room reservations... more details to come. If you are interested [in this], let me know.

2017 – do people know this Friday [is an administration holiday]?

SL – probably not? I only found this out through a conversation.

Socos – board of elections, election are this week. Make sure posters are off by noon April 15th Tuesday. Voting will end on Thursday April 17th at noon. Make sure you vote. Misc please tweet... encouraging. Exec board of elections and judicial board chair seniors can vote...

Thursday April 17th at midnight is the elections party.

2015 – board of elections and appointments... that’s new is that for seniors too?

Socos- I don’t know off hand, but we’ll check.

Jewett – why are seniors allowed to vote?

Pres – they are like proxies for the freshmen.

Socos- I also like to think of it we get to kind of help who we’re leaving in charge as we leave.

SL – I forgot to mention, unofficial munchies Monday is supposed to be at 9pm hopefully in the rose parlor - 4/21.

Act – great Job Strong and Davison... and Raymond.

Raymond – I was going to say great job Steph for [singing]... speaking as a Daisy, Mr. Vassar is on Thursday at 8pm at UpC. It’ll be fun. Logan is also a Daisy.

TAs- on a more serious note, I should’ve said this, I just want to bring to attention quasi cyber bullying during Exec debates. I just want to respect individuals who are putting themselves out there and running.

2017 – Where is this occurring?

TA – Twitter

Pres – thank you for being candid with Ben Lotto. You’re all fabulous in every way.

End: 7:48