SGA Meeting
March 15, 2015
As corrected

I. Attendance

All members present; proxy for Senator Jahan (Proxy Afī Yellow-Duke)

II. Acceptance of Minutes

President Custer: Motion to accept the minutes.
Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
All aye.
Minutes accepted.

III. Announcements

Senator Fisher: Sometimes things happen that warm your heart and you would be a fool not to share. I recently stumbled into a child I didn’t know, but he knew me because he had seen my picture outside of the Crest Room. It was Billy Jacobs, of Mary Hogan Elementary School, the SGA’s biggest fan. He knew that I was Zak Fisher, Ross Commons Senator. He reads the minutes and he had caught wind that our last meeting was a little contentious. He loves the SGA and he said that he wanted to give to us this piece of art to show us how awesome and great we are. It says, “SGA is Cool” with president T. Custer in the corner there.

Senator Berlowitz: Motion to halt discussion and vote on whether Billy Jacobs’ artwork should go up on the bulletin board.
Senator Toy: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Vote on Billy Jacobs’ artwork being displayed on the bulletin board.
All aye.
Billy Jacobs’ artwork will be displayed on the bulletin board.

President Custer: I just have one announcement. I just want to remind you that we will not have meetings for the next two weeks because of Spring Break, so enjoy your breaks.

Senator Gerstenschlager: I don't know how many of you were present at Ross Dining Hall last night, but for about 15 to 20 minutes, the music stopped playing. As the fate of 100 Days hung in the balance, our President stepped up. He renegotiated the continuation of the party and I want to commend him for these actions and for representing the interests of our student body.

Speaker Brady: Thank you, Senator Gerstenschlager.

Senator Gerstenschlager: And thank you, President Custer.

a) Community Council Update (Co-Chair Bogin)
Co-Chair Bogin: Contrary to what I said, we did we look at the smoking policy and we actually made a number of recommendations. You can see them all here. This is something that Advisor Adams typed up. The bolded parts are what are different. An annual reminder will be sent out from the Office of the President. Currently, the policy says that email will be sent out, but not by whom and nobody feels like it is their responsibility. We changed the required distance from 25 to 30 feet so that they can say that it is about 10 paces, which is easier to visualize. We also want signs to be placed at all building entrances and air intake areas but the budget for that is astonishingly high so it probably won't happen. We do think it is important in high-traffic areas and we want to say that they should be there. Finally, we recommended that the policy should be reviewed for people who are new to the college. We also are recommending that the Department of Public Safety enforce the policy as opposed to now when they don't. Officers should request that those smoking move the appropriate distance away. They could maybe issue citations to students but not to faculty or staff. In reality, they won’t enforce heavily, but they should. We are also sort of working with Health and Wellness to involve them and include information through them where we can. Addressing the concerns about the smokers’ oasis: if it’s too far away it gets destroyed so we are going to leave it up to Facilities to look at this if they can do anything about it. We’ll understand if they cannot move them further away. Looking at interior smoking policy violations, we recommend that the Dean of Students and the Deans of Commons look at the fines for that and increase the sanction somehow but we didn’t recommend how.

Senator Medina: My first comment is about the smoking policy. I've had a lot of people come up to me who don't really know what we’re working on so I think we should put more thought into how we talk about it what we are doing. There were people thinking that smoking would be banned entirely on campus. Also, one of my constituents was wondering if we could get a stapler by the Proctor Printer.

Senator Hussein: I spoke to people in the Library and because the printer is not in the Library area, they said it wasn't their problem and that we should get the stapler out of the SGA budget.

President Custer: We’ll buy a stapler, Senator Medina.

Speaker Brady: Thank you Co-Chair Bogin and Advisor Adams. This is definitely a movement in the right direction.

Senator Berlowitz: Thank you, these are very thoughtful recommendations. I want to commend Senator Medina. I recently observed him having an argument outside of the Library about the smoking policy and he was doing a great job of representing Middlebury’s policy. I just want to commend him for that.

Co-Chair Bogin: If everyone did that, I think it would go way further in enforcing the policy then anything that Public Safety could do.

b) Bi-Weekly Finance Committee Report (Treasurer Gratch)

Treasurer Gratch: Not that much to report. We met with a few organizations, but the rush is over for New Money Requests. Most of the requests we funded were funded in full or $50 away from
full, so that's great. We also did interviews so I hope you ratify our new members. We plan on taking one Junior Feb and four First Years and First Year Febs. An update on the general budget: we have one week left and we are hoping that the reserves at the end of the year will be between $100,000 and $130,000. Right now, they are at $117,000 so that's great. We are also keeping in mind that the money for the cabin has not been moved yet so because of that we actually have $157,000.

Senator Fisher: I'm noticing that the largest New Money Request was from Midd InterVarsity. Are they going on a trip? How many people are going?

Treasurer Gratch: It is a large amount of money, but there are about 20-30 students going to New Orleans. They do the trip every year.

Senator de Toledo: They also fundraise over $10,000 for it.

Senator Fisher: That’s great. That’s much larger in magnitude than I thought.

c) Ratification of the New Finance Committee Members

Speaker Brady: Motion to ratify the new members of the Finance Committee.
Senator Gerstenschlager: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

d) Ratification of the Awards Committee Members

President Custer: Chief of Staff Zhang sent out an email earlier with the names of the individuals who we are suggesting should be on the committee.

Senator Berlowitz: Is it always seniors?

Chief of Staff: It doesn’t have to be but in gathering a group for this, seniors have taken the most classes and thus know the most professors.

Senator de Toledo: Motion to ratify the members of the Awards Committee.
Senator Berlowitz: Seconded.
Ayes: President Custer, Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan), Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Hussein, Senator Edwards, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker Brady
Nays: None
Abstentions: Senator Gerstenschlager
16-0-1
Motion passes.

V. Old Business
a) Bylaws Amendment: Weekly SGA Coffee Hour (S2015-SB3) (President Custer)

President Custer: I sent Chief of Staff Zhang a new version of this, which works in some of the concerns that people brought up last time. I’ve changed it in a few different ways. I decreased it from two Coffee Hours a week to one Coffee Hour. It is still up to the president to propose a weekly time and location. Chief of Staff Zhang, can you add in that the Senate has to approve that? It would be in the Davis Family Library or in Bi-Hall in the evening. Students studying there could come and get a free snack and coffee and it would be something that was clearly paid for by the SGA. The hope would be that they might say something to one of us about something that concerns them about Middlebury or that they would just say hello. I don’t think I articulated that well enough last time. It will be held in a place where students will be, at the discretion of the President. I still think that $60 is a reasonable amount for each Coffee Hour. To put that in perspective, it costs $30 for a big jug of coffee and $30 for a plate of cookies from the Grille. There was concern about the harshness of removing people from the Senate for not attending, especially given consistent scheduling conflicts. I changed it so that each member of the Senate should attend at least three a Semester and the SGA President can track attendance. The SGA President would go to all of them. This is just a trial run and so if anyone doesn’t go to at least three without having a consistent scheduling conflict which they have told me about then the Senate can talk about how they would want to enforce attendance next Semester.

Senator Berlowitz: I like the changes. A practical question: does this start next week if we pass it tonight?

President Custer: Well, the actual time would have to get approved and if this passes, I would propose a time at the following Senate Meeting. So these won’t start until after Spring Break if this passes.

Speaker Brady: I am very disappointed that the reforms didn’t pass but I think we are moving in the right direction. This is moving us to committing more time to the SGA and I am fully in support of it. My one question is have you talked to Wilson Café about this? My concern would be that it would hurt their sales if we were offering free coffee. That’s just one slight concern though because I think this is a great bill.

President Custer: No, I haven’t spoken to anyone. I thought about it but I thought that this would be worth doing anyways.

Speaker Brady: I think that it would be a nice gesture.

President Custer: We could also buy stuff from them instead of buying from the Grille.

Senator Toy: I like the changes. You have the requirements for during the Semester, but J-Term would be different. I’d like to make a Friendly Amendment to add as well as both Coffee Hours during J-Term.

President Custer accepts Senator Toy’s Friendly Amendment.
Senator Gogineni: Back to the location, does this require us to be in the Library or Bi-Hall? I like the idea of going straight to the people and it might be nice to have lemonade outside on Battell Beach once it’s warmer outside. The same people always go to the Library or Bi-Hall and it might be nice to have some variation in the people that we meet.

President Custer: We could definitely do something like that, but I don’t want to do that for this. I want this to be a weekly thing that is always in the same place. It should be a reliable place where you can go and get coffee and cookies.

Senator Gogineni: You said this could be a way for people to take a break. I don’t think that people will go to Bi-Hall or to the Library to take a break from studying. Wouldn’t that defeat the purpose?

President Custer: They would be in the evening when Bi-Hall and the Library are both packed with people. Yes, it will be easier for some people to attend than others, but right now nobody is attending it so it would still be a plus.

Co-Chair Bogin: Where in the Library are you envisioning this happening?

President Custer: We could get one of the classrooms or we could do it out front.

Senator Berlowitz: I would agree with Senator Gogineni. Different students prefer different places and most prefer either the Library or Bi-Hall. Most students don’t go to both.

President Custer: We could vary it every other week. That would still keep the consistency there. I just want it to be consistent enough so that people don’t have to think about when it’s going to be.

Speaker Brady: I think we should leave the location up to the discretion of the President. The President can figure out what is working and what isn’t and can change it up if necessary. I agree that consistency is important.

Co-Chair Bogin: Motion to end discussion and vote on S2015-SB3.

Senator Berlowitz: Seconded.

All aye.

Motion passes.

Vote on S2015-SB3

Ayes: President Custer, Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan), Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Hussein, Senator Edwards, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker Brady

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

17-0-0

S2015-SB3 passes.
b) Compensation for Minute-Taking Act (S2015-SB7) (Senators Gerstenschlager and Berlowitz, Nick Warren)

Nick Warren: We’ve already introduced this but I’m very interested to hear what you think and I’m happy to answer any questions.

Senator Toy: One of my concerns is that the Press Secretary is a part of the President’s Cabinet and I don’t think that Cabinet members should be paid. There is a conflict of interest.

Senator de Toledo: Are you concerned because the President can appoint someone who gets paid or because they are sitting on the Cabinet?

Senator Toy: Less of the former, more of the latter. If we are getting someone good, it should be an application process.

Senator de Toledo: My question is what are all of the things that you do?

Press Secretary Tiberend: It’s mostly just minute-taking.

Senator de Toledo: It’s clearly a very labor-intensive process. I think that volunteering to do what we do in terms of representing people makes sense, but this is different. I would like to make a Friendly Amendment that if we agree that this should pass, that we retroactively pay Press Secretary Tiberend for this year’s work.

Senators Gerstenschlager and Berlowitz accept Senator de Toledo’s Friendly Amendment.

President Custer: Just a comment about the conflict of interest. The Senate gets to ratify all the members of the cabinet so the President can’t just appoint anyone that they want to.

Senator Toy: Couldn’t you see in the future other Cabinet members getting upset about why they aren’t getting paid?

President Custer: They aren’t obligated to be on the Cabinet. If they say, “pay me or I’m going to stop doing my job,” then I will thank them for their service and find someone else.

Co-Chair Bogin: I really don’t like this bill. I'm sorry Director of Membership Warren, but I think it is weird to pay one member of the cabinet and no one else. I really appreciate the time you put into these minutes and the minutes you are taking this year are excellent. I don’t want to belittle the work that Press Secretary Tiberend does, but I don't think that four hours is a lot of time. I put in at least four hours a week as Co-Chair and President Custer does as well. I think a decent member of other senators and cabinet members put in that amount of time as well. We serve for the pleasure of serving the SGA. Your internal motives can vary, but there is a direct reward of doing this. It is weird to pay one person out of everyone.

Nick Warren: I think that the work of the Press Secretary is qualitatively different than the work of a Senator or Cabinet Member. Responding to Senator Toy, I wouldn’t object to an amendment
formally removing the Press Secretary from the cabinet but that is subject to what my sponsors want obviously. This should be an advertised posted position. That being said, there is value in having the Press Secretary in the Cabinet meetings but that could happen even if they were not formally in the Cabinet.

Senator Fisher: I think Director of Membership Warren is right that it is qualitatively different work. There is an important distinction between political work and ministerial work. The Cabinet members work for the President making political decisions and chairing committees and they are serving for pleasure. There is something different about the work that Press Secretary Tiberend does and it is work that no one does for fun or can take joy out of. There was talk of making the Press Secretary more than just a minute-taker, but an actual spokesperson for the SGA. I’m afraid the possibility for that to happen will be gone if we chain the Press Secretary to being just a minute taker. I disagree that the Press Secretary should be paid retroactively. I do not think that it is unjust or wrong, but there is someone else in this room that would probably want the same thing. She gave the world’s shortest Bi-weekly Report. She did the same job for a full year and her minutes were also outstanding, so should she get paid retroactively? We are a forward focused body and we can only change the future, as much as I do value Press Secretary Tiberend’s work. I would like to make a Friendly Amendment that the current Press Secretary will not be paid retroactively.

Senators Gerstenschlager and Berlowitz do not accept Senator Fisher’s Friendly Amendment.

Senator Fisher: I would like to make a Formal Amendment that the current Press Secretary will not be paid retroactively.
Senator Toy: Seconded.
Ayes: Senator Gogineni, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Fisher, Co-Chair Bogin
Nays: President Custer, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Hussein, Senator de Toledo
Abstentions: Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan), Senator Sohn, Senator Edwards, Speaker Brady

6-7-4
Fisher’s Formal Amendment is defeated.

Speaker Brady: I would like to give Treasurer Gratch the chance to speak on this. The reason I abstained is because I didn’t get to hear her thoughts.

Treasurer Gratch: Um I guess I don’t usually weigh in. My concern isn’t what Senator Fisher mentioned, but thanks for the shout out. I actually just think this is pretty wrong because the Press Secretary is a way for someone who wouldn’t play a role in the SGA to learn about it and participate in the Senate meetings without having to run in an election. I think it is a really valuable and rare position and I loved it. It also made me want to be more involved in the SGA. Making it a job takes that away. About what Senator Fisher said about turning it into a real Press Secretary role, it is different qualitatively than minute taking. I think this would take away the possibility of eventually having a Press Secretary that can speak on behalf of the SGA, which would be cool.
Senator de Toledo: I think that Senator Fisher made a good point that the work of the Press Secretary is different qualitatively from what Cabinet members and Senators do. What Treasurer Gratch said about getting exposure to the SGA, well there are many other ways to do that that don’t require this amount of work. You are assigned labor-intensive work but aren’t allocated any responsibility. Every other Cabinet member is given responsibilities. I think it is right to retroactively pay Press Secretary Tiberend. If we acknowledge that we should pay her for the rest of the year, we should pay her for the beginning of the year as well.

President Custer: My issue with this is paying someone for taking minutes at Community Council meetings. Community Council is not by run by the SGA. I would be okay with the SGA paying for a portion but would want there to be a contribution from the faculty and staff. I would like to make a Friendly Amendment to remove that.

Nick Warren: I agree with you in theory but I don't think those other three groups will pay for something like this. Beyond that, the purpose of the minutes is more for students than for any other group. Students are often the driving force, as we’ve seen this year, towards pushing other groups to change. We use what we know from what students have done in the past years to move forward. That’s why I think minutes are more for the students and it’s important to know what has happened in both the SGA and Community Council in the past.

Senator de Toledo: Motion to limit discussion to five minutes.
Speaker Brady: Seconded.
Ayes: Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan), Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Edwards, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin
Nays: President Custer, Senator Toy, Senator Hussein, Senator Fisher, Speaker Brady
Abstentions: None
12-5-0
Motion passes.

President Custer: I also have a question for Director of Membership Warren and the sponsors of the bill: Have you asked the administration if they would pay for this? I think we shouldn’t fund this now, ask them, and then we can revisit it later.

President Custer: I would like to make a Formal Amendment to make the change that the Community Council minute-taker is not paid.
Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
Ayes: President Custer, Senator Gogineni, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Edwards, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Speaker Brady
Nays: Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Toy, Senator Vaughan
Abstentions: Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan), Senator Berlowitz, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Hussein, Co-Chair Bogin
8-3-6
Custer’s Formal Amendment passes.
Senator Berlowitz: I do think there is something qualitatively different about this position. To respond to what Treasurer Gratch said, I think it has worked out in the past so that the President and Chief of Staff have found someone who can take good minutes. I don’t think that appointing their friends will always work out though. I think that advertising the job as a paid job that people want is a good idea. Just because it has worked in the past doesn’t mean it always will.

Senator Toy: What do you do and how long does it take you? Do you take minutes for Community Council as well?

Press Secretary Tiberend: I take minutes during the meeting and then it takes me about four hours after the meeting to put them together so that they make sense and look nice. I just take minutes for the Senate.

Senator Toy: I like the idea of paying someone who is removed from the Cabinet. Press Secretary Tiberend, I want to know what you think. Don’t look at President Custer.

Press Secretary Tiberend: I really don’t have an opinion.

Senator Toy: I would like to make a Friendly Amendment to remove the Press Secretary from the Cabinet.

    Senators Gerstenschlager and Berlowitz do not accept Senator Toy’s Friendly Amendment.

Senator Gerstenschlager: There is something to be said about having the Press Secretary in the Cabinet meetings.

Senator Toy: We created the Publicity Committee because we didn’t want to give that job to the Press Secretary. If she doesn’t do anything but take notes, I don’t think she needs to be a part of the Cabinet.

Doug Adams: So you do go to Cabinet meetings and take minutes?

Press Secretary Tiberend: Yes, they’re not as detailed and they’re just for President Custer’s reference.

President Custer: There is value to having the Press Secretary in the Cabinet and I ask Press Secretary Tiberend for her opinion on things related to the SGA. If you removed the Press Secretary from the Cabinet, there would need to be more in this bill about how we choose this person. It would also have to be changed in the bylaws. It becomes a much more difficult matter. If we take the Press Secretary out of the cabinet, how do we choose them?

    Co-Chair Bogin: Motion to extend time until Senators decide they don’t want to talk about it anymore.
    Senator Berlowitz: Seconded.
    Ayes: President Custer, Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan), Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn,
Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Hussein, Senator Edwards, Senator Fisher, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker Brady

Nays: Senator Gogineni, Senator Toy, Senator de Toledo

Abstentions: None

14-3-0

Motion passes.

President Custer: I have a question for the sponsors of the bill. It stipulates in the Whereas about 1:15 for each Senate Meeting, but if you go down to the Resolved, it doesn’t stipulate the amount of time we are going to pay this person to take minutes. If Press Secretary Tiberend takes minutes during the meeting and then spends four hours making them legible to the rest of us, are we going to pay for the 1:15 or for the full five hours that it takes to get them finished?

Nick Warren: This would pay for all the work that she does. I think if the Press Secretary is taking too long for some reason, then the Senate can tell them that.

Senator Gerstenschlager: I think if she’s investing those four hours, she should be paid for them.

President Custer: I totally agree, I just wanted to clarify.

Senator de Toledo: I think it should be at the discretion of the Senate to approve the hours.

Senator Berlowitz: We should pay them for however long it takes them to prepare the minutes for presentation and if they are taking too long, they could be subject to impeachment.

Senator Fisher: So if this were a new position that logged their hours in Bannerweb for a supervisor to approve, would that supervisor be Advisor Adams?

President Custer: Based on how this is worded, it doesn’t stipulate that it’s a college job, just that we are paying on the college pay scale. Could I just pay someone from the discretionary SGA fund?

Doug Adams: You could pay them either way.

Senator Vaughan: I like what Senator Toy was saying about reworking the bylaws. I think the position should be taken out of the Cabinet. Also, the name should be changed to Minute-Taker or something like that. I don’t think you are really a Press Secretary if you’re just taking minutes. I think the Chair of the Publicity Committee should be the Press Secretary because they are doing what the Press Secretary should be doing. Then that person can have potential in filling what we consider them to be, someone to communicate with student publications on behalf of the President. There was confusion about the Press Secretary and the Publicity Committee, so why don’t we just have a Minute-Taker and a Publicity Committee?

Speaker Brady: Was that question directed towards someone in particular?

Senator Vaughan: It was more just an affirmation of Senator Toy’s Amendment to take the Press Secretary out of the cabinet and make it just a minute taker job.
Proxy Yellow-Duke: In terms of continuity, we should take out part about the 26 Community Council meetings in the Whereas section.

Senators Gerstenschlager and Berlowitz accept Proxy Yellow-Duke’s (on behalf of Senator Jahan) Friendly Amendment.

Senator Toy: I think that this is a great bill but it needs some work. I agree with what Senator Vaughan said about there needing to be some separation. Also I think that it should go through Bannerweb. I think that this should be revised and we can come back to it next week.

Senator Toy: Motion to end discussion and table S2015-SB7.
Senator Hussein: Seconded.
Ayes: President Custer, Senator Gogineni, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Hussein, Senator Edwards, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin
Nays: Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Fisher, Speaker Brady
Abstentions: Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan)
12-4-1
Motion passes.

VII. New Business

a) LaundryView Investment Act (S2015-SB10) (Senator Toy)

Senator Toy: I acknowledge that this is going to get a lot of discussion and I anticipate the two major points coming up being whether or not this is something we should be paying for and whether or not this is something that is necessary. In the survey, 71.77% of students said that they would benefit from the LaundryView System. About whether we should be paying for this, in an ideal world we wouldn’t be but we don’t live in an ideal world. Advisor Adams mentioned that he put it in the budget and the administration said no. This won’t happen without money from the Senate. The majority of us voted to give $40,000 to a cabin, and it will be a great cabin, but it probably won’t benefit as many students as this will. This will be for next year so that the Finance Committee can budget it into their annual budget. It will be $8,500 the first year and $3,500 the second year.

Senator Berlowitz: Have you spoken to the administration and they are willing to pay for this after two years?

Senator Toy: I’ve spoken with Facilities and the strong opinion is that the Senate should pay for all of it.

Senator Fisher: From what I’ve said a number of times about sanitizing the college experience, you all know how I personally feel about this. However, more constituents than the number of fingers on my right hand have come to me and asked why we don’t have this. There is a want for this. The survey says this one’s a winner. I also take into account that someone I respect very much said, “A community comes into being for the sake of living and continues to exist for the
sake of living well.” I want to say that I support this. I am not here to represent myself; I am here to represent Ross Commons.

Senator Allis: How many people actually find that when they show up all the machines are taken?

Senator Gerstenschlager: It can be very frustrating when driving from the Mods.

Senator Allis: Where do you go?

Senator Gerstenschlager: Atwater.

Senator Toy: Motion to end discussion and vote on S2015-SB10. 
Senator Medina: Seconded.
All aye.
Motion passes.

Vote on S2015-SB10.
Ayes: President Custer, Senator Gerstenschlager, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Vaughan, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin
Nays: Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Brook, Senator Hussein, Senator Edwards, Speaker Brady
Abstentions: Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan)
10-6-1
S2015-SB10 passes.

b) Parking Fee Fund Discussion (Treasurer Gratch and Chief of Staff Zhang)

Chief of Staff Zhang: Some Context for this: JJ Boggs, Doug Adams, Treasurer Gratch, and I met to talk about transportation funds. Part of the SGA account is allocated to things like break buses for if we start running a deficit. We also get an allocation from the college administration of $20,000, which is revenue from parking fees. In addition to the SAF, this is a second stream of revenue that we have. Treasure Gratch will tell you about the state of that fund right now.

Treasurer Gratch: I’m just going to throw out a few numbers. In terms of revenue, we have a starting balance of $11,960.17, the SGA allocation of $10,000, and then $20,000 from parking fees. 25% of the parking fees go the Office of Sustainability, 50% go to Facilities and 25% goes to us. So we have $41,960.17 total in revenue and then $25,560.00 in expenses for the ACTR, bike shop, and break busses. So our balance is $16,400.17.

Chief of Staff Zhang: The fund is growing slightly which is problematic. We shouldn't keep this money and let it keep rolling over. JJ Boggs, Doug Adams, Treasurer Gratch, and I have been discussing a number of ideas. We have an allocation of $3,000 to break buses to cover the deficit from ticket sales, but we haven’t spent that much of it. We talked about drastically lowering the break bus prices. We also thought about doing something with ACTR. There were some concerns about it not being accessible during weekdays and the idea that it should be available
on Sundays for trips to Burlington. There is a possibility of a bike share program but that would require a large investment. I wanted to come to the Senate to have a philosophical discussion about where the money should go. For example, should we subsidize bus tickets? One caveat is that it has to be spent on alternative transportation. It can’t go into building a beautiful SGA office. It’s in our agreement with the administration that we spend it this way.

Senator Berlowitz: I propose that we get a mobile SGA office, like an RV.

Co-Chair Bogin: With visiting office hours!

Senator Berlowitz: If that is not accepted, I think that a subsidized break bus is a wonderful fantastic idea. The busses are really expensive so I try not to take them even though they are sponsored by the SGA. It’s much more expensive than getting a ride with someone.

Senator Gogineni: Last week at Office Hours, someone recommended a Middlebury shuttle bus. They would like to see a bus that goes all around town and to Hannaford and Shaws. Could our budget be used for that?

Doug Adams: The Middlebury Shuttle Bus, Tri-Town Shuttle, Snowbowl Shuttle, and LINK are to Burlington are all different parts of the ACTR. Right now everything goes to downtown Middlebury. After an expensive state-funded analysis of different routes, the hope is that there will be new routes this summer including a one-seat ride from ADK to Hannaford without going to Weybridge or to the Hospital. It was a student suggestion but it has taken a while to put together.

Co-Chair Bogin: There was an ad hoc Transportation Committee of the Environmental Council this year and we talked about different potential transportation initiatives on campus. We talked about flexibility for faculty and staff so that they could work from home and wouldn’t have to drive as much. There could be a Middlebury office in Burlington so that faculty and stuff wouldn’t have to commute here. In thinking about the carbon footprint of transportation, we thought that a Transportation Director would be great to further these goals. There are a lot of good ideas, but most don’t happen. Maybe this could fund a part time position like that. I also think that the bus to Burlington on Sunday would be a great idea, especially because Sunday is the day that most Middkids get here from the airport and it’s really annoying. About break bus tickets, I would rather have a bus on Sunday than reducing the cost of those. I would love if they were free but what’s happening when you get a ride from a friend is that your friend is undercharging you. The SGA isn’t overcharging you. I would rather pay for the busses to Burlington.

Senator Hussein: If we subsidize bus tickets, it will increase demand for them quite a bit. If this were to happen, we would want to find the right balance. We don’t want it backfire and leave us with students who instead of being happy that prices are lower are instead annoyed because there aren’t enough tickets. I would hesitate to do that straight away. I think that a bus between Burlington and here would be a better use of our funds.
Senator Vaughan: I like what you are saying Senator Hussein. I don’t know if this is the best place to put our money. I think we could subsidize something else that could help those who don’t have money in another way, like the cost of J-Term workshops.

Speaker Brady: This is only for alternative forms of transportation though.

Senator Vaughan: Is there a way we would create a fund to lower those?

Chief of Staff Zhang: That would be a different discussion unless you are talking about J-Term Workshops that require travel?

Senator Vaughan: I think it would be a good idea if we could pass a resolution to take a portion of this money and make it into a fund for J-Term Workshops.

Chief of Staff Zhang: For us to receive the money from the parking fees, we agreed to only spend it on alternative transportation.

Senator Vaughan: Then I stand by what Senator Hussein says.

Chief of Staff Zhang: That is a great issue that we can work on, though.

Speaker Brady: I like subsidized busses. We could consider the break busses but I know that a lot of students have to travel for other reasons like trying to get to Burlington for interviews and it can be expensive to get to the airport. There are several in-town cab services so maybe we could have a conversation with them about subsidizing the price for students. I think we might service more students with break busses though. I don’t know if MiddRides counts as transportation or if money is their problem.

Chief of Staff Zhang: Great feedback in terms of pros and cons. Another thing to consider is that we would be able to have full control over how much we spend on break busses. If we choose the ACTR route, we might not have control over how much that costs. Advisor Adams is actually on the Board of Directors of ACTR so we asked him to approach the board about extending services on Sundays.

Doug Adams: We met Friday morning and are working on the numbers now so we should have something this week.

Senator Toy: I really agree with what Senator Hussein said and those busses are full every time. I think it would be interesting to spend some money to start a ride share program. I know that Senator Chang was working on that and she tried a Google Doc, which didn’t work out because of security and safety issues. I think there should be something in place instead of people just posting in the “Free or For Sale” group. I’m also actually leading a group that is looking at electric cars. We can’t spend our money on one. The good ones from Canada are $30,000 and from China are like $5,000. The Recycling Center drives about 45 miles a day though so it could be something to look into for them.
Senator Fisher: I have been on a bus to Boston that was only a little more than half full so I have to disagree that the busses are always totally full. That being said, I think it is a great idea to subsidize busses. If you gotta go home, you gotta go home. I think the Sunday bus to Burlington would be fantastic. Sunday is the civically mandated day of rest and would be a great day to take a trip up to Burlington. Most of us don’t have appointments, unless you’re going to church, and thus wouldn’t find ourselves busy until about this time in the evening. I think these are both great ideas.

Senator Berlowitz: I think that the Sunday bus is the better call, as much as I would love the break bus tickets to be cheaper. And I have been on busses that have been completely full.

Senator Berlowitz: Motion to limit discussion to 10 minutes.
Senator Hussein: Seconded.
Ayes: President Custer, Proxy Yellow-Duke (for Senator Jahan), Senator Gogineni, Senator Berlowitz, Senator Toy, Senator Medina, Senator Allis, Senator Sohn, Senator Brook, Senator Vaughan, Senator Hussein, Senator Edwards, Senator Fisher, Senator de Toledo, Co-Chair Bogin, Speaker Brady
Nays: Senator Gerstenschlager
Abstentions: None
16-1-0
Motion passes.

Senator Edwards: Would the Sunday bus be one in the morning and one coming back at night?

Chief of Staff Zhang: That would be up to you guys.

Doug Adams: In terms of the request, it would be like a Saturday bus: three up and three back.

Senator Edwards: I think that the break bus subsidy was a great idea but this is a good idea too.

Senator Hussein: In terms of ride sharing, I know the Computer Science club is looking for projects so maybe they would be interested in this. Another thing to mention in terms of the environmentally responsible question, is anyone aware of attempts to change parking for students to encourage students to drive environmentally friendly vehicles? I know at Mills College, they get better parking spots if they have an electric car. Does that exist here?

Doug Adams: As the owner of one, there are no advantages to having an environmentally friendly vehicle on this campus. There is one spot for alternative vehicles in front of Hillcrest. There is one parking place and no electric charging stations.

Senator Hussein: I would suggest that if someone is interested, they should take on the project of adding more parking spots specifically for environmentally friendly vehicles

Senator Gerstenschlager: That’s the first new idea I’ve heard in a while, so...

VII. Adjournment
Senator Gerstenschlager: Motion to adjourn.
Senator de Toledo: Seconded.
All aye.
Meeting adjourned.