VSA Council Minutes  
*September 3, 2006*

I. Call to Order and Welcome

With a quote from former VSA President Rick Rodems’ convocation address, the President emphasized the importance of both listening to the ideas of others and voicing one’s own opinions as Vassar students and members of council. He expressed his belief in a council that is unafraid to “stand up...listen, and keep questioning things”, and that strives to achieve a “delicate balance of assertiveness and humility”.

II. Attendance

Guests: Katie Barnett (Miscellany News), Graham Harbison, Jessica Hughes, Janice Jablonski (Serenading Committee Chair), Juliana Kiyan (Miscellany News), Dmitrij Levitski, Matt Morse (Board of Elections Chair), Walter Padilla (Student Assistant to the President), John Palmer (Miscellany News), Katie Paul (Miscellany News), Zachary Pitts, Anita Varma (Miscellany News), Elizabeth Wieand

III. Meeting Rules

The President proposed a new, less formal set of meeting rules meant to encourage the VSA to become a more “debating body”. Rule 1 stated that meetings will be run according to these guidelines, but that these rules are subordinate to the Constitution and Bylaws. If an issue is not covered by this new plan, the recently revised Robert’s Rules will be used. The only major change to Rule 2 was the addition of estimated time intervals to each section of the agenda that will impose moderate limits on the lengths of discussion periods. New agendas will also include a consent section where Exec will place matters that they do not believe to be very contentious. Any documents relative to these issues will be sent out beforehand and, unless objections are made during the meeting, everything included in the section will be passed. If an objection is voiced, then the issue will be debated and voted upon. Under the new rules, council will no longer be required to make or second motions, but can formulate proposals with whatever language they feel comfortable. Council members are free to communicate any specific problems or concerns to the group, and multiple solutions can be up for discussion simultaneously. Everyone will be given the opportunity to speak at least once before a vote is taken. There will be an emphasis on consensus decision-making when possible, but a 60% majority will be required to pass anything through a vote. In terms of ending meetings, no one has to make a motion for recess; unless a council member has an additional announcement, the President will simply adjourn if an issue appears exhausted.

Lathrop inquired further about the rigidity of the time limits included in each week’s agenda. The President clarified that dialogue can continue past the given limit, but that those who have already spoken will be removed from the speaker’s list if the discussion time is not extended. Strong expressed concern that reaching agreements instead of voting directly could often prevent clear understanding of each person’s stance on an issue. With input from the president, Strong made a motion to amend Rules 6:2 and 6:3 to read, “After a proposal has been presented and thoroughly discussed, the chair will ask if any member of council disagrees with the proposal. If a member does not agree with the proposal, a vote shall be taken.” Town Students also recommended the following amendment to Rule 8: “The council should consider these rules
for permanent adoption in four weeks. These rules shall govern VSA council meetings through that time." All council members were in favor of these amendments.

**Vote to Adopt VSA Council Special Rules for Meetings**

Abstentions: No one. (0)
Not in Favor: No one. (0)
In Favor: Everyone. (23)

Result: Special Meeting Rules Adopted

**IV. Minutes**

The Organization Executive proposed that council approve the minutes from the May 7, 2006 meeting of Old Council. No one was opposed, and the motion passed.

**V. Announcements**

A. Serenading

Janice Jablonski, the Serenading Committee Chair, made a brief presentation about the schedule of events for Serenading on Friday, September 6. As the committee expects a $500.00 deficit, it requested that each dorm donate $150.00 to help cover costs. Questions were raised about the cost of events and what materials can be thrown. After the President warned that planning on debt would not be a viable option, 07 assured council that the Senior Class would be prepared to cover any lingering balances.

B. Arlington Street Fair

The Organization Executive announced that the Arlington Street Fair will be taking place on Saturday, September 30 from 12pm – 6pm. There will be tables and performances organized by various Vassar student organizations, and members of council are encouraged to attend and/or participate.

The Org Ex also announced that council minutes will no longer be direct transcripts of meetings, but will include a summary of the discussions and any votes taken. Recordings will still be taken, and those files will eventually be available online.

**VI. Financial Report**

The Financial Executive presented an excel spread displaying all of the VSA organizations, funds, and account balances as of September 1, 2006. Though each account’s balance was clearly shown, the Fin Ex explained that he can only distribute up to 60% of this money during the first semester. All of the allocations were made via the budget approved last semester by council, and money was added on top of whatever debts or surpluses already existed in the accounts. Once they have supplied a budget number to the Fin Ex, new organizations will be added to this list. To keep council informed, a financial report will be provided each month.

**VII. Goals for the VSA for 2006-2007**

Four major goals were proposed for the VSA for 2006-2007: Community, Collaboration, Inclusion & Involvement, and Technology. The President explained that, if temporarily adopted,
these main objectives would serve as the framework for a more detailed document to be developed by a sub-committee and presented to council at the next meeting. No objections were made to the goals, and they were adopted as presented.

**VIII. Lathrop Vice Presidency**

The Vice President announced that the Lathrop Vice President resigned over the summer, and she recommended filling the position by appointment. Lathrop supported this option, which would select a new VP quickly and provide significant help to the Lathrop and Jewett House Teams in planning the September 16th Bi-Dormal Formal. Joss was “uncomfortable” with appointment and suggested the “more democratic” option of election; 07 then made the proposal to fill the position in this fashion. The President clarified that the space would be open to all Lathrop freshmen, sophomores and juniors, though members of the House Team interested in the position would have to step down from their current roles.

Lathrop urged the council to “keep in mind the position of the Vice President. The President sits on council and represents their constituents, but the Vice President represents the house while working with the rest of the team to do a lot of planning, receiving and delegating tasks...Part of the issue with the election is that someone could be running who isn’t very serious about the job and doesn’t have a lot of experience.” Both the Vice President and the Academic Executive concurred with Lathrop, citing the importance of a cohesive, experienced house team.

Despite her support of the Lathrop House Team, Strong communicated a lack of faith in the process of called attention to the fact that the new VP, whether appointed or elected, would probably require a several week adjustment period. Noyes proposed that there be brief, efficient VSA and ResLife training for whomever ultimately assumes the position.

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**Vote on A or B Proposal**

A (Appointment):  Lathrop, Noyes, Vice President, AcEx, Raymond, Jewett, 08, SoCo (8)
B (Election): Joss, Main, Cushing, TA, 07, TS, FinEx, OrgEx, TH, Davison, 2010, 09, Ferry, Strong (14)

Result: Election

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**IX. Fall Elections**

Matt Morse moved to adopt the following Fall Election times/dates:

- 9/13, Wed., 12:01am, Filing Begins
- 9/20, Wed., 5:00pm, Filing Ends
- 9/20, Wed., 9:00pm, Candidates Meeting
- 9/21, Thurs., 12:01am, Campaigning Begins
- 9/22, Mon., 5:00pm, Campaigning Ends
- 9/25, Mon., 8:00pm, Voting Begins
- 9/26, Tues., Voting Ends
- 9/26, Tues., 10:00pm, Results Announced
07 noted that the proposed weekend of campaigning coincides with Rosh Hashanah, but council agreed that candidates would still have sufficient time. No objections were made, and the election times were adopted.

Filing this year will be done via email because the new computer system has not yet been fully set up. Matt Morse explained that the software, recently written by a professional group, will undergo an initial rudimentary test in four or five days. Two additional, more complicated tests will take place over the next couple of weeks, followed by a simulation election on September 20th. The VSA server is at CIS this year, so there will be a great deal more control in terms of security. Though there are no foreseen problems with the new software, the Board of Elections will be prepared for a paper election in the event of any technical emergencies.

X. Ad Hoc Committee on Elections (ACE)

The Vice President proposed the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Elections, as student government depends on a reliable and transparent elections process and issues have arisen with Vassar elections in the past. Since campus elections have not been significantly evaluated or revised recently, this committee would aim to strengthen the system by reviewing the Constitution and Bylaws and making recommendations to the CRC and VSA council. ACE would consist of the Vice President, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Elections Board, two members of the Board of Elections to be appointed later in the meeting, a member of VSA council ineligible for reelection, and up to four VSA members selected by the VP and Board of Elections. By October 22nd, ACE will submit a progress report to the Constitutional Review Committee, followed by a final report by December 10th to VSA council and the CRC.

Everyone was in favor of the Vice President’s proposal, and the resolution was adopted.

XI. VSA-Residential Life Ad Hoc Committee (VRAC)

The Organizational Executive proposed the creation of VRAC, an Ad Hoc Committee intended to analyze and suggest improvements to the relationship between the ResLife staff, the VSA, and the various student leaders of each dorm. VRAC would consist of the Chair of the Board of House Presidents, three additional house presidents, four former ResLife-appointed student leaders, two members of the Residential Life Advisory Committee, the VSA Academic Executive, and other members of the VSA at the discretion of the Chair. The former ResLife-appointed student leaders will be selected by the other members of the committee in conjunction with the Executive Board, and once formed, the committee will select its own chair internally. VRAC will submit an interim report by October 8th, followed by a final report to council and the CRC by December 10th. A list of former ResLife appointed student leaders will be obtained from the Office of Residential Life.

No one opposed the Org Ex’s proposal, and the resolution was adopted.

XII. VSA Organizations and Political Action

Based on a recommendation from the College’s lawyer, the Organization Executive proposed the following change to the VSA Bylaws, Article IV, Section 18: Political Endorsements and Funding: “VSA Organizations must reimburse or pay the College for any services or facilities provided to the organizations for use in connection with political campaigns or campaigns to influence specific legislation.” The amendment stems from the College’s desire to maintain its status as a non-profit organization; although the original wording of this section is much stricter, it has not been well enforced in the past. The Org Ex predicted that there will be a
lot of “gray area” open to interpretation by the VSA, Campus Activities, and the College lawyers, but a clear change is that organizations will now be allowed to endorse political campaigns. The Org Ex will also be meeting with Ray Parker and all organizations affected by this amendment to promote understanding of the adjustments that will take place and discuss issues of enforcements. This issue will be on the agenda for September 10th, as bylaws cannot be amended during the same meeting that the amendment is proposed.

XIII. Committee on Curricular Policy (CCP)
The student representatives on the Committee on Curricular Policy consist of the Academic Executive and one elected official from each of the academic areas. The disciplines as outlined in the Vassar College Course Catalogue are “Arts, Foreign Languages and Literatures, Social Sciences, and Natural Science.” There appears to have been a clerical error in the bylaws, so the AcEx proposed to change Article V, Section 17 from “Arts and Languages” to “Arts, Foreign Languages and Literatures”. The Foreign Languages and Literatures position will then be declared vacant and opened up for the Fall Elections. This proposed amendment will be up for voting at September 10th council meeting.

XIV. Appointments
A. Board of Elections
   Allison Chandler, Kate Brattin, Riane Harper and Allie McSheehy appointed.
B. Arlington Special Events Committee
   There were two openings in the committee per class; four applications were received for the Class of 2007, none for the Class of 2008, and many for the Class of 2009. The Vice President recommended the appointment of Laura Burnett and Anna Will for the Class of 2007, as well as Michael Frankel and Maria Melnik for the Class of 2009.
   Laura Burnett and Anna Will (2007), Michael Frankel and Maria Melnik (2009) appointed.

XV. Social Programming Fund
   The Financial Executive moved to allocate $600.00 from the Social Programming Fund to the Vassar College Democrats for their “Comedy Against Evil” event on September 7, 2006. Though the fourteen-day rule was “kind of in effect”, the College Dems contacted the Fin Ex over the summer, so their request was deemed acceptable. Walter Padilla was curious about whether the event would be open to more conservative students, and the Vassar Dems explained that they welcome “anyone who enjoys political issues and satire”. No objections were made to the proposal, and it was adopted as presented.

XVI. Open Discussion:
   07 announced that there were 266 days left until graduation.
   Joss inquired whether the four former ResLife appointed student leaders in VRAC could also be current ResLife employees, but the President said that could cause a conflict of interest. It would be possible, however, for a former Student Fellow who is currently a VSA officer to participate.
   07 then raised questions about the status of the VSA server and website. The Vice President explained that the old server has been deemed “compromised”, but there is a new server at CIS and all sites except for the Miscellany News page have been moved there. All sites
are also now accessible from off-campus, though “Ask Students” is not yet working because the software is not ready. The Ac Ex added that some have classified the “Ask Students” website as “gossipy”, and it will therefore be reexamined this year.

Walter Padilla encouraged all to attend Fall Convocation on Wednesday, September 6th, and announced that President Hill’s office hours will be sent out in the coming week.

XVII. Adjourn