

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Agenda for Nov. 13, 2011

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

"In the largest sense, Vassar seeks to educate the individual imagination to see into the lives of others."  
—Vassar Mission Statement

- 1 Call to Order
  - The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.
- 2 Attendance..... Operations
  - All here, Lathrop and TA proxies.
- 3 Consent Agenda
  - a. Approval of minutes from 10/6/11
  - b. \$225 to Slow Foods from the New Organization Fund
  - c. \$400 to Squirm from the Council Discretionary Fund
  - d. \$600 to Aircappella from the Conference Fund
  - e. \$400 to Cushing House from the Council Discretionary Fund
  - f. \$530 to ProHealth from the Community Fund
  - These passed with all in favor.
- 4 Announcements
  - a. Meet Me in Poughkeepsie.....Activities (7 min)
    - It's this Saturday! Registration closes on Saturday. Occupy Wall Street is also going on.
- 5 Executive Board Reports
  - a. Academics (7 minutes)
    - She's been talking to the architects about the multidisciplinary space and they are getting input from the heads of departments as well as students. The Library Committee is thinking of hosting an event where professors give short 2-3 minute monologues about their favorite books. She thinks this might be a good alternative to Rate My Professor.
  - b. Student Life (10 minutes)
    - The Student Life Committee meets at 1:45 on Thursdays and always open. This week Linda Guffrey is coming in. B&G is also going to come in. The Dining Review Committee is beginning to interpret the findings from the peer review trip and they've analyzed the contract and what needs to be added to it. They will turn over their data to Airmark next semester. The focus groups for the alcohol task force are being formed. The college effect is when non-drinker students come to Vassar and then become drinkers and problem drinkers. They want to address this phenomenon. The task force is also asking a group of students to track their drinking habits over a 2 week period. It's through a cellphone and the hope is that

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it will give an accurate picture of students' actual drinking patterns. CCL meets this Wednesday. They will be talking about the VSA's recommendation and the new policies regarding sexually based offenses. He is in support of the new policy.

CLRG is continuing to meet and working towards All College Day. New Student Orientation is meeting and the essential structure will be solidified by the end of this semester. Security and Don Marsala came to his committee this past meeting and they talked about concerns regarding officers wearing plain clothing etc.

-Cushing asked about referring to "alcohol edu." as a source of viable information. Student Life said they aren't depending on it, but it's a starting point and they use other sources to build information.

-Activities asked about negotiations with Airmark. As they wrapped up the focus groups with the food and dining committee, they realized that Airmark isn't doing their job. Why aren't they concerned that ratings are abysmal? They are in the process of reviewing the findings of the focus groups and they will give them the 3 main concepts that they think need improvement/changes. Then it is up to Airmark to measure and test these findings. They have a lot of info because they had 6 focus groups lasting an hour and a half each.

-Joss asked about the major concepts. They heard that students would be happier with fewer stations with higher quality food. They have also thought about self-serve as an option. Joss also mentioned that this past weekend he saw security walking around in normal cloths even though there was no special occasion. President mentioned that Security will be coming into Council on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. She wants people to think of concrete suggestions and questions that they can ask them.

### 6 Update on Seven Sisters Conference.....Operations (15 min)

-Operations explained what it is; delegates get together from the student governments of Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Smith, Wellesley, Mount Holyoke and Barnard. There were 50 participants. They met Friday and the conference began on Saturday with a speaker, a Cambodian genocide survivor who talked about student activism. They had a lot of productive discussion about how to engage people, how to structure government, and community based learning. Throughout the conference it became clear that there were weird vibes about Vassar being there. Our 3 boys were the only ones there. There were a lot of questions about how we fit in with the Seven Sisters and if we have experiences that

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relate to these schools. By the end, her feeling was that most of the participants were fascinated by the way in which Vassar can bring new perspectives to the conference.

-2014 talked about how we have a unique place in history and our unique perspective.

Transgender issues are something all the colleges are learning to deal with currently. He thinks issues like these that unite everyone are one of the very important ways in which to open up dialogue between colleges.

-Finance and Cushing talked about how they felt this experience was very valuable and how each school has something to contribute in regard to current and past issues.

7 Amendment Concerning Conference Fund..... 2013 (20 min)

-2013 mentioned that it's the same as last time. They want to open the Conference Fund to competitions and tournaments because this will open up its uses and options. This motion passed with all in favor.

8 Campus Climate Campaign .....President & Main (30 min)

-President wants to have a conversation with everyone about what kind of climate Vassar wants and supports. She underlined how our mission statement explicitly does not support the type of language that's been seen on campus recently and when you come here you sign on to that mission statement. She was thinking it might be beneficial if we could get every member of our community to sign on to some sort of pledge. She's worried that many people don't know what's happening, so they are thinking of a door to door campaign to talk with students specifically, educate them on what is going on.

-2013 brought up concern about using that much paper.

-2015 thinks this is definitely something we need. They had the first freshmen forum recently and once thing that came up is ways in which to force people to have these tough conversations.

-2014 thinks that conversations in smaller settings are very important, but at the same time we need a widespread message when there's an urgent situation with people fed up with lack of action.

-Noyes had a dorm wide talk about this and how people come from different backgrounds and things can be offensive to certain individuals.

-Joss asked Lathrop to talk about their "not in my house" campaign. He's not sure about the effects that this had on the population at Vassar and although he found the campaign a little negative, he's happy with the volume of the campaign.

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- Operations wants everyone to keep in mind who we're targeting and who we're alienating in these conversations.
- Town Students also talked about who we're alienating and using the Alana Center and different orgs in helping with this conversation process.
- Ferry talked about how Fem alliance is doing a lot of work on this as well as other orgs and we should work with them on these issues.
- Davison mentioned that he feels his constituents are expecting a VSA response and this needs to be done face to face. He mentioned how he's had a lot of productive conversations in classes about this topic.
- Jewett thinks that house teams are very excited to get involved.
- Main talked about why they thought about the door to door campaign as a way of engaging people and getting to the source of these problems.
- 2013 talked about how he's become aware of different biases in regard to talking about these events. He's noticed people blaming male white athletes even though we don't know who committed these acts. He thinks that we need to acknowledge what we don't tolerate on this campus, but also strongly push and encourage the positive behavior on campus.
- Socos talked about how the particular group, the dorm, and Vassar as a whole are all affected by these events. Because of this the VSA is a great way to unite this 3 pronged base of affected people and that's why we need to make some sort of structured response.
- 2015 brought up using these conversations as a way to reflect on who we're blaming and inclusion in all aspects of campus.
- Raymond asked the President to clarify a little more about what she envisions in the pledge. Main responded that they were thinking that they would include excerpts from the mission statement, ask questions, and engage on many levels. President responded to the question "can students could be persuaded to respond to this" in that they don't need persuasion, but more reminder and a learning experience because this is what they committed to when they decided to come to Vassar College.
- Strong talked about how they had their first dorm dinner and discussed pride in their dorm and how to improve it by working with the women's center and making more signs like the one outside strong.
- Lathrop talked about how many people have talked about the gossipy aspect of these issues and how this needs to be addressed.
- Davison brought up B&G being affected by these issues

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- THs thinks we should start some mass campaign because there are so many positive things being said and we need to get this campus wide.
  - Student Life talked about reaffirming all kinds of identities on campus. He thinks the email is a start and CLRG is always a great place to bring up any issues people may have.
  - Cushing thinks this is a great opportunity to show students how they fit into Vassar's history and to build pride.
  - President would like to get together a working group to figure out what the game plan will be on campus.
  - 2013 asked if any student can participate and the response was yes!! She says the most successful accomplishments on this campus are made through collaborations.
- 9 Open Discussion
- 2012: 189 days until graduation!
- Wednesday at 3 in Sanders there will be a teach-in about Sexism at Vassar so that people can talk more about these issues especially people from different parts of campus.
  - Davison said house presidents should send out a blurb. He also wanted to thank Noyes for having a dorm discussion even though they weren't a direct target of harmful comments.
  - The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 with all in favor.