SGA Meeting  
March 8, 2015

I. Attendance

All members present except Senator Edwards; proxy for Senator Hussein (Proxy Mark Sinks)

II. Acceptance of Minutes

Senator Berlowitz: Motion to accept the minutes.  
Senator Gerstenschlager: Seconded.  
All aye.  
Minutes accepted.

III. Announcements

None.

IV. Committee Reports

a) Community Council Update (Co-Chair Bogin)

Co-Chair Bogin: We talked about smoking at our last meeting which was something that was originally sent to us by the SGA so I wanted to give you an update on that. The Smoking Committee formed in the fall and they got back to us with some recommendations, part of which had to do with what you recommended and part of which didn't. There was a recommendation that we should form a task force with faculty, staff, and students on it to discuss a potential ban on smoking. We should also take Laurie Patton's temperature on that issue. My thought is that we won't end up banning smoking but it is something worth talking back. Mark Peluso, our only doctor, and Barbara McCall are both in support of it. The task force recommended that and they also recommended looking at the fines or sanctions for smoking indoors and we might come up with a slightly different way of sanctioning. Lastly, what you actually wanted us to talk about, is smoking in front of buildings. We actually aren't going to do much on this. The problem is that we aren't following the current policy and we don't want to recommend that we follow our own policy. The issue is bigger than just students; it also involves faculty and staff. The staff would actually be more affected than the students and not everyone wanted that to happen. The two things that we are going to do is make the "No Smoking" signs bigger and better, like in front of the library. Currently, there is no education about the smoking policy and it is actually written in the policy that an email will be sent out concerning the smoking policy on campus and that hasn't been being done, so we will change that.

Speaker Brady: Has there been any effort to move the receptacles away from the doors?

Co-Chair Bogin: When they are moved further from the doors, they can't be chained to anything and so drunk people kick them over and its Tim Parsons' job to pick the cigarette butts off the ground.
Speaker Brady: When would these changes happen?

Co-Chair Bogin: The signs could happen this semester. The email would be one that went out at the beginning of the year so that probably wouldn't happen this semester. If you think it should happen this semester, we could probably do that.

Senator Gerstenschlager: Did you think about chaining them to lampposts? There is one in the middle of the mods, 20 to 25 feet away from each entrance, so that could be a good place to put one.

Co-Chair Bogin: Facilities has tried a lot of these ideas and they talk about it a lot so these aren't brand new ideas. Not to be facetious against your idea, but they've tried cementing them and weighing them down. I hope I'm doing this justice, but the cigarette butts always end up everywhere so they are sort of out of options. That's what I was hearing from Tim Parsons.

Senator Gerstenschlager: I was leaving the library the other day and there was a girl right outside smoking and it was very hard for me to not vocalize my frustration.

Co-Chair Bogin: I would say that in general the sort of model that we want is one that is community enforced. It isn't Public Safety's job to sit around and watch for people smoking; they are understaffed as it is and they want to prioritize other things. If you saw someone smoking and asked them to stop smoking next to the door, that could go a long way. You could just point out the no smoking signs, but I understand for sure that it is a hard thing to do and it puts people in an uncomfortable place.

Senator Allis: The reality when we talk about moving the smoker's...paradise?

Senator Fisher: Smoker's oasis.

Senator Allis: When you try and move the smoker's oasis further from the doors, they will probably just keep smoking in the same spot and will throw their cigarette butts in the snow or in the grass, so there is a tradeoff there.

Speaker Brady: Thank you for bringing this to Community Council and I understand and respect the work that you've done but I was hoping that more progress would have been made. If anyone else is concerned about this, I am interested in making this into a student movement. Secondhand smoke causes cancer so this is an important issue.

Doug Adams: I chair the Smoking Committee. The conversation around the issue is much broader and concerns faculty and staff as well as students so we need to go to each of those constituencies to discuss this. That is Community Council’s job. The suggestion to go to the President and to form a task force will include a timeline so that by the end of next semester there will be some kind of recommendation made for the entire community. That includes the summer community as well. It could take four to five years to put in place a change in the culture. There is movement on this though. This is the first time that this was brought to
Community Council in a decade. There isn’t a lot we can do right away and we are also waiting for the new President.

Co-Chair Bogin: The staff representative on Community Council, Brooke Escobedo, said that she brought this to the language school and said that they would lose faculty and staff over this ban and that is something that we can take into account and still decide to do but it is a lot more complicated than getting people to stop smoking in front of the library. We have started the process but if there is someone smoking in front of the library, I think we should just ask them not to smoke so close to the door. People here are pretty nice and I think they would be willing to move. If they got told every day to move a bit further away, I think eventually they would start standing further away. I’m happy to talk to anyone about this after the meeting today.

Senator Vaughan: We could get the Publicity Committee to put up posters around campus instead of changing the signs.

Co-Chair Bogin: (sarcastically) That would be a great image for the SGA: SGA says no more smoking.

Senator Vaughan: It doesn't necessarily have to come through the SGA, we could talk to people who live in the Wellness House.

Co-Chair Bogin: We can also talk to Barbara McCall and see if there are any students that she knows who would be interested in leading and supporting a campaign to decrease smoking on campus.

President Custer: I think people in the Wellness House would be very interested.

b) Confirmation of Maddy Sanchez as SGA Director of Transportation (President Custer)

President Custer: Unfortunately, Janiya won't be able to serve as Director of Transportation for this semester, but Maddy Sanchez is ready to take up the post. I'd like to formally nominate her for the position. She would do an excellent job and you should all vote to approve her.

Senator Berlowitz: What have you done with transportation that makes you qualified for this position?

Maddy Sanchez: I work in the Box Office so I spend a lot of time with Debby Anderson. I have a very good understanding of how the break busses work and I am there at the end of every break working the busses that go to Burlington. There are many students who don't follow our schedule so I get a lot of calls at the Box Office about other ways to travel. I have experience giving them information about the CCTA, the ACTR, and other taxi services so that they can find transportation.

Senator Berlowitz: I'm sold.

    Senator Jahan: Motion to confirm Maddy Sanchez as SGA Director of Transportation.
    Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

V. Old Business

a) Amendment to the Constitution of the Undergraduate Honor System (S2015-SB5) (President Custer, Member of the SGA Honor Code Committee Cate Costley, Chair of the SGA Honor Code Committee Allison Maxwell)

President Custer: I yield my time to Cate Costley, a member of the SGA Honor Code Committee. There has been a slight change to the bill.

Cate Costley: We have been working hard on this since we came into being at the beginning of J-Term. We've been assessing how we can increase student engagement, discussion, and ownership of the Honor Code and we've honed in on this initiative that you have talked about and we want there to be a resolution on that. The biggest change since the previous discussion is that there isn't a quota anymore, so we don't have to worry about what the default will be if we don't get two-thirds. We decided to resolve that by letting the vote be decided by a majority of those voting.

Co-Chair Bogin: Under section iii Revision 3) Consequences of Each Option, you have maintenance listed twice.

President Custer: The first one is the first vote and the second is the vote on the revised Honor Code. There are two different potential maintain options because there are two votes.

Senator Berlowitz: I like the change of getting rid of the quota. I still question the feasibility of the two week revision process. You would need people working day and night to get enough feedback, change the Honor Code, and then publicize those changes. Plus, you need the Senate to have voted on it the night before, so I still think that two weeks is too rushed.

Cate Costley: We did talk about that. Allison can actually walk you through the timeline of those two weeks and we would love to hear what you have to say.

Allison Maxwell: I think that it is totally a valid concern, but prolonging the process would create more issues than it would solve. If the vote closes on a Sunday, then we would have one week for people to think. The following Sunday, there would be a forum involving the President of the College, us as a committee, all of you, and anyone else who can come to voice their opinions. That night a member of our committee will compile a list of all of these ideas and publicize it. Throughout this entire process, there will be a go/ link for people to easily submit their ideas though. We also want there to be a platform like We The Middkids where people can post ideas and we can get immediate feedback on those ideas and see what students do and don't support. For the next week, the committee will do a first sieve of those ideas and we will hopefully have a good idea of what people are thinking. That Sunday, we would present a list to the Senate and you guys will choose which ones you think are the most important and vote on it, and that will be presented the next day for the final vote. That's what the timeline looks like.
Senator Berlowitz: I think that if the vote happens the next day then there isn't enough time to think about it. If I'm not on the SGA then I wouldn't know enough or had enough time to think about it. I still think that two weeks is a bit rushed, but I appreciate the thoughtful answer.

Proxy Sinks: I agree with Senator Berlowitz. I'm wondering what the reasoning is for not extending the process further if a revision would only go into effect in the following semester?

Allison Maxwell: My biggest concern is that people will lose interest. We don't want it to be too long of a period because then people will put it off because the changes seem so far in the future. There is some wiggle room but that's the biggest thing that comes to my mind.

Cate Costley: This occurs after Spring Break and if a revision happens, we may have to go to the faculty to get their approval, so we need to have time for that so that's why we want to keep it an intense and thoughtful process.

Co-Chair Bogin: I think this is great and I like the idea of not having a quota. If anyone wants to revise the Honor Code they can do it normally with two-thirds, but once every two years, the SGA lowers the bar a bit and I think that's cool. My question is at what point do you stop voting? Is there a time limit?

President Custer: It's not specified. It'll be left up to the SGA at that time.

Senator Fisher: I want to comment on the two weeks issue. It is true what Proxy Sinks and Senator Berlowitz said: a fortnight is not a particularly long time, but I am very much persuaded by what...

Allison Maxwell: Allison.

Senator Fisher: ...by what Committee Member Allison says...that's your first name isn't it? You want to keep some energy and vigor in there. I don't have any numbers but I have my gut and it has led me in the right direction in the past and my gut says that very few students will vote to revise the Honor Code. At the end of the day, I think most will vote to maintain the Honor Code or demolish or destroy it. I think the option to revise is important to have in there and I don't think that someone would choose to revise it if they didn't have something very specific in mind. Nobody will decide to revise the Honor Code for the hell of it. It becomes more manageable when you realize that people will be voting with something in my mind and I don't think it will be too difficult to pinpoint that issue.

Senator de Toledo: I just want to expand on that point and about what Director Maxwell says about people losing interest. The tailgate issue became a massive thing on this campus and there were a ridiculous amount of people talking about it and putting it on We The Middkids, but at the Senate meeting a week later, where we publicly advertised that we would be talking about it, nobody showed up. I don't think that two weeks is too short when student interest shifts so quickly between things here.

Senator de Toledo: Motion to limit discussion on S2015-SB5.
Senator Berlowitz: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Senator de Toledo: Motion to end discussion and vote on S2015-SB5.
Senator Jahan: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Vote on S2015-SB5
Ayes: President Custer, Senator Jahan, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Gogineni, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Proxy Sinks (for Senator Hussein), Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker Brady
Nays: Senator Berlowitz
Abstentions: None
15-1-0
S2015-SB5 passes.

b) Senate Reform Act (S2015-SB9) (President Custer)

President Custer: This is a lengthy and controversial bill that I hope you read over. I'll focus on the part which will draw the most discussion and that is the change to the structure of the Senate. The Reform Group started by thinking about the problems that we saw in the SGA instead of thinking of things that we wanted to change. One of the issues that initially came up was that there are certain groups on campus that don't feel like they can come to the SGA or don't feel comfortable doing so. One thing that we tried to focus on was how we change it so that everyone feels that their voice will be heard. The other issue is the apathy issue about what the SGA is doing. The proposed change that we made to the Senate was made to address those problems. How well does the Senate break down about how students disagree? It makes sense for Class Senators because the concerns of a Senior are probably different than the concerns of a First Year. For Commons, that is far less true. There are very few issues where Cook and Brainerd would be going at it in the Senate. That led us to the question of how Middlebury students divide themselves on campus and that probably breaks down to what they do in their free time. What other things do you spend your time doing? I have spoken to people in cultural organizations, religious groups, and club sports who really like doing their own thing and don't feel comfortable talking to the SGA or they don't think the SGA talks about things that interest them. A lot of them tend to be borne out in the fact that these students are doing other things on campus. Adding a Cluster Board Senator creates more controversy in our conversations and what the Senate does. Issues that might not get brought up will get brought up. We are currently voting unanimously on a lot of issues and that might not be the case if we had more differing opinions in the Senate. I don't want to talk the entire time, just wanted to set up the context from how we went to a couple of people sitting down in the Reform Group to this particular change in the structure. That's the logic of how we got there.

Senator Berlowitz: I appreciate this bill and the thought behind it. I don't particularly like the Cluster Board Senators and this solution leaves out varsity sports. If we are dividing along lines of how people spend their free time, some people spend a lot of their free time participating in
varsity sports on campus. I think 25% respondents to the Student Life Survey were varsity athletes. I also wonder how effective these new Senators would be. For the Visual and Performing Arts Senator, what do pottery and Riddim have in common? What do Men's Rugby and Fencing have in common? I talked to someone who is in the Fencing Club and there are about six or seven people. They don't have a coach, they don't get a PE credit and they practice in Proctor Basement. That sounds nothing like Men's Rugby to me. They are a giant team and they played Penn State last year. I think there is a big difference and not enough of a shared identity in some of those groups. The religious groups are different because they have the Religious Life Council, but these categories are leaving people out.

Senator Gerstenislager: I would just like to echo Senator Berlowitz's point. Men's rugby at Middlebury is a big deal, it was recently mentioned in Gone Girl. I don't know if you've read that.

Speaker Brady: The dad?

Senator Gerstenislager: Yeah. I just want to ask a couple more questions. How are these Senators elected?

President Custer: Each organization within each cluster would get to cast a vote. We wouldn't dictate how they determine who they are voting for, but it would be one org. one vote.

Senator Gerstenislager: So we are moving from Commons Senators, who represent everyone equally, to Senators which don't represent students equally. Have you addressed that and can you talk about that?

President Custer: That is a decent criticism, not everyone is equally represented in these clusters. That being said, I view that as a small negative given what the SGA does. Varsity athletes will be represented through their Class Senators so I don't think that adding these will be detrimental to varsity athletes. Outside of varsity athletes, I can't find another example of that. The SGA funds all of these. It will get away from equal representation slightly but the that's the downside for what is a really large positive upswing that could get more people interested in the SGA. Students who normally wouldn't participate would be interested in this new system. This is also a student government, not a real government. We aren't going to be taking away students' liberty or wastefully spending money. This can fix problems that we have. How do we get more students interested and how do we get more things done? This isn't perfect, but I think it's the best way to get there.

Senator Gerstenislager: Currently we have five Commons Senators, and under this new scheme we will have eight Cluster Senators. We already have an issue with getting enough people to run, so how are we going to get three more people to run? And hopefully we would have more than three people running so that the elections would be contested.

President Custer: That is definitely a possibility, but the SGA will actively promote these elections and I think there is a built-in incentive for students to run for these positions in a way that there isn't for Class and Feb Senators. These folks are already spending their time doing something and I think it would be easy to recruit for this and find someone to argue on behalf of...
something they are already passionate about. It's certainly an obstacle, but it is one that we can be avoided.

Co-Chair Bogin: I find a few things problematic with this. The idea of over-representing people that we fund is a weird idea and if we want to base it on things that people do, then I think it is weird to not include sports. Another thing that people like to do is party on the weekends, so should we have a Partying Senator, a Social Life Senator? I think that these categories are pretty good and they do represent a lot of people but there are a few notable groups that are not represented.

President Custer: Besides varsity athletes, who else is left out?

Co-Chair Bogin: Special Interests covers a lot more than other categories do. If you look on Middlink there are some smaller categories like a cappella for instance. Dolci is a member of the Food Cluster Board and not that the Food Cluster Board needs its own Senator, but I just think how well people are represented is a little bit weird especially since we consider ourselves representative right now. There is a difference between having varying perspectives and having varying interests. I think that we could have some interesting and different bills from a Special Interest Senator that we wouldn't have otherwise but I think that we would actually lose interest in people running. I have polled a number of my friends and nobody knows what a cluster board is. I'm serious. I appreciate that the Reform Group has been thinking of ways to combat apathy but changing it to a system where even fewer people know what is going on isn't going to work. There is a transparency issue there. I think that we would have more controversial and different bills on the floor, but that we would lose some interest by doing this.

President Custer: How would we lose interest?

Co-Chair Bogin: They wouldn't understand what we are doing here. They wouldn't know what those Senators are and I think it will put students off if they are less represented. Ultimately, there are a lot of people in clubs at Middlebury but there are also a lot of people who are not in clubs at Middlebury and I think those people who aren't in clubs will feel less represented on the SGA.

Senator Jahan: Why aren't social houses represented? They are comparable to the other cluster boards, especially since there used to be a voting member from the IHC back in the day.

President Custer: Social Houses fall under Special Interests in the labeling. You could pair them out but that would just be a nuanced change to the structure.

Senator Jahan: I am having a hard time seeing a lot of interest in being a Cluster Senator. Being a heavily involved club member doesn't mean that you would want to be a part of the SGA. Could we just have one club Senator who is heavily involved in Student Activities?

President Custer: There are definitely similarities within the clusters. Pushing back against what Senator Berlowitz said, there is something unifying there. Like Club Sports: their common interest is that they would like to be paid for by the college. You get away from that if you step back and have someone who is supposed to represent all of the student organizations.
Senator Jahan: I would like to make a Friendly Amendment to add a Social House Senator.

President Custer accepts Senator Jahan’s Friendly Amendment.

Speaker Brady: There is literally nowhere to go but up from here; we are looking at not great numbers. I don't think that this can way lower student interest which is non-existent to begin with. It might be difficult to get students involved but that is going to be on us. This would set the precedent that you can use these positions to make changes that benefit clubs and groups. I understand the argument about athletes but they don't have to ask for money from us and that is the biggest thing that we are in charge of. Their needs are represented through their Class Senators. I think there needs to be more of a voice for student organizations. This could be a good way to get more people involved who have a relevant stake. There is also no unifying quality among the commons, so the Commons Senators cannot truly represent their 1/5 of the student body. Clusters bring distinct voices. This isn't a perfect system but there is no perfect government. This is a step in the right direction.

Senator Vaughan: I agree with Speaker Brady. A couple things. One, think of how our system is organized now. I go to Commons Council and all of the things that people are telling me are related to clubs and to be frank, the reason I ran for Atwater Senator is because I am involved in other groups on campus and I thought that I could make a change with that. I brought up the SLSEA because I’m in SRI and Senator Chang brought up Midd Included. This is de facto representation and it’s arbitrary because every Senator is also representing a group they their title doesn’t say that they represent. This new system gives all groups a chance for change. There is no perfect government, but in this legislative body, the commons don’t have anything to legislate about. The commons look inside their own commons to build relationships there. Student groups have issues and things that they want to do. In order to make the SGA relevant, we need to unify student power and I think this would be a great way to do that. This just goes along the lines of meeting people where they are which was the strategy behind the failed office hours. We aren’t meeting people where they are.

Senator Berlowitz: I hear what Co-Chair Bogin and Senator Gerstenschlager said. One of the key things is whether or not we represent students or organizations. This would put more power into the hands of the organizations but we are the student government association so we should be representing groups even if they don’t get money and we should represent students who aren’t in clubs. We can’t leave people out because they don’t get money. There is a huge issue with accessibility but I don’t think we can be sure that they will go to all of the organizations that they represent to get their opinions on things. If I ran for the Religious Org Senator I would not go to every religious organization, I would only go to the one that I am interested in. It’s different than having office hours which are open to everyone. Representing organizations is really indirect and they don’t have similar enough interests. I challenge you to tell me how Linguistics and Divestment have similar interests. How could someone represent both of those clubs? How could someone represent J Street and Justice For Palestine at the same time? I also don’t think it is a good idea to increase the size of the Senate. We already have issues with getting people involved so expanding it doesn’t make sense. There was one competitive election last spring or two if you count both of the Sophomore Senators and there was only a 6% turnout for the referendum. These are horrible statistics and increasing the size and making it a more indirect system where
you elect the president of the organization and those presidents choose the Senator is not going to help with getting more people involved. Contrary to what Speaker Brady said, I do think that the SGA would go down if we did this. I think that adding a third class Senator and getting rid of the Commons Senators could be a way to better the Senate, but this is a way to worsen it.

President Custer: The idea that you just threw out is something that Reform Group thought about and discussed. There is a lot of value added with this scheme and I respectfully disagree, I don't think this would make the Senate go downhill. Most of the arguments I've heard against this involve just one exception. This isn't a perfect solution but it goes toward bringing people into the SGA who aren't currently active. Can you find another group besides varsity athletes that are not represented here? I think we should throw out that argument until we can find another group that isn't represented. Also, everyone benefits from organizations even if they aren't a part of them. As to the question of how well a Senator could represent the interests of their cluster, I think that Academics and Activism is less than perfect, but for the rest of them it is difficult to say that they don't have anything in common. There are certain things that all Club Sports or all Religious groups would support like getting Halal meat in the dining halls. I think that even the religious organizations who do not subscribe to the Islamic faith would see that as something to support. I don’t buy that argument except for the first cluster. I think this is probably one of the best solutions we are going to get.

Senator Toy: Regardless of who we fund, we represent the students and I do see this causing negativity towards the SGA by cutting out varsity athletes. We have Senator Gerstenschlager this year, but usually the varsity athletes are not represented in the Senate. I could see a Campus article coming out about how the SGA is clustering students together that don't have anything in common and leaving out varsity athletes. I think that adding three Senators for each year is not perfect but it is a much better solution if we want to increase interest. For people like me who have been a Class Senator for multiple years, I think that I discourage people in my class from running. I think more people would run if there were more spots available. That would also solve the problem of unequal representation. It is still important to represent everyone equally and it makes sense to go to your Class Senator if you need something. I think it causes confusion to have Cluster Senators. I would like to make a Friendly Amendment for there to be no cluster Senators and instead have three class Senators and three Feb Senators.

President Custer does not accept Senator Toy's Friendly Amendment.

President Custer: I have a question before you make a Formal Amendment. You brought up the issue of increasing the size of the Senate as the drawback, but your proposal still increases the size of the Senate. However, this scheme brings in other people who wouldn't have normally been brought in. We would have the opportunity to discuss things that I don't think we would with just Class Senators. I think there is a built-in incentive for people in cultural and religious organizations to run for this. How do you reconcile your proposal this if you're criticizing this scheme for adding additional Senators?

Senator Toy: This doesn't increase the number of Senators from what we have currently, because there are no Commons senators. I would like to make a Formal Amendment for there to be no cluster Senators and instead have three class year Senators and three Feb Senators.
Vote on Senator Toy's Formal Amendment.
Ayes: Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Brook, Co-Chair Bogin
Nays: President Custer, Senator Gogineni, Senator Allis, Senator Vaughan, Proxy Sinks (for Senator Hussein), Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Speaker Brady
Abstentions: Senator Jahan, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Medina, Senator Sohn, Senator Edwards
4-8-5
Senator Toy's Formal Amendment is defeated.

Senator Fisher: I feel similarly to how a parent might feel when their child goes to school on their first day except that we almost just took away the child’s most important subject. First let me say that countless thoughtful hours have been put into this: at least 40 organized hours and then truly countless hours outside of formal meetings in the Reform Group. On the topic of varsity sports not being represented, that is true but that implies that varsity athletes only do their sport and aren’t involved in other things. Sure, that’s true for some but there are varsity athletes who also participate in other very time-consuming serious activities. The idea that everyone needs to be represented equally seems to me to not be true. It’s not true in this country: someone in Wyoming is not as represented as someone in California. Everyone gets two Class Senators and let’s be frank the most important thing that the SGA does involves clubs. That is what our budget is used for and that’s what we have the most direct effect on. Not every student has to be equally represented. As to what pottery and Riddim have in common? Before Middlebury, I went to a performing arts school and I can tell you that someone who does pottery and someone who dances or does something musical have something shared in their spirit and I think that is true of the clusters as well. This is in perfect but what the hell do we have now? Co-Chair Bogin says nobody knows what their cluster board is. But of the people who took the survey, 60% of them don’t know what their Commons Senator does. Like Speaker Brady said, what do we have to lose? When it comes to representing the students, it makes sense to introduce some life and energy and different perspectives. Looking around the room, I think that most of us are one of four or five majors. Most of us are Political Science, Econ, or IGS. It makes sense because we are interested in politics and government, but if you have an interest in art you should also have a way to participate in the student government. Most of the things that we pass are unanimous or are close to unanimous. I think there is more of a diversity of opinions in the student body than is represented here. One more thing about how to get people to run. There is a lot in this bill that talks about student engagement. This has been a tough issue and we’ve debated about how to get more students involved. This is how you get more students to run. We aren’t dead, we exist, but we are writhing and approaching some sort of terminal illness. This is the shock we need. I apologize for rambling. Every Commons Senator who was here last semester and is here today was on this committee and they say that this is a good idea. That shows that the Commons Senator scheme isn’t working. I don’t feel like I can do my job the way it is expected of me. It would be irresponsible not to listen to us. This is an exciting way to improve the SGA and I hope that you will support the Reform Group and support this bill today.

Senator Gogineni: Looking around this room, I think there is at least one person that fits into every one of those cluster boards. I am here representing the Juniors but I have an opinion outside of that in terms of the voices and opinions that I bring to the table. Even if it's de facto, we have all types of those opinions. I think that increasing the number of Senators would
decrease the efficiency and even if this increases accessibility to the SGA, if we can't get time to discuss the ideas, what's the point?

Senator Allis: I don't have much to say that hasn't already been said, but I am really open to something like this. I don't understand why we couldn't add a varsity athlete representative. That makes a lot of sense to me. By not having one, we are adding unnecessary controversy. On the other hand, for example, I'm in a band and we perform around campus and the area all the time, so we are dealing with Public Safety and all kinds of clubs in the capacity, but the one club on this campus that represents musicians is really ineffective so I don't go to their meetings. So how would I get a say in our Cluster Senator?

Senator Fisher: They don't even have meetings.

Senator Allis: I guess I would just need more clarification for how the nomination process would work.

President Custer: This would be something put into the bylaws afterwards. It wouldn't be a nomination. Anyone can run, even someone who isn't involved in any of the organizations. The people who vote are the presidents of the organizations. If I'm not a part of a cultural organization, I could still run to be their Senator. It might not work out well. I don't think that every club would put a person from their organization forward.

Senator Allis: I would like to make a Friendly Amendment to add a Varsity Athlete Senator.

Co-Chair Bogin: What if we just changed the Club Sports Senator to Athletics Senator and have it incorporate both club sports and varsity sports?

President Custer accepts the Friendly Amendment proposed by Senator Allis and edited by Co-Chair Bogin.

Senator Brook: We’ve spoken a lot about representation and how it would be difficult for the Senator. I myself am in Evolution Dance Crew and I don’t know how if I were the Senator for that cluster I would be able to represent both Evolution and Riddim. There is such a conflict there. Would I come to the meeting and say well Riddim says this but Pottery says this and this group says this and this. Like Senator Vaughan, I ran for Senator because I saw myself wanting to make changes for groups that I am in. I keep hearing, and I can’t speak much on it because I’ve only been here six months, but I keep hearing that there is a lot of separation on campus with different groups biting each other’s heads off. I don’t see that separation getting any better under this scheme.

Senator Gerstenschlager: I want to look at a different part of the bill, the part about interpretation. What’s the story with that?

President Custer: A few Senators have raised questions to me about this. This is something that most SGA constitutions have and it just says that the SGA President decides how the interpretation actually falls out. Yale does this and if the Senate disagrees then they can override with a two-thirds vote. This isn’t just me recommending this trying to get more presidential
power. Everyone else on the Reform Group were Senators and people not involved in the SGA and they thought that this was a good idea too. We need someone to make the call. If Director of Membership Warren has to decide how to run elections according to the constitution, it would be easier to have the SGA President make the call because it would be hard to get the whole Senate to convene and vote on it. Somebody has to do this and since the SGA President is the most public figure, they are held the most accountable for their decisions so it seemed sensible to trust it to that person.

Speaker Brady: Having gone to the NESCAC conference and seeing other SGA models, it is miserable without a strong executive. They don’t get anything done. The strong executive is very helpful in getting things done. It comes down to efficiency and we need someone who can give a quick answer. If something is egregious we will stop and vote against it. I don’t think we need to worry about Taylor being a tyrant. He doesn’t have an army at his command to deploy on Middlebury’s campus. Efficiency is important in making the SGA active. Going back to the organization part, Senators Brook, Toy, and Berlowitz said that it might be hard for the Cluster Senators to represent their constituents...what are the Commons Senators doing now?

President Custer: To Senator Gerstenschlager, about the interpretation we looked at a lot of the data from the Student Life Survey. 79% of people said they knew who I was and I think in the future the SGA President is likely to be well known so if you make a stupid call and try and twist the constitution then it will bite you more publicly than if it were a larger group. It’s easier to diffuse responsibility among the Senate. The efficiency of the decision making also came into play.

Senator Jahan: I am also concerned about the interpretation part of this bill. I am concerned as to which situation it would apply to and if you get to make the call like with elections, how would we even know that you were interpreting the constitution to know if we didn’t like what you did?

    Senator Jahan: Motion to end discussion and table S2015-SB9.
    Senator Gerstenschlager: Seconded.
    Ayes: Senator Jahan, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Allis, Senator Brook, Senator Edwards
    Nays: President Custer, Senator Medina, Senator Sohn, Senator Vaughan, Proxy Sinks (for Senator Hussein), Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker Brady
    Abstentions: None
    8-9-0
    Motion defeated.

Senator Vaughan: I have talked a lot so I don’t want to say too much. I want to push back about what Senator Gogineni said about having de facto representation. I don’t think that we can guarantee every year that we will have representation from all groups. Cluster Senators have to take in all of the opinions of their organizations to some degree but Commons Senators don’t go to every common room in the dorms so the Cluster Senators wouldn’t have to go to every club meeting. They could go to a different one each week. If a student has an issue that is related to a club like Midd Included that is relevant to multiple grades and not just one year, then you can go to your Cluster Senator with it.
President Custer: It is getting a bit late. Since this would be a change to the constitution, if we want to get it done, it’s something that we need to vote on tonight.

President Custer: Motion to split S2015-SB9 into 2 parts. S2015-SB9 Part 1 will be the part concerned with the reforms to the Senate. S2015-SB9 Part 2 is the rest.
Senator Berlowitz: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Doug Adams: I don’t speak on bills often but this is a substantial, significant change that you are suggesting. I want you to consider a few things. Think for yourselves, have you done everything that you could do in your current position to improve it? What you are doing is asking a brand new group of people to do that. Simply restructuring will not fix the problem. There was a four year mandatory commons structure and the Commons Senator came out of every residence hall having a representative. I think that having a different system is a good process to go through every now and then, but do you do enough currently? Are you spending 7-10 hours a week doing this job? If you can honestly say, “yes, I go out and meet people, I serve in groups, and I do everything I can” and it’s still not working, then I think you can look at restructuring. There are elements about the reform that are excellent, but restructuring is difficult.

President Custer: Thank you for that. We have discussed this and I would have to disagree that people need to do 7-10 hours a week. That’s an unreasonable expectation and I don’t know that at any time people have done that. I don’t see that happening. This is not just a change for the sake of change. We discussed a lot of issues that the SGA has and how you go about solving those issues. It’s not like we don’t like the Commons Senators so let’s just get some new people. This restructuring has a lot of potential to change how people talk about the SGA. I could understand how this could seem like we are just pushing the problem onto someone else, but I think that reforming in this way pushes us towards solving a problem. There are other aspects to the reform bill that are far less controversial. There will be more publicity and memo writing at the end of the year, it’s not just this change in structure. We want to make this intrinsic to the system so that we get more interest in the SGA.

Co-Chair Bogin: I think I raised my hand maybe an hour ago. A few things that have come up in that time and there are so many. I don’t see a problem with unanimity on a resolution to ask Public Safety to salt more. I don’t see a problem with unanimous votes because there are things that I think we can represent the students on unanimously. I also know that this isn’t what you want to hear but I am uncomfortable voting on this without the bylaws. I’m kind of against it, but I am uncomfortable voting on it without the bylaws on how these Senators would be elected. I think that will impact how well they can do their jobs and how well people can engage with the SGA. You’ve explained pretty thoroughly how the process would go. I just don’t think it’s going to increase engagement and I don’t think there will be interest in being a Cluster Senator. It’s not something I’m a fan of.

President Custer: That’s a fundamental disagreement. This could do a lot to increase engagement and interest and there is very little downside if this doesn’t work out. If you disagree with that, then you disagree with the bill. I can see the part about the bylaws being important, but each org
will get one vote for the Senator. I prefer to keep that out of the constitution and keep it on good faith that that’s what it will be in the bylaws. I don’t want that to dictate whether or not this gets passed.

Senator Gerstenschlager: I'd like to make a Friendly Amendment to add a Social House Senator.

President Custer: I'm okay with that but I want to check with the other members of the Reform Group.

Speaker Brady: I feel uneasy but I'll do it.

President Custer accepts Senator Gerstenschlager's Friendly Amendment.

Senator Berlowitz: I don’t think these categories work and I cannot emphasize that enough. I really disagree with what Senator Fisher said about people not knowing what Commons Senators do. I would say that I could represent a distinct Brainerd interest better than any of these groups. You live in the same place for your first two years. Printers aren’t that big of an issue for Brainerd Students because McCullough and RAJ are nearby. It might be a more important thing for students in Atwater who have a printer in the Chateau. I also think about Senator Fisher’s point about similar majors, just because you are an Econ major doesn’t mean you can’t be in an activist organization or an athlete or in a social house. I think that comment was very irrelevant. I don’t think this bill fixes anything. I would like to yield my time to Jacob Dixon, a member of one of the athletic clubs at Middlebury and he will be speaking on behalf of the Ping Pong Club.

Jacob Dixon: The Ping Pong club is totally different than crew and varsity sports. If you only get one vote, then the votes from club sports will be outweighed by varsity teams. About the efficiency that you were talking about before, it doesn’t make sense to add more Senators.

President Custer: Ping pong isn't a club sport.

Senator Berlowitz: If ping pong isn’t a club sport, that’s ridiculous.

President Custer: I’m not the one who categorized the organizations but whoever did probably realized that the Ping Pong Club and Club Sports didn’t have the same ideas and objectives. There isn’t much more for me to add in response to your criticisms, I’ve already argued it out. I could have gotten quite a few people from various organizations who would have been in support of this. I’m not going to get into the interpretation part.

Senator Berlowitz: Still, these categories are too broad and they don’t represent the students.

President Custer: That holds true for Academic and Activists. With all due respect to the Ping Pong Club, that is the one exception to the rule, not the rule.

Senator Gerstenschlager: Motion to end discussion and vote on S2015-SB9 Part 1.
Senator Jahan: Seconded.
Ayes: President Custer, Senator Jahan, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Gogineni, Senator Allis, Senator Vaughan, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker
Brady
Nays: Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Brook, Proxy Sinks (for Senator Hussein), Senator Edwards, Senator Fisher
Abstentions: Senator Sohn
9-7-1
Motion passes.

Vote on S2015-SB9 Part 1.
Ayes: President Custer, Senator Jahan, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Vaughan, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Speaker Brady
Nays: Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Brook, Senator Edwards, Co-Chair Bogin
Abstentions: Senator Medina, Proxy Sinks (for Senator Hussein)
9-6-2
S2015-SB9 Part 1 is defeated.

VI. Adjournment

President Custer: Motion to table S2015-SB9 Part 2 and adjourn.
Senator Toy: Seconded.
Ayes: President Custer, Senator Jahan, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Proxy Sinks (for Senator Hussein), Senator Edwards, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin
Nays: Senator Allis, Speaker Brady
Abstentions: None
15-2-0
Meeting adjourned.