SGA Minutes
November 2, 2014

I. Attendance

    All members present except for Senator Judy; proxy for Senator Toy

II. Acceptance of Minutes

    Senator Gerstenschlager: Motion to correct the minutes from “meeting with them tomorrow” to “met with them on Friday” on page 13.
    Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
    All aye.
    Motion passes.

    President Custer: The SLSEA had some small changes he wanted to make. None of them are substantive—just a few technical things. If anyone has any issues with making these changes, I would be happy to talk to you more about it.

    Ian Rhee: I thought the minutes had to be really perfect, so I changed some things. There is nothing substantive. It’s mostly just grammatical errors and other minor things.

    President Custer: Motion to correct the minutes on behalf of SLSEA Ian Rhee.
    Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
    All aye.
    Motion passes.

    President Custer: Motion to accept the minutes as corrected.
    Speaker Brady: Seconded.
    All aye.
    Minutes accepted.

III. Announcements

    President Custer: The first announcement is that President Liebowitz is holding a Social Life Forum tonight at 8 in Wilson Hall. I think we should try and end Senate at 7:55pm and I recommend that all of you go to the forum if you can. The second announcement is that I met with Franklin Dean-Farrar, who is in charge of buying new fitness equipment for the expansion. They have $100,000 to spend on the new equipment. It’s going to be a big open area like the Bubble and there will be a balcony overlooking the fields where they will put these pieces of aerobic equipment. Franklin asked to meet with me to see what student input was about what equipment we should buy and I wanted to open it up here and see what your thoughts are. He’s thinking thirty pieces of equipment—no free weights, all cardio machines. They will be divided between spin bikes, ellipticals, and treadmills and he is thinking ten of each right now. There is a very popular spin bike called the Expresso but the average spin bike costs $1,000 and this bike would cost around $5,000 so we won’t buy those ones. Apparently if you’re in the spinning
crowd though, that one is the best. What do you think might be missing right now from the Fitness Center?

Senator de Toledo: I was actually at a lunch at President Liebowitz’s house recently with representatives from athletic teams and this came up. He said that there wouldn’t be any more free weights, but we really don’t have enough space for that as it is now. That’s a sentiment that is shared by a lot of athletes. President Liebowitz said that it isn’t in the plans now but they will add more free weights eventually.

Co-Chair Bogin: I don’t go to the gym very often, but I think it seems silly to have treadmills overlooking a track.

Senator de Toledo: The track won’t be open for use during times when people normally work out because teams will have practice there.

President Custer: The idea is also that coaches can send athletes upstairs to use the treadmills to warm up.

Senator Jahan: Will the new bikes or machines be like the YouPower bikes and convert to electricity?

President Custer: No, they won’t be like the YouPower bikes. The company we bought the transmitter from for the YouPower bikes actually went out of business and there have been problems getting it to work properly. The bikes we are looking at don’t have gears—everything is magnetic.

Senator Gerstenschlager: I just want to echo the concern about the free weights. The swim team has to divide up into two groups during practice because the weight room can’t handle all of us.

Speaker Brady: I will say, from the NARP perspective, that seven treadmills are not enough for 2500 people. You can never get on a treadmill. We really need more of these. I don’t have any data on this, but in my experience, the treadmills are more popular.

Senator Chang: I think an elliptical would be really popular.

Senator de Toledo: There are twenty bikes by the Squash Courts and they are really underutilized, so buying another 10 bikes doesn’t make sense. As my fellow Senators mentioned, there is a lack of treadmills and ellipticals, so I think it would make sense to get 15 treadmills, 15 ellipticals, and then move 8 of the Squash Court bikes up there or something like that.

Senator Chang: I also think we should put up signs on the current bikes letting people know that there are more bikes downstairs.

President Custer: Thanks everybody for the input. They are going to be placing the order within the next two weeks or so, so there is time to get more input. I will reach out to Franklin for a more detailed list about what he wants to get. He’s also willing to meet with any of us, so email
me after Senate tonight if you have more ideas and want to meet with him and we can work on setting something up.

Senator Jahan: Will there be free space for stretching?

President Custer: Yes, there will be 20 or 25 feet of space set aside for stretching.

Senator Jahan: Motion to close discussion.
Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

IV. Committee Reports

a. Finance Committee Bi-Weekly Report (Treasurer Gratch)

Treasurer Gratch: Hopefully you had a chance to look this over. The first thing to go over is the Gamut Room and MMU. Those meetings happened a bit earlier than the rest. The Gamut Room and MMU are run by similar students (the same students) and they had a lot of ideas about big changes that they wanted to make happen, so instead of dealing with it in the way that we deal with other budgets, we decided to have meetings with JJ Boggs, the club leadership, and Olivia Aborn, the Chair of the Finance Committee. The Gamut Room is always really well attended so we wanted to take it seriously. The rest of the budgets were pretty standard. VACA, an arts organization, came in with a huge increase from previous years. The Director of Student Organizations/Chair of the Constitution Committee had some concerns about the items in their budget not being in line with their mission, so we are having a meeting with them. PCSO also had a rough transition. They came in with good ideas but their budget wouldn’t have been beneficial, so they will meet with someone from the Finance Committee to work on it. Globemed is also a weird situation. They came in with a New Money Request for a benefit dinner that will be a fundraiser. Our guidelines don’t let them sell tickets without the money first coming back to the Finance Committee. It’s a tricky thing because they can keep the profit to donate, but if they break even, the money we gave them will come back to the Finance Committee. Some general updates: we are continuing budgeting, we have office hours now, and we are working on getting a Bunker Security Fund.

Senator Chang: We had a conversation about VACA, which is a visual arts organization. They are creating a space for more visual arts. In my opinion, they would be filling a big void on this campus and doing things like providing publications and organizing fieldtrips. What is the update on that conversation with VACA?

Treasurer Gratch: Olivia reached out and nobody has responded yet. And I don’t think VACA is just visual arts. It’s all non-musical and non-theatre art.

V. Old Business
a. Resolution to Support the Implementation of the Green Dot Program (F2014-SB6) (Senators Gerstenschlager and Jahan)

Senator Gerstenschlager: We talked to Noreen Pecsok and Barbara McCall and Green Dot will be the new program that they implement in the spring. Rather than push MiddSafe just for the fall, we are going to get behind what they are doing in the spring. We looked under the bylaws and it falls under the purview of the Director of Health and Wellness to follow the implementation and provide feedback to the SGA.

Co-Chair Bogin: I have a clarifying question. Is the Director of Student Health and Wellness a cabinet position or a faculty position?

Senator Jahan: It’s a cabinet position. We can change it to say “SGA Director of Student Health and Wellness.”

Senator Chang: Can you briefly explain what Green Dot is?

Senator Gerstenschlager: Have you been to an It Happens Here presentation? IHH aims to draw attention to red dots, which represent incidents of sexual violence on campus. It raises awareness of the issue but doesn’t work to change the culture. Rather than focusing on the red dots, green dots represent positive actions of intervention. Green Dot will increase awareness about those green dots and bystander intervention. Faculty members will be trained this fall and students will be selected in J-Term and trained starting in the spring.

Senator Gerstenschlager: Motion to close debate and vote on F2014-SB6.

Senator Fisher: Seconded.

All aye.

Motion passes.


Ayes: President Custer, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Gogineni, Senator Sanders, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Hussein, Senator Chang, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker Brady

Nays: None.

Abstentions: Senator Jahan

15-0-1

F2014-SB6 passes.

b. Outside Aid and Student Financial Aid Update (Senators Toy and Chang)

Senator Chang: We met for the second time with Jackie Davies and Kim Downs and talked more about how this all works. Financially it is really complicated to figure out how to make outside aid more effective and since we are need-based we have to give everyone exactly what they need. However, our aid level might be different than the federal aid level, so there might be room there to allow students to accept outside aid without affecting their awards from Middlebury. The
difference between the federally calculated aid and Middlebury’s calculated aid is not extremely large. The way it works with an outside grant is that it will first take away from loans and work study (the self-help part) and then from the grant. This would help the students in the middle and not the highest need students. It’s really complicated and unfortunately, the number of students that it would help is so small that we are not pursuing it any further. Karina can explain this much better. We do want to work on there being more transparency and we’re toying with the idea of fellows, like the Admissions fellows, who are well trained students that can explain the financial aid process to other students. I also think it might be a good idea to have students who are not on financial aid apply for it and see what it is like and where the process might be unclear. I would personally volunteer to do that. This isn’t necessarily a bill or a resolution, but just some projects that could come from the SGA.

Senator Fisher: I am happy that you did the research and this makes a lot of sense based on these findings. I think the intent of having fellows in the Financial Aid office comparable to the fellows in Admissions could have some benefits. However, given the highly sensitive nature of financial aid and the access to information that someone in that position would have, I think we should tread cautiously moving forward. I don’t think it’s impossible or that we shouldn’t pursue it, I just think we should be careful.

Senator Chang: Absolutely. The fellows wouldn’t have access to any student information, but they would know about the process. They couldn’t advise on a particular cause but they would know how aid is calculated and how the process works. I think these positions would be helpful, because I spent two hours learning about the process and I still can’t explain it. I am happy to have more conversations about this so let me know if you want to be a part of it. A lot of the complaints about Middlebury’s financial aid can be resolved with more transparency and clarity about how it is calculated. Middlebury takes into account so many factors: how many parents, if anyone has a terminal illness, brothers and sisters in college, etc. Some other schools and the Fed don’t take this many things into account—Middlebury is a lot more specific.

Co-Chair Bogin: Motion to close debate.
Senator Gerstenschlager: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

VI. New Business

a. Continued Legislative Support for MiddIncluded: AAL Reform (F2014-SB9) (Senator Chang)

Senator Chang: The story behind this is that last year a group of non-SGA students said that the AAL requirement was wrong in a lot of different ways. It groups regions together that shouldn’t be together, some areas aren’t properly recognized, etc. Last year, the Senate passed this bill with this suggestion for a new distribution. Currently, we are required to take one class in each of the following: NOR, EUR, AAL, and CMP. Also, I didn’t create this bill—I just copied and pasted. The new suggestion will require NOR, because we live in this place, one comparative course, CMP, and two courses from the following: AFR: Africa, ASI: Asia, LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean, MDE: Middle East, EUR: Europe, and OCE: Oceania. We have also included
Mexico in NOR, because it wasn’t included there before. This is what we would be supporting if we pass this bill. Originally, we didn’t have NOR as one of the requirements, but we talked to the faculty and made that compromise. Cate Costley is presenting to the faculty and seeing what the faculty’s thoughts are on this. I am hoping we can pass this before then. Thank you to those of you who cosponsored this bill. I am in touch with MiddIncluded about this and they can come and answer questions next time if we want. I hope that everybody will be in support of this bill.

President Custer: This is an important issue that a lot of students care about. We should keep in mind that we passed this last year and took it to the faculty and they said that it was great but that they were going to look at distribution requirements more broadly and weren’t going to do anything at the moment. They are looking at distribution requirements this year and what Director Costley will talk to them about will be more about what the point of the requirements is and it might be broader than just looking at regions. Are these requirements going to be doing what we want them to do in terms of what we are studying here? I don’t know how useful it would be to pass this because they might end up scrapping the whole system—we don’t know their broader intent. What are we actually trying to do here? Is this system to the best way to make that happen? We can also maybe look at other colleges. Amherst has no requirements. I just don’t want us to get too narrowly focused.

Co-Chair Bogin: I have one very small point to make. I like the spirit of the bill and this is really important, but does Oceania need its own category? Can it just be a part of Asia? I know we have a Senator from New Zealand, so I am interested in hearing what you have to say. Also, President Custer, are you recommending that we table this idea and talk about larger issues?

Senator Brook: I haven’t seen any classes directly related to Oceania. There are many cultures in Oceania and I think it should be included as it’s own category if a professor wants to create a class about it. I think it would also be important and interesting to learn about indigenous cultures of Oceania, so I just want to put that out there in case students or professors have interest in that. If we include Oceania in Asia, I will not be represented anywhere.

Senator Vaughan: Should we include a recommendation for when these will be implemented? Will my year have to follow these requirements or would we follow the old way?

Speaker Brady: If they make a change, it will be for the next incoming class. We will keep the same requirements.

Senator Fisher: Per usual, I will contrast President Custer’s pragmatic words with my theoretical ramblings. Some of my constituents have presented the following view, which I share. We talk about reforming our cultures and civilizations requirements as though it is a unanimous opinion from the student body that the current requirements don’t make sense. I see sense in our current requirements. I do think it’s crazy that North America doesn’t include Mexico. I think the requirements should include where we are physically (NOR) and a course in European thought (EUR) because that thought is the foundation for what we do here as a liberal arts model. Then you take another course in a region other than those (AAL) and a comparative course (CMP) and that makes sense. I think there is a danger in getting rid of the European requirement because that is where the model we are engaging with here comes from. More than a handful of my
constituents have expressed that view to me. I think that what Senator Chang said implies that we are all totally on board with this. I don’t think that every student is on board with this and we have been talking about it that way.

Senator de Toledo: I agree with Senator Fisher. My personal view is that the distribution requirements exist in the liberal arts system, where we have no core curriculum, to provide a framework to explore, but one that isn’t so intrusive that you can’t take other classes that you want to take. The reality is that we are in North America and the thought that we rely on does come from Europe and given that, we should study Europe as a category.

Speaker Brady: Does anybody know what the precedent is for this? What is gained and what is lost when passing something that has already been passed by the SGA? There aren’t too many changes to the bill, right?

Senator Chang: I copied and pasted.

Speaker Brady: Is there a precedent for the SGA doing this?

Doug Adams: There is no precedent.

Speaker Brady: Is this something that we want the SGA to get in the habit of doing? We’ll just be passing the same bill and saying that “we still believe this and you still haven’t done anything about it.”

Senator Chang: Going back to Senator Brook’s argument, one of the theoretical benefits is that it encourages professors to offer classes in more than what you would think of as AAL. In response to Senator Fisher’s thought, the liberal arts do come from Europe and that is a good argument to keep the EUR requirement. I also shouldn’t have spoken like everyone agreed on this, so thank you for correcting me on that. All arguments for excluding Europe reflect the emergence of a globalized world. A class in something is a class not in something else. This change towards a more globalized look at the world comes in two ways: the removal of the EUR requirement and the redefinition of AAL. It redefines AAL and also makes it more politically correct in some ways. What’s the harm in being more specific? In regards to what President Custer said about waiting until Director Costley talks to the faculty before we write a new bill: I think we should pass this to show faculty that two Senates support this distribution reform. Then, after that meeting, we can come up with a new bill or plan of action. We don’t know what the new distribution system will look like, so we can support or propose something new if we want. I’m also totally fine scrapping this and waiting and seeing what happens.

President Custer: Motion to limit debate on F2014-SB9 to 7:55pm (9 more minutes).
Senator Chang: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Senator Jahan: I think that the argument for why it should be included is a reason that it should be removed. Because we are rooted in European thought, it is already part of everything we are
doing here, so there is no point in having a separate category for it. That’s not necessarily what I think, but it is an argument that is present. I would like to revamp this bill, maybe with a student body referendum. I want to see how students stand on this, especially since the faculty have already seen this bill and it’s not what every student actually thinks. I would also like to make a Friendly Amendment to change “northern America” to “North America.”

Senator Chang accepts Senator Jahan’s Friendly Amendment.

Senator Fisher: You can make the argument that everything we do here is implicitly European. Everything we do is human but we spend our whole lives trying to figure out what it means to be human. I also have some data that just dropped into my lap. There was a question on the Student Life Survey that asked if students were satisfied with the current cultures and civilizations requirements and only 47% were not satisfied with the current requirements. This question is phrased in a way that leaves out the concerns, so it is a little bit biased, but let the minutes show that my claims do have some weight.

Senator Hussein: Motion to have a straw poll on the question, “Would you want to include a question on the Student Life Survey this January that captures the essence of this question?”
Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Straw poll: “Would you want to include a question on the Student Life Survey this January that captures the essence of this question?”
16-0-0

Senator Medina: When is that data from, Senator Fisher?


Speaker Brady: No one really commented on my point before, but I don’t like the idea of passing the same bill that we have already passed. We are an institution and there needs to be a continuance. This was passed so it is solid and it stands. We can act against it if our opinion has changed, but if our opinion is the same I don’t think reaffirming things is a good habit for us to get into. It won’t make things any more apparent.

Senator Jahan: That’s what I was trying to get at. I think we need to add more support and more evidence to this bill to make it stronger before we pass it.

Senator Chang: What kind of evidence would you want to include?

Senator Jahan: I mentioned the student body referendum. Perhaps the number on the We The MiddKids petition has gone up or maybe MiddIncluded has concrete data?
Senator Hussein: Is it possible to table a given bill for a couple months. I want us to look at this in February when we have data from the Student Life Survey.

Chief of Staff Zhang: I think the best thing would be to postpone it indefinitely and then we can bring it back whenever we want.

Senator Chang: I just want to say one more thing. We are adding one more year of student support to this bill if we pass it. Last year’s seniors supported it and the first years now will support it. It shows that this issue still has momentum and people still care about it. I also have an announcement before we leave. On Thursday from 12-2, they are installing the Bike-Fix It Station outside of ADK. You can learn how to use it and there will be free hot chocolate. If any of you are sending out emails that week, maybe include this in the email.

Senator Gerstenschlager: Motion to close debate and table F2014-SB9.
Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Speaker Brady: I have heard a lot of complaints about the level of smoking on campus, especially outside of dorms and dining halls. I talked to a Public Safety officer about this and there are some buildings that you aren’t allowed to smoke in front of but nobody really gets punished for smoking in those areas. I am referring to the smoking of tobacco. I’m hoping to see smoking areas further removed from this campus because secondhand smoke is really harmful. Talk to me if you’re interested in doing more on this.

**VII. Adjournment**

President Custer: Motion to adjourn.
Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
All aye.
Meeting adjourned.