

VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Council Agenda for Nov. 20, 2011

Time: 7:00pm

Location: College Center 223

"Guess why I smile a lot? Ugh...cause it's worth it."

—Marcel the Shell with Shoes On

- 1 Call to Order
 - The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.
- 2 Attendance..... Operations
 - All here.
- 3 Consent Agenda
 - a. \$250 from Speakers, Lectures and Panels Fund to VARC
 - b. \$1700 from Community Fund to Democracy Matters
 - These were adopted with all in favor.
 - Finance pointed out the Break the Silence Event. Main wanted to thank Finance for all the work he's put into making these types of events happen.
- 4 Announcement From Nicholas de Leeuw, Faculty Chair of Community Works (20 min)
 - Community works is a campus organization that raises money from faculty, administrators, employees, and students to support a list of local charities picked each year to support. They support M Power, Battered Women's Services, Dutchess Outreach, and many others. Many students are familiar with the orgs through fieldwork experiences. Dorm auctions have been the biggest fundraisers for the past few years. They raised up to \$500 in the past and this money really goes a long way. They would appreciate any help they can get on this.
 - Davison wondered when the latest time they could give them the money is. They asked for some time in December.
 - Student Life asked how collaboration between students and faculty on fundraising could be facilitated.
 - Activities asked how they chose the orgs. They started this year with 45 orgs, but they've gotten down to 10. Some change from year to year and some don't. There is usually at least a few new ones each year, like the SPCA this year. There have been a lot of really creative ideas in the last few years, VSA is thinking about having a brainstorming session together about this.
- 5 Forum on Master Planning with Betsy Eismeier, Vice-President for Finance & Administration and Dean of Planning and Academic Affairs, Rachel Kitzinger (45 min)
 - The campaign is to raise \$400 million. As of a week ago they are at \$287 million. The goals are to raise money for the science project (the bridge building from Olmsted to Skinner) and renovation of New England and Sanders Physics. They are raising the roof, and expanding the plant. This is one of the major goals for the project in its entirety. The second major focus of the campaign is financial aid; they spent \$53 million this year on

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financial aid and the average grant is \$37,000 to the freshman. 60% of the students are on financial aid. The 3rd pillar of the campaign is the annual fund. The revenue from this fund goes into annual projects. Currently, less alum give although the ones that do are extremely generous. The Annual Fund is a way of supporting the daily lives of Vassar students and they want to use the campaign to raise awareness and participation in it as well as giving. They are confident that by the end of 2014 they will have reached their goal. They have used the sesquicentennial celebrations to help reach this goal. This is a multiyear project and it has been arriving over a period of years due to endowments and gifts. The results of this will be timeless. The Annual Fund also contributes to the aid program. The sesquicentennial period has been an important way of telling alums exactly what Vassar is doing; this communication is key in raising the funds. They assume that a lot of the \$400 million will go to current projects as well as these new renovations.

-2013 wanted to give a shout out to the phonathon members and their work raising almost \$500,000 for the campaign. He asked about distribution of the \$400 million on the 3 pillars. The Administration hasn't yet approved the science building. They are waiting to see if they will do it all at once or stage it in different ways. They think they have a plan that is as economical as possible. The money that comes in is mobile. They can defer money from one pillar to the next if they find enough money in one area to give to another area. The science project is a combination of gifts and funds.

-Main asked them how they decide on the message used when talking about the current image of Vassar with alums. He feels it has changed a lot and mentioned there have been some critiques of how they represent the queer history and the change from an all women's college. The Vassar Voices program is a way of portraying many different perspectives and the purpose of Vassar as providing an education for people who normally wouldn't have access.

-They both work on the committee for planning. They're focus is on a 5 year outlook. They use a financial model to predict what can happen. They base decisions on what they feel the college's position is. They've recovered well since the recession, but we're in a period of tremendous volatility and they need to look at this as they consider what the endowment will be in the future; it changes month to month. Since it's such an uncertain time, they need to look at investment returns. In the long-term, they're good, but in recent years they've been swinging back and forth. They are also looking at their expense patterns and the role the campaign has in factoring into budget decisions. What will happen to financial

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aid in the recovery process from the recession? What they've found is that many students aren't aware of the details of the financial aid program; they really want to communicate this to students. They predict financial aid will be stabilized and controlled over the next few years. Currently it spreads across a broad range of family incomes; 134 students with financial aid whose families' income is over \$500,000/yr., 100-200 students (didn't get the exact number! Sorry!) receive aid in income bracket of \$60,000-\$500,000, 163 students receive financial aid whose families earn \$60,000/yr. Students graduate with an average of \$14,259 of loan; this includes work study and summer work. There are four parts to the financial aid policy. They approach high schools that wouldn't otherwise have access—this leads to a broad pool of applicants in terms of race/socioeconomic background. They are looking at a broad spectrum of the brightest students in the country. They are looking at talent and achievement, not money. They meet full need. Even if the family situation changes, they still meet full need. Between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 they did a repackaging and paid less overall, but between 2010-2011 they spent a lot more (over \$800,000). In the past few years they've had extreme growth in the dollars that go toward financial aid. They want to reach equilibrium on the draw rate from the endowment. Over the course of the recession the Vassar employment base shrank by 10%. According to their plans, they'll have a shrinking of endowment through attrition (retirements or people leaving); the faculty employment doesn't really count in this. They will reduce another 4-6% overtime. They are still seeking this goal. 60% of the operating budget is employment. They continue to look at how they staff certain areas and how to do this more efficiently. It's an important issue to be aware of because faculty may find ways to streamline operations.

-Student Life is aware that they don't work with a range of information that is available to them. Most documents are public online or if asked for. Vassar in the Economy is a website giving details about the budget year by year. Maybe VSA could make some sort of briefing book so students know what's available to them. He also asked about the 10 yr. endeavor of the science building project: It started when they realized that Vassar's peers are improving their science facilities and they want to keep with standards. Mudd Chemistry is a building that they knew is failing which brought the renovation process to the forefront. They talked about programming and research that needed to be done over 3 years, generated by the faculty and their needs. Because the college honors what we do as teachers and learners they allowed for this process. They reviewed other architects that have worked

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on projects like this one; they're looking for important architects for this project, nothing but the best. They recently decided on a firm. They have explored all possibilities to control costs and achieve program goals. The plan they have is high cost, but it meets the needs and keeps Olmsted as the centerpiece with new wet labs on the sides. New England and Sanders Physics will be fixed up as well. There's an executive committee that looks at every stage of the progress of the project. It's been an interactive process between faculty, and people working on the project. An example is the student and faculty run committee on sustainability working on the project. They've also brought in architects to talk about the campus master plan. It's all starting to come together. There's wildlife, older building, the stream, accessibility, etc. to take into account. There are a lot of elements involved. They have a planning group for the multidisciplinary areas as well.

-Cushing asked what students can do to minimize student costs on campus. Respect for physical space is very important since it's an ageing campus. Vassar has a huge curriculum because of so many faculty and student interests. Having students engage in the process of deciding on efficient choice of classes and working really hard in the classes we have is essential.

-2014 asked about their opinions on the senior and sophomore class gifts. The sophomore class gift that allowed for the 24 hour space in the library was awesome, but not all gifts are focus gifts and are therefore often over ambitious. Also apparent in their work with alumni, a gift that corresponds with their plan and highest priorities is the most effective way of making a change. Students should also plan to give back to the college.

-Main asked about the endowment for the Women's Studies Department. She encouraged seeking multiple sources of information. One thing the department does is support endowed chairs for departments. These chairs support the teaching of what professors are passionate about in each department. However, for multidisciplinary departments, they don't hire professors specifically for that department. They therefore can't endow a chair of the Women's Studies. Main then asked about taking fewer classes. The response is that 2/3rds of the college's expenses go towards employment. They want to focus on thoughtful expansion and be cautious of overlap and how to curtail this. They want to make sure students are spending more time on the classes they are taking rather than taking more classes and not studying more (read Academically Adrift).

-President asked about the bookstore becoming a student center and what VSA can do to make this a reality. They've been talking about it and it looks like the plan is going forward.

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There need to be discussions about prioritization of space, with Terry Quinn, Chris Roelke etc. 6,000 sq. feet plus; a lot can be done with this. They want it to be a huge success because the bookstore being across the street will be less convenient for students so there needs to be a good reason. They're looking for a local architect for this project.

6 Executive Board Reports

a. Activities (7 minutes)

-Meet Me in Poughkeepsie happened!! They had to do an emergency caravan, but it all worked out. They're under budget so they may have a community day in the spring.

-2013 asked how they can improve the event for the future. He wants events to be campus wide and get more solid events planned.

-350 people signed up and 175 people went. 250 went to Meet Me at Mahoney's.

-The FARC trip really grew community connections and President hopes that the future Meet Me in Poughkeepsie trips will be similar to this; Hugs, contact info, fun.

-Knocks for Mookie!!

b. Finance (7 minutes)

-The VSA is in good financial health.

-The new sound system has been ordered. The capital loan system is almost operational and the website is almost done. They got permission to store a drum set in the Mug.

7 Declaration of Open Positions Operations

-Spring Joss Junior Rep, Jewett Junior Rep, and 2013 Treasurer.

-Joss asked about the system. 2013 explained that the bylaws were changed and these are elected positions but since they're vacant, they must be appointed and approved by the Operations Committee.

8 Open Discussion

-2012: 182 days until graduation.

-Davison thanked everyone for coming to the teach-in on Wednesday.

-Mollie announced the Misc's election of Senior Officers for next semester.

-President: We'll be meeting the Sunday of October Break. The Campus Climate group will meet on Tuesday at 6 because it's the only time that works for everyone.

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-Main represented Vassar at the Black and Latino Males Conference. It made him reflect on Vassar and the type of education and place that we are. They are very non-normative and he's grateful for this place.

-Town Students thanked Main and wanted to bring up the idea of taking fewer classes. She is concerned about the student voice being repressed first. Academics responded about the faculty's concern with students overloading or double majoring. There's also been discussion in CCP about classes taught in different departments covering very similar topics. She thinks there could be cleaning up done without compromising the student experience. Main asked for clarification on cleaning up curriculum. She explained the overlap in Greek and Roman studies talking about English topics, or Art talking about French topics.

-Cushing wanted to thank everyone who came to Harvest Ball and thinks we managed it well enough to have more events in the Leomen Leob.

-2012: accept Elfster invites!

-Davison had the first technology meeting this semester and they will work on printers and Vmail changes etc.!

-2015 asked other house presidents to do more interclass collaborating.

-2013 suggested talking to Merist about doing the event together and getting more people involved in the community. Yes they will try to do this more, but they have to work with what people apply for as an event.

-Lathrop: Happy Thanksgiving and motion to adjourn. This passed with all in favor.