

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Agenda for September 28, 2014

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

“We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face...we must do that which we think we cannot.”-Eleanor Roosevelt

### 1 Call to Order

Start: 7:01

### 2 Attendance .....Operations

### 3 Consensus Agenda

- a. ViCE Special Events (Discretionary) .....\$1200/\$5000
- b. VC Sound System (Capital).....\$510/\$510
- c. Islamic Society (Discretionary).....\$375/\$375
- d. Class of 2016 (Discretionary).....\$0/\$500.33
- e. Improv (Discretionary).....\$121/\$121
- f. Ultimate Frisbee (Capital).....\$685/\$685
- g. Asian Students' Alliance (Speakers).....\$1000/\$2000
- h. Asian Students' Alliance (Capital).....\$371.71/\$371.71
- i. Minutes From 9/21/14

President: Does anyone object to the consensus agenda?

Joss: Why did Frisbee not get passed last week, but did this week?

Finance: The first time they applied for funding was for dinner once a week, we said no. Second time was for capital to buy Frisbees and Frisbee related things.

Activities: Frisbees, but also speakers?

Finance: As I said, Frisbees and miscellaneous Frisbee activities. This included Frisbees, a water cooler, speakers, and something else. A tent. Typically those are pretty standard for team-based organizations. It's really boring to practice without music so we thought they were appropriate.

President: Operations wanted me to let you know that he has a computer open because we don't have the speakers list on the screen. He isn't being irresponsible.

### 4 Executive Board Reports

- a. Finance.....(7 min)

Finance: Finance met for the second time in the past week. We approved these various fund applications. Levels are exactly where they should be right now, this early in the year. Members of the exec board that were available met to approve the appointed positions for finance committee for this year. I will send out a list of these individuals in the near future. I am very excited about the new students participating. Almost all accepted the position and we are waiting to hear back from a few others. We will start meeting at the usual time with this group of people once training happens.

President: Any questions for Finance? No.

- b. Activities.....(7 min)

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Activities: We also met for the second time this past week. We reviewed 29 pre-org applications. Decided to approve some, deny others, and meet with the rest. We will meet with them sometime this Thursday or next. That being said, I have decided to resign from my position. It's something I've been debating over the past week or so, this wasn't an easy decision. I will continue to come to council and activities meetings until my position is filled. But for those of you staying I promise you this experience is fulfilling.

Cushing: I wanted to say you're amazing and thank you for doing this as a senior. Your presence has been a rewarding experience for me, and I'm happy you're still my SARC intern.

President: thank you Activities, you've been great.

5 BOEA Business ..... BOEA (20 min)

President: Now we will discuss how we will fill Activities' position.

BOEA: First off, freshmen elections went well, we have a Freshman Class President here. So yea, the BOEA met today to discuss what we are planning, what we would like to recommend for this position. We strongly considered appointment over election for multiple reasons. We decided on election. We've been considering logistics, and we are recommending we open filing and campaigning starting Monday at noon, which would go 7 days until next Monday. Voting for the 48 hours following that. It will be a fairly quick turnaround considering the magnitude of the position.

Ferry: As soon as they file they can campaign?

BOEA: I made sure that you have to check off that you've read bylaws and ask any questions beforehand. The filing form is a little more interactive about how training works.

Activities: I trust BOEA, but I don't feel comfortable handing this position off to someone who has really good campaigning skills.

BOEA: Actually there were a lot of people on the fence for the implications of an election. While we really want to see someone good in the position, the disenfranchisement from doing an appointment seems to outweigh those issues.

2017: I would say that all of us are here because we campaigned and won an election.

Student Life: I'm curious about whether BOEA talked about the perceived separation from exec and the rest of the council.

BOEA: When the VSA ultimately makes the decision for an appointment as opposed to an election, the broader picture is that there is a select group of people that is already exclusive and usually picking their own successors. Because exec positions have a lot more, well a lot of scrutiny, considering the precedence of appointments have been highly controversial, elections have not been as highly questioned.

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Finance: I have a tremendous amount of respect for the BOEA, and the committee that was basically created from scratch. Casey knows exactly what he is doing, but I feel that I have to disagree with the decision of the committee, which may contradict with Casey's personal decision. We need someone to fulfill this roll immediately and start straight from where Activities left off. We had a lot of time to prepare, but a new person needs to be trained and situated with the roll. As willing as Activities is to stay and watch that happen, our positions are very administrative and a lot of stuff needs to get done immediately. For example, I am responsible for who is on which listservs. These administrative rolls need to be filled by someone who knows what they're doing. I do not think that the student body will feel disenfranchised because they didn't pick the VP for Activities. I think people won't really care. It is our job to make sure someone is capable of filling the roll, and an election will have very low voter turnout. Many people won't even know it happened. We need to worry about our function and how this will impact our programming and functionality.

Cushing: Question, I don't remember how this position was filled last year. Was it election or appointment?

President: Election. The year before two VP positions resigned and both were filled by appointment. But that was later in year.

Cushing: Was there a particular reason why it was election and not appointment? Is that because it was later in the year?

BOEA: The first time, it was because the positions were, there was certain level of controversy over positions that I think council wanted to deal with through appointment, so ultimately a discussion was had. Last year with the election emergency meeting called, we had a discussion that we thought in that specific situation an election would make sense. The situational aspect is key in our discussion.

Joss: A lot of what Finance talked about was emphasizing getting the right person rather than semantics and how we appear or how it will effect the opinions of student body. I'm wondering if anyone else thinks that an appointment would really be preferable in picking the right person for the job. Any strong opinions? Will we get a candidate who is competent enough for this position?

2017: Talking to Finance's point a little, I don't understand all of the issues you raised. Yes there is very real work that needs to be done immediately. However I don't see how we can have a conversation about how our mission is for openness and visibility if we don't look at how our actions affect our openness.

Jewett: If you're very on the fence because of the immediacy of the issue with the timeline, the difference is 3 days between election versus appointment.. I don't think that's a huge deal. Thinking

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about how positions have been filled, there has been lots of controversy about filling with appointment. So I feel that elections are perceived much better in general.

Davison: In response, I understand why elections increase access for members, specifically at large, but for this position, an exec board position, I personally feel more comfortable putting it as an appointment. I don't see executive positions as being as representative of the student body, in comparison to House Presidents. For this position I don't think it is as important. I would feel more comfortable with an appointment to handle the position immediately.

Activities: Echoing Finance, and even to make it about me, I resigned for reason. I want to be out of here. I need to get out and I don't want to sit for 4 weeks and train someone. I really think there are people on campus, on the activities committee, who would be great candidates, and I think there are a lot more advantages to an appointment than an election.

Jewett: There are definitely a lot of pros and cons for an appointment. The pro is that more people tend to apply when it is an appointment versus an election, because they find interviews to be more accessible. That being said, it's a small group choosing a very important position.

Operations: I'd like to start by saying I'm definitely in favor of election. To address Activities, about training people, all of exec can train someone. Very specifically, it is my job to train new members. Exec can handle a lot of responsibilities in the interim. I think it's really absurd to go against BOEA and then right after approve giving them the autonomy to do this on their own. We elected them for this job and they clearly had a long conversation. I trust their decision.

BOEA: Our appointment timeline is modified. Applications would open tonight at midnight, close noon Friday, and the appointment would be made Sunday afternoon. In order to make it feel more like a level playing field, anyone could come and observe interviews, however the interviews would be questions predetermined by the BOEA and anyone can add on that. There would be no open discussion after interviews, so that we would let everyone see what happens but not let some voices override others.

Finance: One, if we have conversation about the ethics of elections versus appointments, we should think about who is choosing the candidate. The election process does not mean that it is representative of the student body. There is an inherent bias, and this is shown by seeing how remarkably undiverse the VSA typically is. There needs to be a larger conversation about that before saying one is more representative than another. Coming to the shortened timeline, I appreciate that the BOEA is trying to make this work, and a 3 day difference doesn't make a difference at all, so that isn't a problem. The problem is with who is going to be put in the position. We can say all exec will help train, but these are positions that are complex. If I were to leave tomorrow, there would be issues, it doesn't matter how

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quickly the roll was filled. It definitely needs to be recognized that this is a lot more administrative than a house or class president position, and it is also important to think how this makes us look to everyone else. I think we care a lot more than the rest of campus, we just did this and it's exhausting. 3 weeks from now no one is going to know because 3/4 of the student body won't even vote.

2015: I think our biggest problem is getting caught up in elections. We need to recognize that we are a month into the school year and are changing the part of board that the student body sees the most. It doesn't matter if we can just come to an agreement about what's going to keep this thing going. We don't want some sort of backup, and suddenly we can't throw events. That is what the student body is going to care about.

At Large: I'm listening to you speak and there are things I am somewhat alarmed to hear. The concept that you don't think that we care is not true at all. We really do care as shown by our responses to how positions are filled. The concept of an exec board, they represent us in a very clear way to administration. So the concept that the general student body, who would have to go to Activities as a member of their org... if you don't know what is happening because there's no election, you may not be aware who they even are. An election gives us the opportunity to see their platform. I totally understand that it will be a lot of extra work, especially for the remaining members of exec and for Activities. But this sets a very not good standard about who represents us, especially because we have a very high turnover for exec positions, it feels like it's disenfranchising us again by saying we can't elect the next person who is going to sit on board and represent us to administration. I'm not comfortable and the concept that we don't care is really really false.

2015: If we have an election, we need to make it a point that it is very public what this position is. it can be very overwhelming to encounter everything exec has to do for the first time.

BOEA: With advertising the election, the first set of emails will directly explain that at this point we need someone who can come in on the ground running and describe what that means.

Finance: Does a certain percentage of the student population need to vote in order for an election to be valid?

Jewett: Especially because orgs do work with Activities a lot, and like 90% of people on campus are involved in orgs, Activities is very representative of the student body. If people care, then the student body is accountable if there is an election, and that's important.

At Large: I'm on the twitter feed and every single person on the feed wants an election.

Finance: How many people replied?

At Large: 6

Finance: And how many of those are from the Misc?

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At Large: 3

Finance: And that's a lot?

At Large: it's a lot for us.

BOEA: In an election, someone has to receive more than 50% of votes from the coming voters.

President: Sounds like we'll have at least 6 voters. One, we really want to ensure that we are making the best decision so that people know they have a voice in this, and two that we do this in a way that we have a VP for Activities who is ready to go.

Strong: It is important to consider when making this decision not only what BOEA has said. That is very important, but part of why we are arguing so much is that we are looking at this as not only what's best for student body but what's best for us as a board and as individuals. Ultimately what is best for them needs to come first.

Activities: Everyone has valid points, and I care about the position so much. I wouldn't be here if I wasn't passionate. That being said, I don't feel comfortable allowing someone who doesn't have any relationship with these 140 orgs to oversee them. I've developed relations with so many, and I also approve events, and I don't feel comfortable having someone come in not knowing what they're doing. It entails a lot, and we need someone with some background.

Cushing: I would like to ask at large members to feel free to participate as much as you can. It is very important and this effects the whole campus. So if you have anything to say, go ahead.

TA: On that point, I think this may be off topic, but there are at large members here who have expressed very real questions about the process and the lack of respect that we've given them is a little saddening, especially as a council who prides themselves on openness accessibility.

At Large: I support BOEA on this issue. An election is the student body's decision. I have faith in BOEA. Casey's done a wonderful job besides the fact that he said he's resigning. Preference should be given to him, he's the one who has to do this. It's him. I support him.

TS: About what you were saying about not trusting someone with no experience, that is part of the job and what you learn on the job. They're going to have to learn as they go, that might be part of it.

Hopefully it is someone with experience with orgs, but it is most important that they care and have the capacity to develop these relationships. It's going to be hard because of the time of year, but it is important that they represent the student body.

Raymond: Similar to that, I understand that idea of an appointment means that you have more control over the position. But as someone who was appointed and not elected, I don't think it guarantees that someone who knows what they're doing will fill the position any more than an election does. There is

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no way of that happening. I've been learning on the job, I got thrown right into this, so I think it is perfectly feasible.

Operations: I want to make a motion. I move to accept the BOEA recommendation to fill the position by special election with the timeline specified.

Finance: People have made a lot of good points, and I'm happy to hear from At Large. These are all great arguments in theory, but it is a lot more technical than house positions, and requires a lot more training. It is different running in April because there is lots of training time including training from the previous and current exec board. On exec Activities has the largest responsibility in terms of time and the diversity of things needed to be done on a daily basis. I think anyone can fill this roll in May, but not in October. Anyone here was empowered by the people who elected or appointed them to make these kind of decisions, and people are far more concerned with the most effective choice. The people who most typically vote are people engaged in Activities. The people who elected our board were people engaged last semester. Typically this position is filled by rising juniors, because those are the people who vote for them. Right now they're abroad. Now we have a new Sophomore and Freshmen class. In spring the student body is a lot more educated as opposed to now, where a quarter of the school is brand new and doesn't know who is qualified. I think this needs to be taken into consideration.

Joss: I'd like to ask quickly, I thought you weren't allowed to vote in spring if you are studying abroad.

BOEA: In terms of eligibility, the bylaws specifically state them. The senior class proxies for the freshmen. Right now we still have 4 classes, and seniors have good faith in knowing how Vassar runs, even if they won't be here.

Joss: In terms of being a popularity contest, an election for Activities is very different than for the position for Freshman Rep. I think it is a very big distinction between a special election for the VP of Activities and the election of a Freshman Rep. A lot more campaigning effort, and I have faith in the election process in picking best candidate. Appointment does not necessarily guarantee getting a great candidate. It will require extensive training no matter what, and I sense that the general climate in this room is for an election.

2016: I support election. Like Operations said, we deliberated a lot during operations meetings. Why do we have the BOEA if we aren't going to trust their decision. Elections worked in the past, specifically for Student Life last year, and the person is going to have to be trained regardless, so people will have to step up. I don't know what people mean when they want someone who is experienced. What does that mean? Having some rolls in an org? Also if we have very much outlined the responsibilities, it will make it very serious and lesson pool of random people applying.

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Student Life: The structure of an appointment is specifically designed to find the most competent person. More people throw a hat into the pool in the appointment process. The whole point is to find a person who is best for the job. In theory election is the same, but as someone in orgs I would feel my back would be covered more if this was an appointment, but if the student body wants an election we have to be responsive to that.

Cushing: Directed to Activities and Finance, what do we mean, I'm asking this to make sure of what you're saying, what do we mean when we say someone who has been on Activities and has experience with Activities? Do we have someone in mind particularly? Or is it just an expression? I just want this made clear.

Activities: Some people on the committee know which orgs we have, have a knowledge of the VSA, and some people have strong ties with the Campus Activities office. Mostly just knowing the orgs that we have. You can't necessarily gauge that through an election.

Finance: 2 responses. If I were hit by bus, there are probably 4 people on campus who could step into my roll and there would be no difference. They could all do this and there would be no difference in bank accounts or purchasing, but if it were anyone else it would probably take a few weeks, considering that things are already moving. What I said with experience, people usually have time to prepare and are already in the rolls. An appointment means that we are guaranteed someone with experience, but it doesn't mean we are guaranteed someone good.

Activities: Maybe someone who knows about the pre-org process, because it will take me maybe a week, 2 weeks, to teach someone what a pre-org is and why we can't approve them all. There's a process to it all

At Large: A lot of the things I'm hearing from people around room about appointment rather than election seem very self-centered, like what is best for you as an individual. Someone said we need to seek to represent our constituents. As an individual, I don't care that your job is going to be harder for the next week of the half. If it benefits 2400 students for the next 6 months, you can deal. You agreed to have this position, and as a member at large this seems elitist, saying "hmm what will be best for VSA council?" You are supposed to represent us, and appointments just don't do that.

finance: Can you elaborate on why appointments don't work?

at large: They don't, not as much. When you look at the definition of an appointment versus an election, more people have a say in an election. More people will have voices heard. We elected BOEA to decide these things.

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Academics: I don't want to give my personal opinion. I want to say that this is a really heartening thing because I felt like a lot of people in this room didn't care, and this showed me that people really care. This is the most at large members that have talked in a long time, I thank you for caring.

2016: Speaking to something Activities said about having relationships with orgs and administration. That is the point of being VP of Activities, you're going to develop these relationships. No one can have a relationship with every single org, they develop over time. When you're in the roll, I understand there is a lot involved, and training takes care of that. That comes with the job as you are in it.

Operations: At this point people are starting to make the same points. I want to call a second motion, to call to question and end the debate.

President: I don't have a vote, but it's easy to look at this as a group, but we are not an ordinary group. I encourage you to look at this...I don't care if my job is harder for a month...try to see if you are looking at it from your perspective or that of the student body. We are just going to vote on this and end it. Options are abstention, voting in favor of an election, and voting against an election.

Abstaining: Activities, Student Life, Academics, 2018, and Davison

In Favor: Operations, Town Students, 2016, TAs, Raymond, Lathrop, 2017, 2015, Jewett, Main, South Commons, Strong, Ferry, Joss, Cushing, Noyes.

Against: THs, Finance

The election passes. BOEA, I need you to send me the timeline.

6 BOEA Amendment..... Operations (10 min)

Operations: You all saw this amendment last week. It makes BOEA internally decide on appointment or election to fill a vacancy, so this would not happen anymore. Any questions?

President: Perfect. Alrighty. So, abstention, pro-amendment, or no to this amendment.

Academics: I would feel more comfortable, after the very long conversation we just had, I am not in the appropriate headspace to make any sort of decision. Can we table this and think about what happened tonight and what will happen in the future? That would help me as a person. I motion to move to table.

Operations: I want to speak to the motion. I would like to point out that Operations has now spent 3 weeks talking about this and lots of thought went into it. Operations already put a lot into it.

President: Okay, I motion to table, to table for a week and revisit.

Abstaining: None

In Favor: Town students, Raymond, Lathrop, TH's, 2017,2015, Main, Ferry, Activities, Academics, 2018, Strong, Ferry, Davison, Cushing, Joss

Opposed: 2016, TAs, Jewett, South Commons.

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The motion to table has passed, we will revisit it.

### 7 Open Discussion

Cushing: One thing that I've observed in the last 3 meetings, we don't know when there are a lot of abstentions. Can we please make it clear to everyone what the process is when there are 7 or 8 abstentions. Like why do we need 16 people for something?

President: Definitely, we will clarify the process.

Main: Activities, I love you and I'm going to miss you on VSA.

2016: I will also miss Activities. Also, 2016 is having their first event, which is unfortunately just for juniors. It is called "Where Are All The Juniors" and we are trying to make people abroad feel like they're still here. We will try to make maps of how many people are in each country and really unify the class. It is on Saturday from 11-2. Mark your calendars.

Operations: To echo Academics' sentiment, I am really glad so many people participate. I am glad people have feelings and cared. In general, in the future I don't think we should have to make that kind of decision the second after it is dropped on us.

Joss: Love you Activities, you're the best. It was really great to have At Large members who come regularly. It is great to have you here, especially the people who live tweet and give an alternative perspective.

Activities: Thank you all for a very exhilarating last hour. It was everything I wanted in last council meeting. Regardless of who winds up in the position, I will train them to best of my ability.

Finance: Welcome to Rebecca, our Freshmen Rep. My goal in terms of council very generally is to have more of a community feel. For example when I was in your roll my freshmen year I ended the year not knowing everyone's name on council. I hope that this is something we can all amend. Activities, I don't know that I would have even run for my position if you weren't running for Activities. People don't see how much he has done. The reason that I'm ok with this happening on an emotional level is because he has done most of what needs to be done for rest of semester. He was very proactive and put up with a lot. I appreciate you sticking with it this long. The biggest problem I see with the VSA in my 3 years on council has to do with the election and appointment process. Try to be open minded that just because it is an election, doesn't mean it is representative of the student body. This position has been filled by a white man for the last half decade. This has caused a lot of issues, and is indicative of council as whole. We should be looking for new ways to rectify this.

At Large: In regards to the email from members of administration last night about their potentially being someone with a firearm on campus. I was hoping someone could speak to if they know of something going on that hasn't been told to us yet. The email said the report came in at 20 past ten,

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but we weren't informed until more than 2 hours later. Why is there such a huge time difference?

Personally I felt really uncomfortable not knowing that someone was carrying weapon on campus for 2 hours on a Saturday night.

Town Students: I'm not familiar with that whole process, but I know in the past it often takes a while for the police report to come out. They are very cautious and don't want to alarm students if it is unnecessary. There's a whole series of steps. It shouldn't take that long, but I don't know if that's anything we could address. It is a longish process.

President: We are meeting with Cappy tomorrow, and Chris Roelke later in the week, but I was personally concerned and in my position concerned, so we will definitely bring it up.

At Large: I am one of Cappy's assistants this year, and every other week or so we hope to have a representative at every council. I am sending notes to Cappy and Chris, so this problem will be brought up. I am also hoping to get back in here to do a forum about what we do. If you have any concerns, I see her once a week so let me know if there is ever anything.

2015: I want to echo Finance. I'm still not sure how I got here but I wouldn't be here without Activities.

Activities: Based on the timeline, I will be here next week so this is not my last meeting. Directed towards house presidents, I know VSAs can suck, but I promise the experience is rewarding and satisfying. We are dropping like flies, and I promise it is a great experience. With that I move to adjourn.

President: All in favor? All but me. Opposed? Me. Meeting adjourned.

End: 8:11