

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Minutes for March 3rd, 2013

**“While we’re looking at them and pointing to the pieces of them that we hate and demonize, it’s really a mirror for us to examine ourselves that we might get our own house in order.”**

Joseph Tolton ‘89

1 Call to Order

-The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

2 Attendance .....Operations

-All here except Ferry and 2014 were late and Town Students wasn’t here.

3 Forum with Dean of Freshmen, Ben Lotto.... (45 min)

-He’s been a math professor here for twenty years. He wants to give an overview of the POSEE initiative. He started with some historical context. Vassar has a long history of engaging with military actions. Over the summer of 1918 during WWI Vassar hosted a summer training camp for nurses. Women went to an intensive boot camp that counted as the first year of a three year nursing program. Students came from 41 different states. Room and Board tuition was \$95, around 115 students. Some Vassar people gave scholarship money. After the war a group of Vassar women went over to France and organized a number of relief efforts. The country of France sent Vassar a tank as a gift which sat on campus for twenty years. During WWII, the curriculum changed and Vassar introduced “useful” classes that made people apply to the war effort. They ran the college year round and had a three year plan so that people could be part of the war effort. During WWII, the navy partnered with Vassar to teach a secret cartography course and had some of these women went into the navy and do code breaking; class of ’43. After WWII a handful of men went to Vassar and graduated, but didn’t get Vassar degrees because they couldn’t award them yet, but once they went co-ed then they gave them. After the war with Afghanistan veterans got all four years covered. The Yellow Ribbon Initiative helps colleges partner with the government about giving veterans private school education. They’ve tried to encourage veterans to come here, but they’ve yielded zero veterans; many other private schools aren’t yielding vets either. Then, the POSSE Foundation was brought to Vassar. The idea for POSSE came from a kid who was going to leave a school who said he would have made it if he had his posse. You bring a group of ten students, train them beforehand together, select and send them together. They have over 90% graduation rates. McCarthy Award went to the founder. They identify student first, then select them through (DAP dynamic assessment protocol) where 25 people come in and they pick 10. They break into small groups, do icebreakers, do role play situations, etc. Focuses a lot on leadership skills. Faculty mentor that meets with the posse for 2 hrs every week and each individual every other week. This happens for the first 2 years. They do a retreat every year. The POSSEE Foundations also supports internships and career opportunities for the kids in the program. It’s been around for 25 years. Spring of 2012 Cappy got an idea that Vassar could do POSSE for veterans; they then had an agreement hammered in after 2 weeks. So, Vassar is piloting the first Vassar POSSE. They’ve been

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Minutes for March 3rd, 2013

**“While we’re looking at them and pointing to the pieces of them that we hate and demonize, it’s really a mirror for us to examine ourselves that we might get our own house in order.”**

Joseph Tolton ‘89

through the selection process and chose 11 students who are accepted and will be starting school here next fall. He’s been chosen as the faculty mentor for this group. There’s a big awards ceremony after they’re accepted so he met all of them. They’re very impressive and excited about coming here. He convened two groups to talk about this, key administrators (nuts and bolts groups). He also convened a group of faculty. He wants everyone to know they’re coming and to accept them and

-Raymond asked if it’s similar to Transitions. They’ve already had pre-collegiate training in New York so they may not come here too much earlier.

-Cushing asked how they’ll be incorporated into Residential Life. Probably the ones coming alone will live in the dorms, but some are in pairs. A lot of them would prefer to live on campus. They will be just like any other freshman, in a student fellow group. They will probably all be in singles. We have a small group of students that come each year from the local area and live at home and it’s awkward. This POSSE might help.

-Main asked about age range. They are coming in from mid-20s to mid-30s.

-Student Life asked about what kinds of accommodations will be offered to students with PTSD and how they will be introduced to alcohol and drugs. They will be accommodated in the same way through the office of accessibility and counseling etc. They will also be able to appropriately refer them out to other organizations. He thinks we have a great infrastructure to accommodate a diversity of backgrounds, issues, etc. He doesn’t think that they will be strangers to drugs and alcohol; they will be treated like all freshmen. Some of them were in the military for 2 years, some for 12 years. Some have been out 8 years, some are still in.

-2015 asked if they might be able to use senior housing. He’s not sure Res Life will be OK with this.

-Ferry asked about POSSE students with families living in the dorms and integrating. He doesn’t think this will happen. Ferry also asked about collaborating with WestPoint. They have been talking to WestPoint. They have army, air force, and marine represented. They don’t have a formal connection in place with WestPoint yet. He’s trying to be very flexible about the whole thing.

-Activities thinks that this is really wonderful. Dean Lotto thinks this is going to be enriching for everyone involved and set the path or future universities.

-2013 asked about NCAA, are there any problems with their eligibility? He’s not sure, not that he knows of.

-Strong asked about how them having non-traditional backgrounds and how they’ll integrate being older. He’s hoping that the common academic bond will help with this for sure. He’s hoping it won’t be a problem. This is the first of many POSSES and it’s going to be the

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Minutes for March 3rd, 2013

**“While we’re looking at them and pointing to the pieces of them that we hate and demonize, it’s really a mirror for us to examine ourselves that we might get our own house in order.”**

Joseph Tolton ‘89

biggest challenge, but once there are more the older groups can normalize for the younger ones.

-He appreciates all of the engaged questions.

#### 4 Consent Agenda

- a. \$2,000 from Community to Vassar Prison Initiative
- b. \$1,350 from Conference to MEChA
- c. \$1,130 from Speakers to Democracy Matters
- d. \$2,500 from Discretionary to Founder's Day
- e. \$5,000 from Collaboration to ASA
- f. Minutes from 2/24 meeting

-All adopted.

#### 5 Executive Board Reports

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

-Thanks to everyone who helped out with the Do Something movement. They’ll be coming into CCL to talk about it.

-They’ll also be a coordinating meeting this week to debrief events.

-The bookstore won’t be moving off campus. They are trying to get new retailers in there. They’re under too many financial constraints and given what the state of bookstores is, there’s this problem. However student space was presented and they are really on board with extending the hours of the retreat, putting in more outlets, and getting better lighting.

-The budget for the 2013-2014 year was passed. Strong will be renovated, Raymond’s bathrooms will be too. The endowment is \$850 million and they spent 6% of the endowment this year. They want to bring this down to 5%. We went need blind right before the recession about 5 years ago and they decided to stay need blind. This meant that they had to cut in many areas. The assumption was that we’d recover from the recession quicker than we’d planned. They are trying not to cut too much in other areas so they are beginning conversations with faculty and he wants to see student education this spring and fall. They are talking about education and next fall there will be a vote by the trustees about what direction to go, if financial aid could be cut or where our priorities need to lie.

-2016 asked if there’s a possibility that we would move off need blind. Employment levels and financial aid are where there’s the most spending, but he doesn’t know.

-THs clarified that this semester we’re educating people about the financial situation and next semester will be discussing what happens, but isn’t this all up to the trustees

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Minutes for March 3rd, 2013

**“While we’re looking at them and pointing to the pieces of them that we hate and demonize, it’s really a mirror for us to examine ourselves that we might get our own house in order.”**

Joseph Tolton ‘89

anyway? How will student input help; they clearly don’t want cuts. The two main areas are either laying people off or cutting need blind. What does that mean for our college? How has need blind changed the composition of our student body? Thinking about these questions. Please think about this over Spring Break.

b. Operations .....(7 min)

-Thanks to Operations committee for helping put together the interest meeting. Right now Ops is working on writing policy documents for each committee. Who should be sitting on the committees? Can they be more deliberate about who they include on each committee? And they want to make an institutional memory. The Board of Directors of the Alumni Association met this weekend and she went and talked about how they are planning reunion. The alums jumped into action and had about 8000 people watching the live feed for WBC. Lots of the alums want the T-shirts that people were selling so they want to start selling them either in the bookstore or elsewhere. They also talked about GRISTS. The website is really nice and the new admissions materials. 2013 added that they are reformatting reunion so that it brings in more traditions. They also talked about how they talk to different alumni and how to engage them with other alumni. They specifically talked about how you can connect with certain identity groups through new technology tools. They are trying to make it more exciting for 5 year reunion people.

6 START Town Halls.....Terrace Apartments(7 min)

-They hosted three town halls last week. There was varying degrees of attendance, but the people that came brought up a lot of really good points. Some weren’t aligned with either one specifically. They took a lot of notes that they will use to send out a survey. They are putting it together this week trying to make sure it’s unbiased. Renee is helping them so that it’s not leading or biased in any way. They will send it out after spring break and make a nice presentation.

-Joss wanted to note that we should keep in mind that Renee Pabst does have some bias.

-Main recommended Professor Ming Ong who helps with statistics. She’s also the cutest woman in the whole world.

7 An Amendment Concerning Judicial Board Representatives.....Operations (15 min)

-2013 explained that this amendment creates an auxiliary pool of past members that can help if they’re needed. The chair is allowed to reach out if they’re needed. These people can run for other positions. They can’t always get enough students to participate on these panels.

-2015 asked about the second portion of the amendment. Is this because the Judicial Board hears VSA cases? She wonders if there should be another section mandating that this

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Minutes for March 3rd, 2013

**“While we’re looking at them and pointing to the pieces of them that we hate and demonize, it’s really a mirror for us to examine ourselves that we might get our own house in order.”**

Joseph Tolton ‘89

auxiliary pool can’t serve on cases that have a conflict of interest with another positions? To 2013’s understanding, you have to not be on a case if there’s a conflict of interest so this wouldn’t happen.

-Joss noted that part of this is because after classes end they don’t have enough people.

-Alaric noted that there’s a strong majority opposed to this amendment. They believe that we don’t need this in the first place. They have 17 members so almost never do they not have enough. They didn’t believe that individuals elected for a specific year should be kept from participating; that’s fixed in this case. He’s also not sure that this will solve any of the problems that have come up in the past few years. Increasing the pool is only increasing the potential members which doesn’t address the problem. In the end this comes down to the chair deciding what to do if people don’t answer emails. It comes down to enthusiasm about whether or not people want to serve, rather than increasing the pool so more people won’t respond.

-2016 wanted to clarify that they are having trouble getting 4 students out of 17. He thinks that they need hold the elected positions accountable and create stricter regulations about judicial board responsibilities.

-Finance made a point that people should be aware of what they’re deciding about student conduct issues; they need to educate about the position more. He also thinks that increasing the number might cause bystander affect rather than holding more people accountable.

-Davison wants to caution against institutionalizing a cop out.

-Activities thinks that making it stricter might not solve any problems

-Operations noted that they don’t have to pass this amendment; that’s totally fine. If one of the problems that people don’t understand the time commitment then they can do other things like having an interest meeting or a campaign.

-Academics asked about the finals period and how to fix this? Is there a way they can use this auxiliary pool just for this weird period when people are busy or not on campus? She thought this was for the nebulous end of year times. Operations responded that they could change this to be more specific about this.

-THs asked if it’s a good idea to have people who haven’t served on many panels to serve on severe expulsion or suspension cases. Alaric responded that as long as the person is trained then they are equals on the judicial board.

-2016 asked if we have problems filling judicial board positions every year. They think they usually have enough people and they always get filled by appointments.

# VASSAR STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## Council Minutes for March 3rd, 2013

**“While we’re looking at them and pointing to the pieces of them that we hate and demonize, it’s really a mirror for us to examine ourselves that we might get our own house in order.”**

Joseph Tolton '89

-2015 asked if there is a current expectation about how many panels each person will serve on. In his opinion the bare minimum is responding to one panel every one to two weeks. Is there any rule about having to respond to the emails? No, past chairs have done different things.

### 8 Open Discussion

-2013: 83 days until commencement. The entire Senior Week schedule is hashed out. It’s going to be really fun.

-President: There is a Council meeting the Sunday we get back from break. Skidmore is hosting a student government conference April 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>. Come up if you want to participate. We have to RSVP by this Thursday.

-Activities made a motion to adjourn. This passed with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.