

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Agenda for February 15, 2015

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

“Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up.”
-James Baldwin

1 Call to Order

Start: 7:02

2 Attendance.....Operations

Absent: Davison, Student Life

Proxies: THs

Late: Finance

3 Consensus Agenda

- a. BSU (Speakers).....\$4500/\$5000
- b. Miscellany News (Capital)\$1344/\$1344
- c. Feminist Alliance (Social Consciousness).....\$1000/\$1000
- d. Davison House (Capital) \$432.52/\$432.52
- e. Democracy Matters (Speakers)\$425/\$425
- f. Organizations For Approval
 - i. Beauty and the Beats
 - ii. Body Positive
 - iii. Committed
 - iv. Generation
 - v. LiNK
 - vi. YDS
- g. PreOrgs Advancing a Semester:
 - i. Chabbat
 - ii. J Street U
 - iii. Mug Enthusiasts
 - iv. VAWFA
 - v. Chess Club
 - vi. Quizbowl
 - vii. WOCA

Activities: For the first group of pre-orgs, we spent a lot of time assessing them, and these are the ones moving up from third level pre-orgs to orgs. The pre-orgs who are advancing a semester are these other ones listed below. The other ones, since this is not all of the pre-orgs, we are reviewing and seeing if we want to move them up further or let them stay at their current level to do more work on campus, and see whatever we can do to help them. And we are also still taking applications for new pre-orgs, due Thursday.

- h. Class of 2016 Treasurer - Juan Fernandez
- i. Strong House Treasurer - Julianne Johnson

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At-Large: As far as appointing goes, Juan Fernandez sent in an application and also answered interview questions online because he couldn't meet. Julianne Johnson, she has experience on house team and seemed really excited to take on the position.

j. Minutes From 2/8/15

President: Any questions on the fund apps that are listed here? They all seem pretty straightforward, I looked over them this week. We're going to move on then. Does anyone not agree with something on the consensus agenda? No? Okay, we will assume it is passed.

4 Constituent Concerns..... (20 min)

President: Does anyone have any to bring up? It's okay if you don't, there is a lot on the agenda. I just want to provide the space.

2016: I kind of have one. So my class has to deal with thinking about senior housing, and there is no formal organization tool, no formal one to form groups, or if people don't get a 5 person house, no tool listing people in singles or doubles who are looking for a house. I feel like there is something that should be implemented to do that.

5 Executive Board Reports

a. President.....(7 min)

President: The biggest thing, the trustees are coming back from February 27th to 28th, which will be fun. I don't know if you will all be invited to the dinner again because that is normally not the case. The main thing is, and obviously I will report back to you all after, but if there is anything you want stressed or focused on, I would, let me know and I can make sure it gets covered. Next, administrator meetings are coming up again. If there is an administrator you have particular concerns for, let me know. If at any point you want to meet with someone and feel uncomfortable reaching out to them, let me know and I can put you in touch. Last, forums are being scheduled for the semester, like the one with Luis last week. If there is anyone specific you want, let me know. I generally invite who asks to come and who has come in the past, but if you have an idea reach out.

Town Students: I was wondering, I live with someone who has done a lot of activist work concerning the trustees specifically, like the divestment campaign, and I am curious what their level of awareness is on issues on campus. What they know and what they are thinking they want to do, because they play a huge part, they are really involved and implicated in all of it. I think we should be able to have some form of conversation because it is not clear exactly what their... recently there was an email thread that pushed to remove some administrators. They obviously know about some of this, but as of now it could be something where they're like "this always happens," so a way to gauge their level of concern?

President: They definitely know what goes on, more than people think. Not that that always means they are aware of the intensity of an issue, because they kind of get one side of it through a filtered lens, but they are aware, and I am sure they saw the email circulating, and I have to talk to them about

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student concerns so I address that sort of stuff. They are incredibly aware of the divestment, it has lots of focus in meetings. If there are specific things you'd like to get passed on, let me know and I will make sure it gets conveyed.

Town Students: Do you take questions?

President: The meetings are like this, updates, they ask questions, and then discussion that I participate in. And there is stuff where all of exec goes for them to ask about student life and student opinion. Granted, their receptivity is varying based on topic, but they are generally very receptive.

Strong: I want to request we get Art of Admissions in.

President: Cool, anyone else?

2 Council Updates

a. Jewett.....(7 min)

Jewett: I know the TAs will be excited, Jewett merch is coming in this week. We are also in the advanced stages of planning Seven Deadly Sins, which will be a week from Friday. Everything that is under our control is under control. It is going to be great, come, and tell your constituents. We are launching publicity this week. That is pretty much it.

b. 2017.....(7 min)

2017: There's really nothing we are doing that is immediate, so if that is the focus, we met, we are talking, planning programming in the very early stages. I can go into that. Our class wanted to bring in a speaker, an 84' grad and president of the NAACP education fund, she wrote an amazing book, and last year did the commencement speech at NYU Law, a beautiful speech, and we really want her in to speak. Her schedule didn't work last semester, and this semester we've been loosely keeping in touch. She was contacted by two professors working with Dialogue and Engagement Across Differences, and now they want to bring her in. So there is a small power struggle. We want her in regardless. If they have more pull they can do that and we'll just attend. That is the big thing. Also, a more enjoyable programming, we want to have an outdoor movie screening in late April. That is in the early stages. There will be food and candy, so get excited already. By the time it comes around you will be so excited.

c. 2016.....(7 min)

President: 2016 is going to talk later in the semester.

6 Elections Amendment.....Jewett (20 min)

Jewett: It is the same as it was last week.

President: Can you say what this would change?

Jewett: Cool. Basically what it will do, it will make Spring elections the same as Fall, and it shaves 3 days off because as it is, elections are long and stressful. It also conflicted with the Res Life room draw. That is not an issue anymore, but I still think it is a good idea. It will shorten things up a little bit.

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President: Does anyone have anything they want to say?

2017: Question, we were discussing this in ops, you mentioned next year there will also be a conflict with room draw, the schedule as it was would conflict this year and next year.

Operations: I might have said that. Luis said Res Life wants to try and make it earlier and earlier every year. Not super early though. They want to distance room draw and finals so that time of year is not as stressful.

President: So this will basically make it the same as Freshman elections.

Jewett: Yes. So it will be a week, a week, and two days of voting. Any questions?

President: So we're going to vote.

Is anyone abstaining? No.

All in favor? Everyone.

All opposed? No one.

Therefore we will pass this amendment.

7 Elections Timeline.....BOEA (20 min)

BOEA: Hi, okay, so, you should have a sheet that says suspended/amended. Since we chose the amendment, filing will open Tuesday April 7th, at noon. If no time is listed, assume it is at noon. A week later it will close, and later that day will be the mandatory candidate meeting. After campaigning opens, it will close Monday April 20th, and at noon voting will open. The results will be released in the Retreat that night. Room draw starts two days later. Any questions?

President: Awesome. We're going to vote to accept this timeline. If you want to abstain, I don't know why you would, but that is your business.

2017: I just want to make sure, do we have confirmation from Res Life that two days will be enough?

BOEA: For time? To remove from the room draw? Yes, we do. Additionally there will be an interest meeting, so we will be emailing you all to talk about your positions and get other people to run. And there will be an exec debate before campaigning closes.

At-large: Do we know when the exec debate is?

BOEA: No, not until we get the candidate schedules. I am assuming Sunday, April 19th, because campaigning ends April 20th. Maybe at 5pm, and then you can all go to council, it will be a fun evening.

President: Does anyone want to abstain?

All in favor? Everyone.

All opposed: No one. Way to go. Yay we have a timeline, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. But this is a great position and you should all run for it.

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8 ResLife Task Force CharterOperations (20 min)

Operations: As Luis mentioned briefly, this task force will look at the current Res Life house team structure, determine elements that need to be re-imagined, reinforced, or changed. Some key points, the construction will be of more students than administrators or faculty. Also, everyone who joins has to be on campus this and next semester. So if you are abroad in the Fall, you can't apply. There needs to be continuity in the committee to do its thing. Other highlights, we are not giving it any funding outright. It can apply to Finance for funds. Anything we contribute will also be matched by the Dean of College division, because we are jointly chartering it. Any questions?

President: How do you apply to be on it?

Operations: Chris Roellke and Carolina will send out a joint email to the student body. And then to join, you can contact Luis or myself. It will probably be via application, because I am assuming more than 6-8 people will be interested.

At-large: Any reason why it includes every house position in the membership, including at-large and not on house team, except HFIs or floor fellows?

Cushing: They count as house officers. We should take care of that though. I was going to say, in Operations we were talking about, from which years, whether, 2014-2015 members or 2015-16 members of house teams are eligible to join. Did we come to a consensus?

Operations: Yes. It will be just current House Team members. The committee will start almost immediately, and they won't be there next year.

Cushing: Can we change that to make sure representatives of House Teams are on it next year? If they apply?

Operations: The idea is that membership will be constant across the two semesters that they will be working. Old House Team members will count as at-large.

TAs: There are lots of seniors who have been on House Team before. Is there no way for them to join if they wanted to?

Operations: No. Not as this is written.

Strong: How will this work for the Operations component?

Operations: It means I'm signed on for next year.

Finance: Is there any way to make membership more flexible? Maybe seniors can join for a semester. It is kind of bizarre to cut out the 25% of the student body with the most institutional memory for how House Teams have changed. Can there be observing members for a semester?

Operations: I don't see a problem with that.

Ferry: I just want to say, this is a small task force, and it is hard to fill it with a variety of people who aren't seniors. The idea is to have continuity and maintain a small, functioning task force.

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2017: There is a lot of rigidity, not only in the exclusion of seniors, but in ensuring that next year there will be no House Team members on it. Unless one happens to be on House Team for two years in a row. Come December next year, they will be recommending a plan not looked over by those who are currently on House Team.

President: Would it be possible, for this semester to allow seniors, and for next semester have a few new members replacing seniors who are currently on House Team? That way it would cover past, present, and future House Teams.

Operations: That sounds doable.

Academics: I think it would be a detriment. When you've been on a yearlong committee, when you bring in new people and have to fill them in on what you're doing and bring them up to speed, I feel that is a detriment to the task force. The language isn't so rigid, it uses words like "ideal". Ideally this what we should look like because there is a large swath of people. Personally I don't see the problem. The task force isn't about dealing with things currently happening. It is about reimagining and rethinking structure.

Finance: What I find concerning is the issue of surpassing our mandate by creating a structured committee and saying this is how it should be formatted a year from now, when this council is not even going to be reviewing the findings. I understand that we are looking forward, but my thought process when it comes to student government is that if students want to be involved and are interested, they should be able to be. This committee needs to be as open as possible so that anyone who wants to contribute can. On the onset limiting 25% of the student body, with still a semester left, is not the way to go about doing it. I can't see why we can't make it more open.

TAs: Off of that point, I can't speak for everybody, for all seniors, but I imagine many have been invested in this and in Res Life in the past. I mean, they might have a good stake in how Res Life moves forward. Even if they are not living here, this has been their home for the past four years.

President: I think academics brings up a good point. My other concern, having been on house team for two years and on different house teams, it was different both years, and there is a limited sample size in one year, since each year is largely affected by the goings on on campus and by house dynamics, so I worry there will be a limited perspective by only pulling from one year, but also this should have some continuity.

Academics: This really is not rigid. Luis and Ramy can pick whomever they like. Now that they've heard our concerns, when reviewing, they can take that into mind. The ideal isn't exactly what the committee is going to be necessarily.

Operations: The way it is currently written, if we do end up wanting more people, we can just add them. That is under the discretion of the chairs. It is not like anyone is really automatically excluded.

Main: Could all of these issues be resolved by adding the words "at least..."?

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President: Maybe. Anyone else? Do we have to vote this week?

Operations: We don't have to, but we are allowed to.

President: I have to make a motion to withhold for a week. Given this discussion I think we should wait a week. We can table it back to Operations to work out the kinks.

So, all in favor of waiting a week? All.

All opposed: None.

9 VSA Executive Board Stipend Amendment.....2017 (45 min)

Operations: So we are going to give a history first.

At-large: So, I wrote this in the past. One discussion in the Spring of 2013 led to, it might have been through SCIA, the original document in which we wrote a letter to administration about the idea that exec should be given a stipend as a way of accessibility concerning the given hour commitment. That isn't to say that any other work on campus doesn't have a big commitment, everything does, such as sports and council members. But because this specific body works closely with administration, historically speaking there is an expectation that all students have access to these positions even with a work study commitment. So the idea would be to have a way to clock hours, not during council meetings that other council members are also doing, but during the other added-on tasks the exec positions are responsible for. I don't know what the discussion has been since that letter was created, it has been a long time, and I don't know the specific state of this document. There has been a long discussion on finding a way for students who are on work study, a way that those needs can be met if they consider running for an exec position. Historically speaking, the position favors individuals not on work study.

Operations: After the initial letter, last year's council wrote a letter to Cappy. She turned it down, said it was Chris's project, and he was on sabbatical. Last semester Hannah brought it up, and the senior officers and Chris said we can get paid, but it will have to come from our budget, not the school budget, for fear of a conflict of interests.

Finance: What was the actual fear?

President: We talked a lot. The idea is that if a specific office is paying us, his reasoning to me one on one, was that if an office is paying, now they would never do this, but there is the fear of a future evil being who manipulates the exec board because they are in his pocket, and suddenly the exec autonomy is paid off by an evil Dean pushing evil projects because he is paying them. So a weird bribery situation is going on. In order to keep us as a separate body, if paid by the college maybe we might feel pressure to conform to administrator requests, so in order to stay separate, we cannot take money from them.

2017: As it is written, it would give every member of exec a stipend. The manner in which that would be dispensed isn't written, I'm assuming weekly or biweekly, but that is not important to the structure.

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Would it be equal amounts or would the student be eligible for the traditional work study allowance per class year? This brings up a debate we've been having, I don't think this is something we've decided on, so maybe decide here, whether or not only people paid on work study will get the money. Because that can be viewed as unfair if people doing the exact same work are not getting paid. That is a big thing to work through. Anyone who is receiving a stipend and decides to work a campus job will have to forfeit their stipend to be employed by the college. That way they can't game the system and be paid double.

President: I want to add that the proposed change will take place next year. So this will not affect anyone on this year's exec board.

At-large: A point of clarification, if you don't want to take advantage of the stipend while already having a job. Can't you also opt in? One thing from my background as an intern for the Financial Aid office, if this treated as a campus job through the Office of Student Financial Services, I don't know what the thoughts or discussion have been about that, but I just wanted to make you aware, the stipend is an allowance, not guaranteed. You have to clock in. So if you sign this to student employment, if want you want to be a separate element, treated as a campus job in the sense that it forgoes one, a little wonky thing, those numbers change depending on hours and what relationship is maintained with the Student Employment office. If the relationship is structured and in place, I am just trying to clarifying how it will be structured from their end. It will be placed through student employment if I understand the current language.

Finance: What I'm interested in hearing from council, this is the third time I've seen this proposal, and in my experience and my institutional memory, not having a program like this limits the pool of potential runners for VSA executive positions. We made commitments at the beginning of the year to try to uphold that, a commitment to diversity, and this position is currently limited to a certain group of people on this campus. The reason it is so vague, we don't yet know how to work it out. But we were tired of waiting for other people to work it out for us. So if you are supporting the resolution, it means you are condoning us to go ahead and make it work. I'm opposed to discussing the logistical, I don't think it is relevant and it is going to be complicated. I am interested in hearing what you think about making the position more open.

Cushing: I don't know if this is relevant. I want to ask. Who is paying this ,where is the money coming from? Are we going to administrators, or will there be a separate VSA fund for this? My second question, I don't know if it can be answered, is whether House Presidents will ever get paid, considering that we also attend 7 hours of meetings every week, which is basically a campus job. If not, maybe a stipend would be a good replacement for that.

Finance: The avenue we are most currently exploring is that money will come from our fund. Money would be taken from the Student Accounts fee. This is viable since we are looking for ways for that to

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be restructured, considering we don't use it to the full extent every year. Also, it would be marginal compared to how much is in the fund. I think we approved more money this week than it would cost to pay for these jobs for the whole year. That is where we are looking. In terms of how it will be distributed, there are tax issues we have to deal with. Presumably we will transfer a set amount of money to the Controller's office and they will figure out an appropriate way to distribute to us that meets tax obligations. We are not just withdrawing cash and handing out stacks to the VSA exec.

Strong: My question, why do you think people who are already on work study who are willing to do another job need to give up their stipend?

2017: The idea was to, because this is being done to make sure people can run comfortably, and can find time to fully discharge the duties. The purpose isn't to make exec a paid position, but to ensure that people who depend on work study money can be a member of exec without also having to do 9-10 hours of other work.

Strong: My concern, as someone who has a very taxing work study job and this position, there is no way in hell I would give up my work study position, since exec is just one year.

Jewett: Can't you petition for more than one work study job?

At-large: It is really complicated, technically you are only supposed to be working a designated number of hours and receive a designated stipend range. If you reach the cap you can't work anymore for that period. Those logistics are important.

Finance: This isn't work study, it is just being structured like it. I am a million trillion percent positive we are not under their obligations.

President: It would be similar to the HSA position, where you can reject the stipend for exec and keep your current job. This currently works if you're an HSA. I know HSAs who wanted to keep their job and rejected the stipend.

Socos: I worked two work study jobs, and it is not that complicated, it took 5 minutes and it was done. You can have two at once, it is stupid, but you can do that.

Operations: A few things. In the present structure, the max cost is \$13,000-\$14,000 if everyone on exec got paid. Which is nothing compared to how much we rake in from student accounts. The second thing, Pomona uses their student accounts fee to pay most of the elected positions. Point three, responding to Cushing, on the potential of paying House Presidents, if we did this, it would be a foot in the door toward making that happen. This is the third year trying for this, and if we manage to get it done, we would be able to have a serious conversation about those other options.

Ferry: I don't know if this needs to be on this amendment, but there should be something in place about what happens with the money if someone gets out of an exec position, because it could be unclear how many hours they worked if they left at a random point in the semester.

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Joss: I just want to throw it out there that even if we approve this, I don't think we can offer a stipend and think we can expect it to fix all our problems. It is definitely a step in the right direction, but it will not magically solve all problems.

Finance: I wanted, I thank Luke for that comment, I do stress baby steps. This entire year we have been making small adjustments to make council more open and accessible. I think thus far more progress has been made in this past year than we have when we have tried to do sweeping restructuring in an idealistic fashion. I do think this is one of the million trillion things we have to do make student government more accessible to the student body.

President: There are definitely a lot of components, both logistically and idealistically. If you have ideas email them to Operations, 2017, or me. Not Max apparently. We will definitely be discussing this. Let someone know if you want to discuss further. What Max said about baby steps is important.

10 Open Discussion

Joss: The Battle of the Bands will be Saturday the 21st at 7pm in the Susan Stein Shiva Theater. Nine bands and artists playing, so please make it out. There is a Facebook event with set times on it if you want to go see your friends. It will be really rad, and there are prizes for first place, cash for each member and an opportunity to play at a No-Vice show. It will be fun, really sick, you should go.

Finance: A few things. So because I was late, I want to explain what the \$6000 that we committed to other people were, so everyone knows. BSU is collaborating with the Office of Health Education to bring a speaker who will be speaking titled "Not All Black Girls Know How To Eat". This is one of the many joint ventures the VSA is pursuing with the Office of Health Ed. The Misc needs a new comp because they have been trying to fix their computer for a million trillion years and have yet to be successful. Fem Alliance wants to start their first ever conference, oh, second ever, second non-annual conference, on campus sexual assault among other things. It will be really cool, and a good fund.

Davison house, in a triumph of student will, the treasurer spent all year trying to procure bike racks, and somehow they got the Sustainability Office to pay for them. So we paid for locks. Part of this is a project to see if this can be a model given to all of the houses, by which we would pay for locks and students would put down a deposit. We are hoping to lesson bike thefts. Democracy Matters wanted to have a panel, it might have already happened. No, it happens on Thursday. The second thing, SIRC will be meeting for the first time this semester tomorrow. They will be discussing the divestment proposal, so if people are particularly inclined, talk to me about how you feel. There are lots of feelings and we've spent lots of time gathering those feelings. I sent out an email concerning open positions in the Finance Committee, appointed positions, and the committee now is much more representative of the student body in terms of gender, race, discipline, important things, so encourage your friends to apply. I will be giving, spurred by Josh Sherman, sending an email out about fund levels. I decided to

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compile a presentation that will be accessible to everyone here. I just need to verify numbers with Accounting. Then it will be sent to the Misc and the student body. Last semester we conducted audits, and the results will be sent sometime this week and there will be a presentation to council. I am working on who we will be reviewing this semester, but I'm pretty sure it will include Hip Hop 101 and the Houses as a group. If you are interested in being involved let me know.

Academics: Also another thing to apply for, the student seminars. The application for teaching a seminar will come out tonight.

2016: I have another bone to pick with Res Life. I am interested in seeing if, with the way the current timeline is, you find out if you get into a 4 or 5 person draw, which happened the 13th or something. I wanted to figure out a way to coordinate that with juniors applying for the suite draw, so that if they didn't get in, we can combine these groups. I've been emailing, and was told by Res Life that this is "impossible" and I find that ridiculous. So I don't like Res Life.

Jewett: I just wanted to ask Joss if we have to reserve tickets?

Joss: Nope. Just show up.

Operations: Two quick things. Since Student Life isn't here, All College Days are happening Monday-Wednesday, and you can view the schedule online. The VSA helped fund it and partially are staffing it. There will be a bunch of workshops, and a keynote speaker Monday night. Tell your constituents, and there is a Facebook event, invite people.

Academics: Also as a proxy for Student Life. The Title IX survey, there will be a focus group on that, happening when Student Life meets tomorrow at 8pm in the VSA office. If you like pizza and \$5 Vcash and are on the VSA hop on in.

Operations: And then second thing, a project I've been working on personally and would like help, as we all know student leaders don't often feel appreciated, so I am working on planning an award ceremony taking place in April, and need help. If you'd like to join send me an email. It will be cool, and a dinner potentially.

2017: Is this for student leaders just on the VSA?

Operations: No, everyone! And I move to adjourn.