

VSA Council

Sunday, November 8, 2015

7:00pm – 8:40pm, New England 106

Minutes by Steven Park

Attendance

2016	Yes
2017	Proxy
2018	Yes
2019	Yes
Cushing	Yes
Davison	Yes
Ferry	No
Jewett	Yes
Joss	Yes
Lathrop	Proxy
Main	Yes
Noyes	Yes
Raymond	Yes
Strong	Yes
South Commons	Yes
Terrace Apartments	Yes
Town Houses	Yes
Town Students	Yes
Finance	Yes
Academics	Yes
Activities	Yes
Student Life	Yes

Operations	Yes
President	Yes

Consensus agenda

- a. Collaboration to NoViCE (0/800)
- b. Capital to NoViCE (Tabled/1378.04)
- c. Speakers to LiNK (100/300)
- d. Capital to Quiz Bowl (130/130)
- e. Speakers to ViCE Comedy (Tabled/10000)
- f. Social Consciousness to MBSA (2750/2600)
- g. Social Consciousness to VJU (Tabled/2000)
- h. Frozen Budgets:
 - i. Young Democratic Socialists
 - ii. Episcopal Church of VC
 - iii. No Such Organization
 - iv. Multiracial-Biracial Students Alliance
 - v. Vassar Bikes
 - vi. The Limit
 - vii. Feminist Alliance
 - a. Certification of Chabad Jewish Community
 - b. Middle Eastern Students Collective to Level 2
 - c. Minutes from 11/8/15

Finance: We met with No-Vice about buying a new sound system. Capital Quiz Bowl got new buzzers. For NBSA, some costs have gone up, but they're getting money for a workshop for people of color.

Discussion of frozen budget moved after forum with Judy Jarvis.

Forum with Judy Jarvis, Director of LGBTQ and Women's Centers

Judy: Hi, everybody. I'm Judy Jarvis, and I'm the director for LGBTQ center and a Vassar alum. So the main focus of my forum with you all is the gender neutral bathroom initiative. I won't be able to give you a full update, but I did email you information, so you should have an idea of the breath of the type of work it'll be. I also want to connect with you all on the student-led initiatives. So the gender neutral bathroom initiative has been an on-and-off thing for many, many years. Dorms have been coed since the mid 1980's. The factors was the nature of the women's college. It was a voting process where the dorms one by one said that they wanted to be coed. We don't have to fight the fight about our dorms. However, when I started to hear about thirteen to fifteen academic buildings with zero gender neutral bathrooms, and it's important to have them form for many reasons including psychological reasons for transgender and genderqueer people. To be weighing whether you want to use the bathroom during class means that you're not at your full convention. We want facilities to support all our students.

So with that, we have a wonderful coalition that started working in the spring of 2015, including Ed Pittman, Marianne Begemann, and the acting dean Eve Dunbar. It was a group that was supported by the president. It just takes a long time to change facilities. Where we are now...there are nine out of thirteen buildings that have at least one gender neutral bathroom. A big part of this was education. We did eight different sessions, meeting with the deans, the faculty, etc. There was also a trans-ally meeting that included gender neutral bathrooms. We are in an interesting moment where students on campus think that the initiative has been successful and that there's nothing to worry about. But that's not true. There are still four remaining buildings, mostly athletic buildings. I've had complaints from professors and staff of three different buildings on campus. There were vandalism of gender neutral bathrooms in Main. In Davison, a sign that was mounted on the wall was ripped down, and that takes a lot of effort. Those are the only things I hear, but there might be more. I always try to have an educational conversation.

So here's where I need your help with. We have to work to maintain these bathrooms on campus because students don't stay here as long as administration or faculty. So

unfortunately, it doesn't really work to tell people "you're an idiot." It does work because they're coming from a totally different point of view. It's usually different generation or background. It's also their facilities, so I have to make sure I'm not being superior to people who don't understand why this is important. So I'm wondering what brainstorming VSA can do. One idea was having the VSA send an all-campus email affirming the importance of gender neutral bathrooms, saying that it's unacceptable for vandalism, as well as to include language on why. And looking back on what VSA has done, I think the VSA has done stuff in the past but we can reaffirm it, just to make sure that there's energy around and stop people from thinking that it's already over. The opposition don't care what I say, but they will care if other students tell them. I think a lot of people are against gender neutral bathrooms because they see it as radical activist student expression or something like that, and we have to get out of that, because that's not true. So I want to hear thoughts.

Noyes: So, I was wondering, how much weight does faculty have on implementing new gender neutral bathrooms?

Judy: It's hard to tell. I don't necessarily think that professor dissent will undo them. My fear is that if there's a lot of misinformation whipping around, if I'm not here or you're not here, if there's a new building, who's going to push this initiative? Like athletic buildings may not be constructed for six years. So we want people to remember why this is important in the long run.

South Commons: Thank you for coming in. This might be a question for Ramy, but is the rhetoric around this right now still on the fire-code argument? I know another side of this was, sometimes, there will be a gender neutral bathroom but in a nook or cranny where it's hidden, so tour guides don't see. I just want to know the general opposition rhetoric.

Judy: So, I know for building codes and the fixtures you need depend on occupancy. If you try to do anything to the building, you get fined. So no one would do any short term changes to them. Still, we were able to do a lot. We got folks on board to allow multi-stall bathrooms to be gender neutral, so we didn't add anything. Where the difficulty is from

like the chapel where they don't have gender neutral bathrooms. And for Sanders, we're changing two men's rooms into gender neutral bathrooms. What we're talking about is choice and whether everyone feels comfortable. In that same breath, we don't want everyone to flip out. We're not trying to make every bathroom gender neutral. Mostly, the resistance is coming from misinformation. That's good, because then what people are worried about are not real, so we can just easily shut it down. What's difficult is for athletics, because of code stuff, like having a guest locker room for women or a guest locker room for referees. So we're looking for the best possible solution. It's hard to give a blanket answer, because each building is different. There were "yay buildings" and other buildings where faculty sent me multiple emails.

President: So a few things. I co-wrote with Danny the initial statement. I do agree that students think that the battle's over. One thing I want to ask is, I know the college already wrapped up the master plan. Do you know if the administration finalized the establishment of gender neutral bathrooms?

Judy: I can't say. I hope so. Luckily, I have a strong working relationship with Marianne Begemann, and I'm keeping in her sights. I still think that's an area for students to be aware of. There are students on the master planning committee. In terms of intent, yes, that is the intent. All buildings will be intended to have gender neutral bathrooms.

Jewett: Of the concerns raised, were they all raised from uncomfortableness or were there practical arguments?

Judy: Well for Sanders, there's shoddy construction for gender neutral bathrooms. Some of the bathrooms are poorly designed and need to be addressed and the complaints were about whether we're we ready for this. So I tried to emphasize equity and choice. I don't want to be rude to the people who have reached out to me, although I would rather have them tell me instead of murmur behind my back.

Cushing: One of my members on House Team brought up concern that most of the gender neutral bathrooms were old women's bathrooms. How do we go around that? The concern

is that we converted a lot of bathrooms to gender neutral bathrooms, but are they functional and serve the purpose?

Judy: Do you know which bathrooms, because the only ones I can think of with that situation is Sanders Physics. We want it to be about choice. If there are other buildings with that situation, please let me know. In terms of male and female sign bathrooms, we want that to be equal.

Raymond: It's also the Deece. On first floor, there's one women's room, two men's room, and one gender neutral bathroom.

Judy: That's really helpful to know. At least there's one women's bathrooms, because if there were none, then that would be unacceptable. We'll work to change that.

2018: I want to ask how much weight would writing a letter would have and what else can we do besides writing a letter.

Judy: Part of it is I'm welcoming everyone's creativity. A letter can be great, but they might only work for that semester. We have handouts and other passive educational stuff, but I don't know what else we can do. Maybe huge posters on college center? Just where are places where we can remind people where student government stands in this issue? I would love to hear brainstorm.

Town Students: There's a growing section in the library next to the magazine section. We can try something there.

Judy: Thank you. But don't forget that you don't have to come to me to do this. I want multiple things happening.

At-Large: I just remembered something about the Deece. There was this incident where someone was going to a bathroom and a staff member told them to go to the other bathroom on the other side.

Judy: When we had a meeting with the dining staff, we had mostly positive feedback. It's hard because it's not easy to predict who of employed groups will be supportive or not. So in terms of how to deal with those individual situations, I don't know. It sucks. It's so complicated in terms of power dynamics and equity. We have to continue conversations and hear out people who feel frustrated with gender neutral bathrooms. Sorry, I don't have a good response.

At-Large: Is there a way for VSA to partner with you to make a poster that says "Yes, we have gender neutral bathrooms now"?

Judy: I'm open to all angles on this.

Student Life: Is there something we do yearly, maybe first year orientation, that's about gender neutral bathrooms. Or if not, we can make one.

Judy: That might be a good angle. In my experience, it hasn't been really students who had problems because they get used to it and get acclimated. It's usually faculty who have more different opinions. But that's not to say all students are yay, and we have to find a solution to that.

South Commons: For academic buildings, was there a policy where, after a certain hour, all bathrooms become gender neutral?

Judy: I think that's a just student thing, something they agreed on.

South Commons: I just really hope that there will be a partnership between students and faculty where senior members communicate with the campus.

Judy: My experience is that it's not the senior officers who are the hurdle. It's usually faculty or staff members. But it'd be great if we can have students make presentations for staff meetings about this. In terms of more guerilla tactics, I don't think we're at a point where they are effective right now.

South Commons: You said it's not senior members who are the hurdle. We can have them raise their voice of support.

Judy: That's a good idea. It'd also be great if people can have conversations with staff members so they can understand. Just talk in such a way that it's a conversation, not a lesson.

President: Any other questions? No? Judy do you have anything else to say?

Judy: No, I just want everyone to try at different angles so there are multiple things going on. I don't want to be the bottleneck of this.

Frozen Budgets

President: These are the seven organizations who either signed up and did not attend or just did not sign up.

South Commons: I just want to go over concerns of freezing these budgets. I want to thank Activities for doing so much. But after speaking to some of these organizations, they told me that they weren't given much of a timeline. The state law states that these people can't be leaders of organizations if they don't attend these trainings.

President: No, the club becomes de-certified.

South Commons: Right, I'm assuming long term that, in the future, we'll have it earlier so it doesn't become chaotic. There are problems with organizations who can't fundraise for their events because of this. I'm not trying to defend these organization leaders, but I'm not sure if the best solution right now is to freeze the budgets. This also has to do with the issue of communication. I felt like treasurers should have been emailed, because this is financial, and treasurers should have been aware. I don't know if this impact is the best course of action, or if it's better to pursue an alternate course of action.

Operations: I think it's important to clear up misinformation. All organizations were contacted. Multiple emails were sent. Their programming will be able to continue, at least, the immediate programming.

President: What's happening with NSO and with Rocky Horror is, because someone still has to pay for them, so we let that slide.

Activities: If they didn't get the emails, they didn't fill out the forms I sent.

At-Large: I want to press on Exec for follow-up on what South Commons has said on how funding and defunding works.

Operations: It's kind of like an extraordinary circumstance. The problem here is that, as Ramy said, if we did not allow the programs to go through, their student accounts would be charged with thousands of dollars.

Academics: It also depends on the type of programming.

President: Also, for SAVP, the interns put on the training and they'll happily do one more this semester. There's also one in the Spring Leadership conference. In terms of timeline, it was a pretty clear timeline. Events that are still registered on the calendar will still happen.

South Commons: On the finance aspect, there are organizations where they haven't signed anything yet but we have to tell them their budget are frozen.

President: Existing events are unaffected.

South Commons: So any events afterwards are frozen. So they can still do fundraising for their current one?

President: Motion to freeze these seven budgets.

At-Large: These weren't dead emails, right? There were back and forth conversations?

President: Yes, all but four organizations have responded. The one organization that never sent any communication ever was YDS. We don't have contact info on them, either. When I reached out to people saying that they did not go to these trainings, they were all remorseful. Except YDS, because we can't contact them.

South Commons: When's the closest training?

President: Late November.

Town Students: This is something we legally have to do, right?

Operations: Yeah, it's a law.

At-Large: I move to separate YDS from everyone else.

President: We can just do that now. This will be for the six other organizations.

Motion to Freeze the Budgets of Six Organizations:

2016	Yes
2017	Yes
2018	Yes
2019	Yes
Cushing	Yes
Davison	Yes
Ferry	Absent
Jewett	Yes
Joss	Yes
Lathrop	Yes

Main	Yes
Noyes	Yes
Raymond	Yes
Strong	Yes
South Commons	Yes
Terrace Apartments	Yes
Town Houses	Yes
Town Students	Yes
Finance	Left Early
Academics	Yes
Activities	Yes
Student Life	Yes
Operations	Yes
President	Can't Vote

Motion to Freeze the YDS budget:

Joss: Wait, does YDS even have a budget?

Operations: Yes.

2016: Since we haven't had any contact with them, it'd be unfair if we freeze their budget. We should contact them first. This could be separate conversation at the Activities committee. If they didn't know, it's not their fault.

Strong: Can we table this discussion to have an Activities meeting instead.

At-Large: I'm kind of uncomfortable treating this organization better than organizations that are remorseful.

President: In practicality, it wouldn't change anything either way.

2016	No
2017	No
2018	Yes
2019	No
Cushing	Yes
Davison	Yes
Ferry	Absent
Jewett	Yes
Joss	Yes
Lathrop	Yes
Main	Yes
Noyes	No
Raymond	Yes
Strong	Yes
South Commons	Yes
Terrace Apartments	Yes
Town Houses	Yes
Town Students	Yes
Finance	Left Early
Academics	Yes
Activities	Yes
Student Life	Yes
Operations	Yes
President	Can't Vote

President: Seventeen in favor, so frozen. We're going to move to reports.

Reports

a. President

President: My updates were bystander training. There will be one more training and spring leadership. Our ad-hoc committee have talked about busing. We, being the 9 other people, went to the Seven Sisters conference. After updates, we'll talk about that. I don't think I have anything else.

b. Operations

Operations: So we didn't have Restructuring this Saturday, but we will have one this coming Saturday. Please come and help us. We're still working on the Saturday shuttle report. It's going well. We got good options in buying shuttles. We sent out surveys for Tasty Tuesday, and we got a lot of responses, so look for an interesting update on that.

c. All Other Exec

Student Life: No major update.

Academics: Peer advising dinner is this Tuesday. You all should come.

Seven Sisters Conference Update

President: We went to the Seven Sisters conference as a historic Seven Sister. During the opening remarks of Barnard's president, he kept bringing up that it was actually 5 1/2 Sisters. There were a lot of cool workshops about gender identity and stuff. There was a workshop about divestment that almost all of us attended. There's a good chance our divestment people will be coming back to VSA. The last time we talked about fossil fuels was 2012.

Noyes: There's a constitution also about Seven Sisters that we chat with each other at all times. There are also two representatives from each school. There was a small amendment to that. Instead of two execs, it's one exec and one anybody. We also amended that the board has to reaffirm that constitution each year so that people are actually doing things with the two delegates. There's a temporary board to get delegates in by December. We also as VSA have to vote on that constitution.

President: The constitution is posted on our website.

2018: The theme of the conference was empowering women globally. In that meeting, we also talked about what we can do with the Seven Sisters in the future. I think we can be more involved in empowering women as part of the Seven Sisters.

President: The other thing is the SGA student president breakout. We met for about four hours. I brought up the refugee program and I'll be sending them documents. We also talked about structural problems. Also, Barnard's having a winter housing crisis where the director said that no student can stay over the winter at all. A lot of students responded that they will be homeless for the winter, and the administration told them to get nanny jobs. So we told Barnard we would coalition-ize with them and help them with a policy recommendation. One thing we can do is reach out to our alumni network to host people. It's shitty. It's fucked up. We'll put that on the record. On administration relations, we do not have the worst of administration relations. Yay. I'll probably have more to say next week. Oh yeah, you know how we resolved to be political? All the other schools freaked out. We talked a lot about free speech and funding. No other SGA is political.

Constituent Concerns

Noyes: The SARC has been not functioning up to its full potential. And it's really tough. I would love it if we can have a look into how it can be streamlined out. We can look into ways to make it better.

2018: Can I have a list of organizations who are having trouble?

At-Large: I think it might be good job to have Hollis in for discussion. She's wonderful. It's tough since everyone's booking events and everyone wants the same spaces and we have really old computers. It's hard to pinpoint specific problems. I think re-vamping SARC would be awesome. Google forms would be so great. I don't know why we don't do that.

President: As a former SARC intern, it's really complicated. Sometimes eight organizations can come in and it looks like space is open, but it actually is not because someone has to put them in a calendar.

Noyes: I understand, but it's important we work this out for the sake of the organizations.

2018: My constituent concern is that one of my people on council said that the vending machine was great, but it's only in Main, and they don't want to walk all the way to Main to get tampons. I also recognize that they're also owned by companies, so we can't decide what we can do with them.

Operations: Vending machines for dorms is under Res life, and their budget is very petit.

South Commons: I'm glad people like these vending machines. With these machines, I think it's more possible to have them in dorms. If we care enough about this, we can contact triple J, and if we tell them students will buy tampons in these machines in the basement, they'll do it.

Joss: One thing we learn in the Seven Sisters Conference is that Barnard has tampons for free.

Operations: WHAT?

2019: If condoms are free, tampons should be free.

Resolution Concerning Disposable Water Containers at Commencement

Noyes: So, as you may know, I'm the co-founder of the Vassar Greens. We launched a campaign called Tap That, and we got administration support to ban disposable water bottles, so they can't be sold anymore because they're really bad for the environment. However, for large events where things are hot, there are still water bottles being purchased and disposed in campus. This is bad. We offered a lot of alternate solutions to

the administration. It would be great if the VSA could support us in this endeavor. In the past, we've done re-usable water bottles and box water. We're also thinking of getting a Water Monster. This could be a great way to put pressure on the administration.

At-Large: It might be good idea to reaffirm the desire to ban water bottles, because the Retreat is selling water bottles now.

Operations: Operations talked about this in the past week. Campus Activities just wanted affirmation from the student body to see if this is something they wanted. Maybe a letter would be more appropriate than a resolution. Some members would also want those alternatives to be more clearly stated before moving to completely ban water bottles.

South Commons: Just to explain why a letter, we're not changing what we do; we're changing what another office does, so it would be better to do a letter. Also, it would be better because we can be more detailed with a letter.

Noyes: We're already talking with them to get them to agree. The Greens are already trying to persuade the administration, and I think it'd be more powerful with official VSA backing.

Terrace Apartments: Personally, before I vote to push this, I think I want more information. So, a letter would be good, and I'd feel better.

The issue has been tabled to Student Life committee.

Open Discussion

Cushing: On the refugee thing, we created a Google forum for people who are interested in joining the council. We will email everyone who is interested. Everyone should sign up. Also there is large support from several departments. Not one, several.

Raymond: I want to plug an event. There is a Grace Hopper event on Tuesday at 7pm. You guys should come.

Main: I talked to Rebecca shortly about this. If people aren't coming to your committee or anyone under you aren't doing their job, email them and tell them to do their job.

Noyes: What if they still don't come?

President: I would encourage them to email them to say that they will be impeached.

Strong: But what power do we have?

President: Well, you're their supervisor. You can't fire them, but you can bring the issue here and we can impeach them.

Meeting adjourned 8:40pm.