

VSA Council Minutes

May 3, 2009

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Attendance

Guests: Andrew Bennett (Student Asst. to the President), Matthew Brock (Misc), Brian Farkas (Misc), Emma Mitchell (Misc), Molly Turpin (Misc), Jill Scharr (Misc), Ruby Cramer (Misc), Selina Straburger, Moe Byrne, Nicole Clark, Hannah Groch-Begley, Syed Sauun Shebeeb, Mischo Ishikawa, Elianne Schutze, Laura Riker, Tanay Tatum, Aaron Grober (Main VP), Elizabeth Anderson, Stephanie Damon-Moore, Madeleine Joyce (HEL), Elana Schulman (HEL), Dane Jensen (HEL), Jon Read (Vassar Ultimate), Gabe Schuster (Vassar Ultimate), Hobie Fuerstman (Vassar Ultimate).

3. Announcements

a. Late Night Programming Survey

The VP for Activities presented Council with the results of the late night programming survey. 2009 commented that these results were “quite telling”, and that next year’s Council should take them into account in order to devise programming that appeals to *all* students.

b. Fines

The VP for Finance announced that 2012 has been fined \$25 for late Org Review submission. Broadway A Cappella, ECVC, Helicon, EMS, TONCA, Unitarian Universalist and Vassar Prison Initiative were each fined \$50 for failure to submit an Org Review.

Catalyst and Woodshed were each fined for late Org Report submission. Choice, Investment Club, MeCHA and VARC were fined for failure to submit Org Reports.

4. Approval of FY 2010 Operating Budget

The VP for Finance moved to approve the VSA Operating Budget for the fiscal year 2010. He stressed that the VSA cannot realistically continue to certify new organizations. He elaborated that, as the proposed budget indicates, Council is “taking money away from those who *are* certified” when it certifies new orgs. In all, the VSA budget was “over-requested by almost 400,000 this year”, and a greater degree of financial conservatism is needed during these challenging economic times. The VP for Activities emphasized that budgeting decisions incorporated the Activities Committee’s assessment of groups’ org report and org review documents. She added that the Activities and Finance Committees worked hard “to make decisions in a fair and democratic way”.

A few representatives from Happily Ever Laughter (HEL) expressed concern “about the way in which comedy sketch groups were handled this year”. HEL’s budget was reduced by \$50, while the other comedy groups’ budgets were increased (such that all groups now have equal

budgets). Dane Jensen, of HEL, explained that his group is unique, as it performs in the Shiva twice annually and is part of the Shiva Advisory Board. He elaborated that the group has traditionally received more funding than the other comedy groups because of the costs associated with “using the [Shiva] space and using it well”. Finance and other members of Council responded that, if HEL requires additional financial support next year, it can always apply to Supplemental Budgeting and other funds. Representatives from Vassar Ultimate spoke in support of HEL, as did other members of Council; many stressed the fact that other comedy groups have not submitted org reviews and org reports in recent years, as well as the fact that a cappella groups’ budgets vary widely. Ultimate then urged Council to fail and revise the budget. 2009, TH, 2011, 2012, Joss, Lathrop, Raymond, Main, Strong and TA were not in favor of passing the budget; Noyes, Cushing, Academics, Student Life, Operations, Finance, Activities, Ferry, TS, 2010 and Jewett were in favor, and the motion failed.

Closed session began at 7:20 p.m. Student Life encouraged Council “to take money from indecent exposure”, an org that was just fined, “and give it to HEL”. The President responded that he felt “uncomfortable” taking money from one org and giving it to another, and suggested taking money from internal funds or special purpose funds. Finance felt that it would “not [be] appropriate” to grant HEL additional funds, given that the org has “already been fined by the Shiva for not cleaning up well enough”. He stressed that HEL can perform in *alternative* campus performance spaces and that all organizations should be more careful with the ways in which they spend funds, given the current economic crisis. Finance added that all orgs were sent the budget on Friday morning, and that HEL and Ultimate should have responded earlier. He continued, “the easiest solution would be to take money from the leadership fund, but it is inappropriate”. Operations felt that taking \$100 from the Leadership Series Fund would not be “a big deal”, since money from this fund is mostly used for purchasing pizza. She emphasized, however, that additional money should *not* be given to Ultimate.

Noyes explained that she has been involved in groups that have been fined by the Shiva in the past, and she stressed that “HEL must take responsibility for its own actions”. Cushing challenged HEL’s claim that it is the only comedy group that performs in the Shiva, stating that No Offense has begun performing there and that The Limit and Indecent Exposure are looking into performing there in the future. He affirmed that, while HEL claims to have more tech than other sketch comedy groups, this is only the case because HEL “has always had more money” than these groups. He concluded that, if HEL uses the Shiva properly in the future, it should not need more money than other groups. 2009 agreed with Cushing, asserting that it would be “irresponsible to give HEL more” money than other groups, simply because it has been given more in the past. Student Life moved to call to question. 2009, TH, Activities, Finance, Joss and Raymond were not in favor; Noyes, Strong, Cushing, Main, Lathrop, TA, Jewett, Academics, Student Life, Operations, Ferry, TS, 2012, 2010 and 2011 were in favor, and the motion passed. 2009, 2010, Ferry, Activities, Finance, Academics, Cushing, TA and Noyes were not in favor; Strong, Main, Raymond, Lathrop, Joss, Jewett, Student Life, Operations, TS, 2012, 2011 and TH were in favor, and the motion passed.

Cushing moved to allocate \$100 each to Indecent Exposure, The Limit and No Offense from the Leadership Fund. 2009 supported this motion, asserting that it is “not fair” for one comedy group to receive more funding than the others. The President echoed this sentiment, noting that

there is no precedent for allocating an org the same budget every year. Finance spoke against the allocation, explaining that “draining more money from the Leadership Fund” is simply unacceptable. He explained that he was “Sad that we’re doing this”, but acknowledged that it is “necessary to standardize everything”. Cushing, Finance and 2009 were in favor, though all others were opposed, and the motion failed.

The closed session concluded at 7:51 p.m. Student Life moved to allocate \$100 from the Leadership Series Fund to HEL’s budget. 2009, 2011, 2010, Activities, Finance, Operations, Academics, Cushing, Strong, Noyes and TA were not in favor; Main, Raymond, Lathrop, Joss, Jewett, Student Life, Ferry, TS, 2012 and TH were in favor, and the motion failed.

2009 moved that Council enter a closed session once more. 2011 and Joss were not in favor, though all others were in favor, and the motion passed. The VP for Activities moved to censure Vassar Ultimate, on the grounds that the team has “severely jeopardized the Vassar reputation.” A resident of the area in which Ultimate stayed during its Spring Break trip issued complaints about team members’ conduct and asked that Vassar students refrain from returning to the region. Activities explained that she has “reached out to the Frisbee Team”, and that its representatives explained the situation from their point of view. However, she explained that Exec decided to move forward with censure proceedings, based on how the VSA has handled “similar experiences” in the past. Activities explained that censure will require a formal apology from the organization, but added that the team can apply to the Conference Fund next year to fund its future trips.

The closed session concluded. 2011 moved to allocate \$3500 from the Conference Fund to Frisbee. 2009 felt that it would be “unfair to reduce the Conference Fund”, a fund “used by the entire college, simply because a single group is dissatisfied”. Finance was also opposed to this motion, claiming that the VSA needs to put in place “an extra step so that there’s some sort of accountability”. He added that there is a “90% chance” that Frisbee will be granted the money that it needs “the Conference Fund or something” *next* year. Joss and Raymond abstained; Strong, Cushing, Jewett, Academics, Student Life, Operations, Finance, Activities, Ferry, 2012, 2010, 2009, TA and TH were not in favor. 2011, TS, Lathrop, Main and Noyes were in favor, however, and the motion failed.

Council then voted to approve the fiscal year 2010 budget. Joss, Lathrop, Raymond, TS and 2011 were not in favor, though Noyes, Strong, Cushing, Main, Jewett, Academics, Student Life, Operations, Finance, Activities, Ferry, 2012, 2010, 2009, TA and TH were in favor, and the motion passed.

VP for Activities then moved to censure the Ultimate Frisbee Team, reiterating that both the new and old VSA Exec Boards felt it would be “the most fair” form of disciplinary action. Hobie Fuerstman, of Ultimate, noted that he has spoken with the realtor company that the team used and explained things from the team’s point of view. Additionally, he and other team members met with residents of the area, discussed the incidents with them, and provided the team’s contact information to allow these individuals to express any comments or complaints. Hobie added that major complaints were *actually* made about individuals from other universities, and that Ultimate’s representatives spoke with Georgia police to settle these issues as much as possible. Joss and Raymond abstained from voting, though TH, 11, TS, Lathrop and Noyes were not in favor of censure; 2009, 2010, 2012, Ferry, Activities, Finance,

Operations, Student Life, Activities, Jewett, Strong, Cushing and TA were in favor, and the motion passed.

5. Open Discussion

- 2009 announced that 21 days remained until graduation.
- The President stated that he has “watched council evolve over four years”, and that it has “made much progress during that time”. He asserted that this year’s Council’s efforts have “strengthened the legitimacy of the VSA in the eyes of the administration”, and claimed that it has been “an amazing year”. He urged future Council members to “speak up” and empower themselves.
- 2009 felt that, while this past year was “frustrating” for many, it was “an amazing growth experience” for the VSA Council. He applauded Council members for the way in which they handled major challenges like Kick Coke and the financial crisis.

6. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 8:56 PM.