SGA Minutes 3/6/2016

I. Attendance


Members Absent: Senator Han, Senator Schulman

Senator Rainey arrived at 7:20

II. Acceptance of Minutes

Senator Gogineni: Is there a motion to amend or accept last week’s minutes?

Senator Toy: Motion to accept.

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of accepting last week’s minutes? (everyone) All those against? All those abstaining? Minutes have been passed. Let’s move on to announcements.

III. Announcements

President Gratch: Welcome everyone! We’re going to start with Treasurer de Toledo Thank you for coming everyone. You will all have the opportunity to speak. We will start with Aaron.

Aaron: Let’s start with the non-controversial things. I’m supposed to make a recommendation for the student activities budget. It is not $410 per person I think we should keep it at the same level. Do we have to vote on that?

Senator Gogineni: Given how our budget currently looks. Would it be against our best interests to increase it?

Aaron: Honestly when we talk about the margins - given where we start right now we will be getting a little more money to work with next year. We’re also being cognoscente that it is pretty high already.

Senator Toy: I’m wondering what the CPI plus 1 thing is?

President Gratch: It can be increased up to CPI plus 1. I understand it might not make a difference this your or next year but it’s more of a gradual increase. It would mean an increase of only 82 cents.
Aaron: Ok, I’m not going to say no to that. It’ll be a total of $2,000 dollars. CPI is pretty much nothing, so sure.

Senator Gogineni: Questions or comments before we vote?

Senator Sohn: What are we voting on?

Aaron: I guess we will be increasing by CPI which makes sense because things get more expensive. This is a recommendation by the SGA to Laurie Patton.

Senator Gogineni: So $410 dollars plus CPI per person.

Senator Boyle: Motion to vote?

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of voting right now?

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of recommending CPI plus 1 to Laurie Patton: (everyone). All those against? (zero), all those abstaining (zero). Ok this has passed.

Aaron: Ok, moving onto general guideline changes. Starting this April, we begin our budgeting process. The first is cluster boards. I know there is a lot of text here. Its mostly regarding the cluster boards. Right now we have a handful of cluster boards: SCB, religious life council, commons and the cultural orgs are making a proposal to become a cluster board. What a cluster board means is there is a board that oversees all of your member orgs. At the beginning of each year they make a presentation to the cluster board about how much money they need. The cluster board then makes a decision of how much of the proposed budget they want to fund. The cluster board also requests a flex funds so that their orgs can do money requests throughout the year. The cluster board then comes to Finance Committee and presents their overall budget. We look at it holistically as a cluster board. If it’s more than the previous year we look at the orgs within it. Each org would have to justify an increase in their budget: i.e. more students in the orgs, all these orgs were underfunded etc. As this has happened in past they come and ask for a 40% increase. We couldn’t do a full 40% increase that but we gave them a 15% increase. The cluster board gets to decide how they want to individually allocate this increase to their member orgs. Some benefits of clusters: orgs have complete autonomy about their budget, we’re just rubber stamping it. Since these clusters are larger than 10K the final say does come to the Senate floor. This is not new but it had not been laid out in our guidelines yet.

Next section: conferences. Orgs want to go to conferences but they are unfortunately very expensive. We won’t guarantee funding to all conferences and funding will not go to entry fees, food, where you’re staying and transportation fees (within reason). Fees of $500/person start to add up quickly – so costs need to be within reason for funding to be possible. Given these costs, if every student went to these conferences we’d be in debt. Flights and hotels haven’t been funded in the past but I wanted to finalize it. In general, with these proposals we are trying to get to the point where we can fund orgs well. So
that 3-4 orgs are not pulling down the budget of all the other orgs. We have a limited budget so we’re taking out things that are 200-300 per person. We all think the student activities fee is $410 per person but it’s a lot lower than that.

Ok, the final thing is meeting snacks. We understand some orgs get snacks for people to show up. That is fine and we think they should get funding for that. That fluctuates depending on how many people you have but some orgs request more extensive snacks – it’s a greater part of their org. This often occurs with cultural orgs but we can’t be giving every org $500 for snacks.

Co-Chair Chang: Thank you for all of this. One thing I got from a constituent is that they want a line added to flights or hotels. They were worried that if they couldn’t get funding they couldn’t get a flight. Maybe we can add “In exceptional cases people may apply for hotels or flights.”
In the past we used to fund small stipends for conference foods. What’s the thought process behind this shift in policy?

Aaron: I think we can have an ideal and we have what’s realistic for our budget. We have to fund on-campus things at a much lower level than we want to. The student activities fee is about students being on campus. A lot of students can’t get to the on-campus events due to personal contributions. We should fund these on-campus activities well – by no means are things being funded well. As it is 300K has to be cut and these are just little things that add up on a per/student level. I get that with flights – the baseball analytics club asked for flights to Arizona. Last year they won the conference and it’s important for them to go but if we fund that it’s well over 1K per student.

President Gratch: Is this to say that the orgs can’t use the money they receive for these purposes?

Aaron: I think that would be fair.

President Gratch: I would be in favor of an amendment. The Finance Committee will not – instead of unable to fund requests say they “will not fund requests”. Something that says the org can’t spend it on this.

Aaron: I’m flexible on food but not on flights or hotels. It’s such a big drain of resources.

Senator Gogineni: Do you accept that amendment?

Aaron: I’m happy to make the food thing stricter.

President Gratch: The Finance Committee won’t allocate funds for that purpose?

Aaron: Ok so I would be flexible on the food items but I want flights and hotels to go under the same category as alcohol.
Senator Gogineni: Do you want to make that change now?

Aaron: It’s ok. I understand it and will change it.

Senator Toy: Meeting snacks: doesn’t every club get $200 for expenses like that?

Aaron: Yes, that budget can substitute for meeting snacks. The club that meets one time a week but has 40 people coming will probably work through that very quickly however. It depends on the individual club we just don’t want every club to be entitled to a meal each week.

Senator Edwards: Ok a couple questions: 1. Based on meeting with heads of cultural orgs they are in favor of this?

President Gratch: Yes.

Senator Edwards: If students are not funded for flights/hotels what other sources are there?

Aaron: They can go through commons heads, I’m familiar that depending on the theme of the event/org there is sometimes funding available. And sometimes there isn’t and that’s a bigger problem. The way we’re trying to address this – if we could make every person happy that would be ideal but it’s not going to happen. I want the process to be as equitable as possible.

Senator Boyle: I think that there are important conferences that will impact the ideas they bring back as well. Baseball analytics isn’t an example but conferences for cultural orgs would be. I’m in support of what Co-Chair Chang said.

Aaron: So you’re saying that we need to determine who’s people’s interests are better than others?

Senator Boyle: When you have a conference that may be important to people it’s only going to be important for those people. You have to judge the impact of conference on the campus.

Senator Gogineni: Given there is more debate on this do you mind if we move on to club sports?

Aaron: Let me set out what the origin of process looks like: first the ideal when talking about club sports was we wanted to find a way to get more administrative funding. We don’t think club sports can be sufficiently funded by the student body. Funding them through the student body also has a huge impact on other orgs being funded. They are immensely expensive: they have high dues and still have to do a lot of fundraising. This is not fair because many club sports are competing at the level of varsity sports. Unfortunately, the school is not in a financial situation where they can give more to club
sports – there are salaries being frozen, department funding is being cut. I get that this is frustrating but after I found that out I didn’t want to pursue this process. Even without getting more money we do need to control funding on a per person basis. We can’t adequately fund each org on a per person basis. We were funding on campus events at lower levels than we wanted to. I looked at these numbers and it’s not great because our activities fee of $410 per person leaves a large number of club sports above or right below this per person cost. Additionally, the student activities fee is not actually $410 per person because there are certain things that happen on campus (MCAP, campus events, speakers) that take away from that. You contribute to the commons system, the SGA, the yearbook, the senior committee/feb celebration committee and Middview. This leaves about $170 per person remaining. Without Middview it’s $211 per person for next year. These are sports that are 1.5 to 2 times the student contribution. Other students can’t see their portion of the contribution because of the immense cost of club sports. We are trying to make club sports more accessible but we need to balance these two things. Fund club sports less and the individual contribution goes up. I offered two meeting times and met with 14 of the 15 club sports. We went over all of this. No one is happy that we are reducing funding but this is about making budget as equitable as possible. I’m going to go through proposal now.

Take aways: We want to tier club sports. Club sports can move up and down this tier. Then we have funding guidelines – this is not much of a change. We fund uniforms, competitions, small equipment. We can’t fund storage, big equipment, crew shells or sailing boats. The change is with the funding caps: tier 1 would be capped at $410 per person, tier 2 is $307.50 and tier 3 is $205 per person. This is based on the student activities fee they are not set numbers so if the student activities fee increases, these numbers would increase as well. We’re tagging it to the active competing roster. We’re asking coaches and captains to be diligent about this. Recreation activities is separate because it’s reaching more students than those competing on a team. Also when we look at per person caps: if you’re receiving more as a club you will be lowered but if you’re receiving less, you won’t go back up to the cap. Moving onto to fundraising: club sports do a great job but there are not adequate fundraising opportunities at Middlebury. This is something that this campus needs but I’m not sure how that’s accomplished. Fundraising is something we expect. Some club sports are competitive some are more about getting together – we’re not going to hold these two orgs to the same standard. The sixth and most important part is financial aid. We haven’t formalized who is going to administer it but we’re finding people that have access to financial aid data already. We don’t want people coming to us saying they need financial aid. We want someone who’s approachable to students to be the point of contact. We’re going to try and meet the reported need and rely on this financial person to see if this is the aid they need. If the aid is in line with our budget, we will allocate this fund. We will have a couple deadlines – fall sports and spring sports. If you’ve never played a sport but can’t make a personal contribution – we want that to be ok. This will make it more expensive for those students that can afford it. We don’t love having to do this but it’s the reality of the situation. People have voiced concerns about these orgs that take up a lot of per person costs and leave other orgs that don’t with less funding.
Senator Gogineni: This is first open to purely technical questions. No opinions please.

Senator Raber: After speaking to some orgs do you have an idea as to whether these orgs will not be able to continue?

Aaron: I don’t know for sure. I think it will impact crew, sailing and equestrian the most. That makes sense because they are inherently more expensive clubs. The school doesn’t pay the equestrian coach – they do pay the crew and sailing coaches. You have clubs at $600 per person costs - I do have some concerns there.

Senator Toy: I’m confused about the financial aid. Is this a new part? How would that work? I’m hesitant to vote on this if it’s not worked out. How much of the financial aid will it be? Do students go to coaches?

Aaron: We’re asking for an estimate – and we’re hoping to give a little more than the estimate. We don’t want captains or coaches asking each member of the team if they need aid. The alternative is yes, I understand in this body you want everything to be very strictly worded. We have not been able to fully flush out this part yet. However, if this part is not in by the time we start budgeting it will be problematic. If we don’t have this part and cut per person costs it would be the death of club sports.

Senator Boyle: Between that and the spring meeting – what was the level of collaboration with club sports? I know crew has 16K financial aid per year. Will yours make up for that?

Aaron: The fall was a different process. It had good intentions but there was a lot of miscommunication and I had big meetings that were not attended. We asked club sports to raise concerns and we’ve been able to address some of them. There is a level of expediency too. In terms of the level of financial aid: whatever number that is we’re gong to do the best we can to match it. We can’t give 100K in financial aid cause then we’re at where we started.

Senator Gogineni: Given the per person cap: how much percentage wise are costs being cut?

Aaron: About 33%.

Co-Chair Chang: What is the total about of money coming back to the Finance Committee if we pass this?

Aaron: Assuming no other club sports get an increase its probably 20K but this is not just about this year its about the continuing forward of club sports. Ideally this guideline is a long term thing. It sets a point of negotiation. The colleges long term finances are in better shape than the short term ones.
Co-Chair Chang: How did deadlines for financial aid get set? And is that enough time for people to join halfway through the semester?

Aaron: We can rethink those deadlines if people would like. One problem that arose with captains: if they’re a spring sport and they allocate all their money in fall what happens? Whoever is doing this: we’re not administering the money. We need to have some sorts of limits on timeline so that all students have their requests heard at the same time. If we set a deadline all requests can be considered and students have similar opportunity.

Co-Chair Chang: Ok, so $211 is how much students have left after fees. So we’re still talking about a system where it is still taking away money from the $211 per/person. What was the decision making process for $210 as benchmark?

Aaron: It makes it more equitable while having club sports continue. If I said $211 – the top three club sports would cease to exist. Crew, sailing and equestrian will always cost more than a club that has a weekly meeting and eight events a semester. We need to recognize that things are relatively more expensive.

Senator Edwards: And the administration stands no chance of them picking up club sports?

Aaron: No.

Senator Edwards: You said fanatical aid is reviewed by who?

Aaron: One option is the financial aid office itself. Or a Commons Dean you could go to any of the Commons Deans. We’re looking for someone who has access to financial aid data and who is approachable to students and familiar with administrating budgets.

Senator Sohn: I had a question: addressing fundraising – some orgs have an alumni donation – does that exist for club sports?

Aaron: If they reach out to the alumni office they don’t get as much traction than if they go through student activities. They can have access to some alumni lists to make those requests. Of course alumni are in different categories so I can’t vouch for the advancement office but we need more fundraising opportunities. I’m not the one that can make that happen.

President Gratch: In the past, specifically the sailing team has used advancement to buy new boats and stuff.

Sailing Team Representative: We didn’t have a fleet before. In 2009 we got a fleet thanks to a donation.
Senator Gogineni: Is it imperative if we vote on it this week? I think this came out of nowhere in terms of what the proposal will look like and we need more time for research/discussion.

Aaron: I think it’s not passed this week it needs to be voted on by next week. We want to get info out to clubs to prepare for budgeting.

Senator Gogineni: We can start with discussion.

Senator Boyle: I emailed Chief of Staff Spector a presentation. Could you pull it up?

Senator Gogineni: While that is brought up – any other comments?

Senator Toy: I feel super uncomfortable doing this if the financial aid portion is not more solid. I would like to see numbers. I could see this as the SGA spending more money in the end if the financial aid thing does not work out.

Aaron: If we don’t do anything here, and that’s ok that is your choice, the status quo will not be sustainable and orgs that aren’t getting enough money will get even less or we will have to continue to reduce funding of club sports without guidelines to do so. We have to budget regardless.

Senator Rainey: I agree with sentiments before me. I don’t feel comfortable voting on this today. We need more conversation with water polo, equestrian etc. to hear their sentiments. I know I came in late, please excuse my ignorance. Where are we with comparisons on how it will affect other orgs on campus? In terms of how we will be dealing with funding for them? I think there needs to be more discussion with the guys behind us?

Senator Boyle: It was not done well in terms of how it was brought to the table. There was a fall meeting with a lot of promises and ideas. Trying to appeal to athletics – treasures sent in stories specifically about transportation. In the Spring a new plan was proposed with many cuts. I’m confused to the content of the conversation with clubs. What was the content of the discussion with the administration? The Finance Committee needs more collaboration with club treasurers. These are all the club sports covered by a new plan. In terms of rosters: Rugby and crew need to go through medical clearances so there is a clear roster. Other clubs could potentially run up the roster to get more money – not saying that will happen but is a possibility. The per person cap limit isn’t fair – are all these students using $211 of the money spending. Are club sports using money that could be spent elsewhere – MCAB, Middview, construction projects? Even if you are of the view that the cap is fair – I think there is a legitimate argument here. I think it’s a responsibility for the Finance Committee to get. The head of equestrian was blind sided and wondering why there were not other opportunities to get money presented. Ironically this is less inclusive. I don’t think the Finance Committee would be able to give money to each club in financial aid. I listened to the report last week – I find that how the budget was portrayed last week is not the same as it was portrayed this week. Fundraising – this
is funny because club sports already do this a lot. The Finance Committee budget is creating the pitfalls but I’m going to judge how much you fundraise and then give you more or less money. Impact: It would raise costs per person. Teams are still going to want to be competitive. They will try to make up the budget cap – I for one have a hard time paying $200 for a semester and $800 for a spring break trip. It has a dangerous impact on students of color etc. So we should say no. There may be a better solution. We should create a committee that has a treasurer for each club – increase transparency, not have a five-month gap between meetings. Make this discussion a public affair. Those are my thoughts.

Senator Gogineni: Any other comments?

Co-Chair Chang: Technical questions: how do we let them speak?

Senator Gogineni: There will be time yielded.

President Gratch: I want to yield time.

Senator Gogineni: Thank you all for coming – if you all have the same interests if you could consolidate opinions in the interest of time that would be great.

Sailing Representative: Part of the 3-year average for team members. Sailing has had 1-2 seniors but we’re getting 8 new freshmen. Our roster is a lot bigger in the fall than the spring. That could be 40 people by next year. Money also funds novices on the team otherwise we can’t fund them. Our fees for sailing team – 6K a year for Waterhouses – it’s the venue for us to store our boats. Our docks are owned by us and used year round by Waterhouses – so it brings down cost. It’s 6K more just to be on the same level as teams on land. Half of our new budget would be spent on getting on the water. Going further – if I incorporate the allocated van rentals fees that would be our entire budget. Not accounting for boat repairs, regattas, registration fees, safety equipment. We’re going from $16,761 to $12,300. That is a massive slash. Still we do have new members each year. We’re graduating one senior. Our team dues would be $300/year per person. I know here are plenty of people on financial aid that we’ve been saying at our meetings. Because of the cuts we would have to mandate that we have a much higher team due amount. We could have people without financial aid thinking – if I don’t go to every practice its not going to be worth it. Do I value it enough because I’m not valid for financial aid? This budget also looks for a pot at the end of a rainbow for the college funding something down the line. We don’t know if they’ll fund this 20K later. We already rely on alumni donations for our team to run. We’re kind of stretched thin. I think if this budget passed we couldn’t be a race team anymore but just a club sport. We would not be able to go to regattas.

Senator Rainey: Do you want to be competitive?
Sailing Representative: Yes, since we’ve raised money for new boats we want to be competitive. We have been seeing results. We have novices on the team not as many as crew but we do take a lot. We’ve won tournaments.

Senator Gogineni: Thank you for coming in. Can we get one rep from each committee?

Crew Representative- Erica: We’re in a similar situation – we share the cost of Waterhouses. Last year we got $32,500 in funding. It was less than we needed but under this new funding cap would only get $24,600 – that’s an 8K loss if this cap is implemented. This only includes expenditures – leaves out van rentals, uniforms etc. Our operating budget exceeds by 50K. We fundraise, get donations from parents, friends and alumni. We can’t guarantee that donations will make up for this loss. It’s highly unlikely that it will. There are not more fundraising opportunities we already fundraise a ton already. Man hours last weekend was 258 hours divided by the 60 members of the team. That’s 4.5-5 hours per person in two days to be on the team. That gets us about 6K a year. The only option we have left for the 8K lost – we would raise fee from $250 to $388. It would render them unable to row. We want our team to be open to anyone on campus. It’s not a common sport to do in high school and many people want to try this sport. We compete at an incredibly high level. The last thing we want to do is raise the individual participation fee. The time we spend – Tiff wanted to bring up the amount of time we meet – can justify that full amount. Our on-season is both fall and spring. We’re spending 20+ hours a week training and competing. It’s a tremendous amount of time training etc. This team is a huge part of peoples’ lives on campus. We need the funding that we currently get. Our current financial aid is internal but we might not be able to do that with these caps and the Finance Committee might not be able to either. A lot of financial aid goes to our spring trip but the Finance Committee specifically said we can’t do that. There has been no help offered to make up for the the 8K so we hope that this cap is not passed.

Claire: I’m from the equestrian team. Unfortunately, our treasurer couldn’t come so I don’t have the stats other teams have. As was said, our coach is paid for out of pocket. We offer two scholarships. We also have people taking lessons but they have to pay out of their own money to ride. I pay $600 per year to ride. If we cut $200 out of our year it would be $800 per year per person. The entire goal of college riding is to make equestrian more accessible to those that can’t afford to buy a horse. I wouldn’t have come here if it didn’t have an equestrian team.

Senator Toy: How many are on the equestrian team?

Claire: Competing is about 12. There are 6 people riding this semester without competing.

Proxy Parikh: It’s just a coincidence that I’m from water polo. Our trip to nationals was almost completely funded by donations from senior parents. This was the case for those seniors but for future years I know this is a financial burden that would not be able to be taken.
Senator Raber: For the crew spring trip: is that budgeting by the SGA?

Crew Representative: That is paid for by the members alone.

Aaron: So this first comment will be surprising: I think we should spend more money on club sports but as a responsible steward of the school budget I felt the duty of the school to create a proposal. If we think club sports should be funded more – they are inherently more expensive - then this should be voted down and a statement should be made. I ask that this body does something either now or in a few weeks. If we continue to budget as we do, we will continue to get comments to us or behind our backs. We’re not trying to discriminate and since there’s no policy behind this we get students complaining that club sports get too much money. Rather than shooting down each idea we bring come with other ideas. This is the equitable way to fix this but if not this, please do something.

Senator Gogineni: I don’t want to overexert authority but should we do a straw poll. Should we wait a week for this conversation or would like to proceed with discussion?

Senator Rainey: Motion to vote to table this to next week.

Senator Raber: Seconded

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of tabling till next week? 5 votes. All those against? 7 against. It remains.

President Gratch: Personally I don’t think we should vote on it tonight. But we should discuss more. This is a big deal and should require more discussion and research. I wanted to follow up on what Aaron said. I know it came up suddenly but this has been a conversation that has been happening for the past four years. There was the same exact discussion my first year here. There was legislation passed on what the administration should pay for and what the SGA should pay for – then the administration didn’t follow through on the part they signed on. Last year I was in Aaron’s position. I tried to come up with something and it was really hard. Something does need to be done - thank you everyone for coming.

Senator Gogineni: To make this efficient I’m going to put 30 seconds time per person.

Senator Boyle: I think that we should continue to keep one-year funding – fund at the same level and make an appeal to the school citing past failures. If they were trying to make deficits in their donations and make alumni donations – those take months to clear.

Senator Edwards: What about the idea of sending out student wide survey to gauge interest outside of club sports.

Co-Chair Chang: Along similar lines – who is going to benefit from this new cap? Hearing their stories would be equally important.
Senator Gogineni: Maybe there should be a one-year gap year before implementation?

Senator Raber: Obviously this is hard. But I think that this is an issue we need to take head on. There are club sports but there are also other interest groups. It’s easy to be persuaded one way or another when you hear each side of the argument.

Senator Rainey: There is a cultural orgs cluster that is going to happen and as someone on the working group there are real things they are trying to do that they don’t get enough funding for. They have concerns as to the conferences that they could do with the money they receive.

Senator Toy: I think this needs a committee: The Senate and various orgs: cluster boards and club sports.

Aaron: If you care about it someone take this on because otherwise we’re just going to keep talking about this. Someone form that committee.

Senator Boyle: I would take it on but I need someone not biased as well.

Senator Raber: When we vote on this: we have members effected by the proposal: should they still vote?

Senator Gogineni: We’re not necessarily negating their opinion so I would say yes.

President Patton: Motion to table discussion: everyone go out and talk to other groups and see what other opinions are had.

Senator Rainey: Seconded

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of tabling till next week? Everyone.

Aaron: Again this is a controversial thing. We can vote on it – we can wait on it. We need to make a decision. I’m here on behalf of the Finance Committee but the SGA sets the policy that we follow to allocate the budget and things will be controversial. It has to be voted on otherwise we are in this limbo. If you want input on how we’re budgeting this is the way to do it.

Senator Gogineni: Do we want to vote on the general guidelines proposal? About the cluster boards: is it possible for after the cluster board has allocated funds and one of the orgs decides they don’t want to pursue an event, the money be returned?

Aaron: Yes, definitely.

Senator Chen: When we were talking about funding for travel/conferences. Having served on the commons board and experienced the allocation of their money, it would be
hard, based on the philosophy of the commons, to make a case to fund travel/conferences. The commons are a hard stretch.

President Gratch: There is one other source of funding, the academic travel fund, which any student can apply to. They give up to $350 or 1K if you’re presenting at a conference.

Senator Gogineni: Motion to table or motion to vote?

Senator Rainey: Motion to table

Aaron: When you table – it goes to the next meeting. Is someone going to do something from now till next week to do something between weeks?

Senator Rainey: Yes, I need to do more research and talk to my constituencies which is why I’m motioning to table.

President Gratch: Seconded.

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of tabling: 8 votes (President Gratch, Senator Boyle, Senator Rainey, Senator Parikh, Senator Bhakta, Senator Edwards, Senator Chen, Senator Singh)
All those against: 3 votes (Senator Raber, Senator Toy, Co-Chair Chang)
Abstaining: 1 vote (Senator Sohn)
Motion to table has been passed.

Senator Gogineni: Ok, back to announcements.

President Gratch: I just wanted to open up the floor to discuss/debrief the meeting we had on Thursday.

Senator Toy: We talked to two cultural orgs about sending out our agenda to student org presidents ahead of time and also sending out emails during elections to cluster boards having them share it with their org. We want more diverse students. I am going to start attending cluster board meetings as a liaison for SGA. Hana Gebremariam is going to do that on the cluster board end. Who do I talk to to get that process started? I that’s the basics.

Senator Sohn: From the cultural org meeting – Senator Rainey brought up how you see signs about sexual harassment but you don’t see anything about cultural appropriation. Not a handout but something we could give out to the general public in dorms etc.

President Gratch: I think that’s a great initiative. I want to help do it. We tried to do it for a year for mental health. Communications is really tough about it but I want to be in a conversation about that. One other thing I took away from the BSU board meeting are three concrete things we could work on with them: 1. more resources for them: funding
and staff for the AFC 2. Looking at retention rates and black student admission rates—the black student numbers are not really growing. It’s not just Posse or Hotchkiss. 3. Counseling—more counseling at AFC. There’s only one counselor that POC students go to which is a challenge. I brought those things up to Laurie Patton and we can get back to you next week regarding those.

Senator Gogineni: First year committee report—Senator Rainey do you want to do it now?

Co-Chair Chang: On March 11th I’m meeting with Baishaki Taylor. I’m going in for info about retention rates and GPA and I would love help on that effort. Email me if you would like to get involved.

Senator Rainey: Ok for the First year report: we’ve done 3 events so far. The first is woman—dominated: that is all we had apply. It’s not much more diverse outside of the that however. We started with a budget of $2500 and we still have $2000. Cookies and chill was our first event. We basically had cookies and milk and welcomed people down. We had a Reg and Febs meet and greet. We jammed out to music and had name tags where people were able to put their commons—the Febs are all spread out and sometimes it’s hard to meet other people in your commons. We had an Intercultural open-mic night.Here people had to wear something important to their culture. Moving on to Inclusivity bills. This is a big thing that came out of freshman senate. This has been a big thing because it’s a big issue in the freshman class. We had Sombrero girl and Katrina and these inclusivity bills have tried to get that conversation out there. Campus response: the campus did not like me after this. I want to talk about the reaction. (trigger warning for language) Read out loud from Yik Yak: “He’s a total dick”, “He’s manipulative and a back stabber and brings up issues that are not on campus”, “He’s a pathological liar”, “A lot of those stories were fabricated”, “Stop calling Rainey a black baboon it’s so racist!”, “We don’t like Rainey because it’s ma. We freed you all from slavery what more do you want?”, “He’s attacked me personally without me doing anything to him”, “Midd is by far one of the most inclusive places”, “He’s calling the whole white community racist”, “as a POC I don’t find anything wrong with this campus”. This is just a snapshot of reactions as to why these bills are important on this campus. Racism is here, racism exists. I just came from the Posse Plus Retreat with Senator Toy with some productive conversations about self help. Inclusivity is a huge problem and I want to use this coordinated racist attack to me personally so that I’m not the only one bringing up bills about inclusivity. That there is legislation and actions that are coming from all of you. Because the black senator is hated and I think if I were white I wouldn’t be getting the blow-back. I would be praised because I would be helping the POCs that need help on campus. There have been things that are much more negative. I face a lot more even in person. I want to put that out there and the racism is real—this campus is racist. The future: what are we doing in order to continue the conversation about inclusion: we are going to continue to push hard. The Community Council bill is a lot. It’s too packed to have a debate about that. Next week we need to have a conversation about that. And another bill for resources for POCs on campus. I didn’t have resources last week when I needed them most. Carr hall is a building but it’s an empty space. I don’t see the SGA or
administrative support that the clubs are getting. We’re working on a biased response team but where is it. I needed that personally and I felt like I had nowhere to go, I felt unsafe, I felt threatened, several POCs on campus felt threatened. There were comments that were also offensive to the entire POC community. My reputation on this campus has been devastated. I’ve considered transferring, I’ve considering resigning as a Senator, I’m called anti-white, anti-women, anti-Middlebury because I believe in inclusion. Resources like green dot would make sure that our POCs would have a place to go. We can’t continue to put it off which is why I think publishing or communications or whatever should get themselves together. I have more bills but I don’t think I have the time or energy to talk about it now. If you have questions please come talk to me.

Senator Toy: I’m so sorry this happened to you this is awful. It makes me really upset to go here. So you talked about inclusivity bills: what was the impotence for people to lash out?

Senator Rainey: I made it onto the front page of The Campus: last Thursday it was in The Campus but the responses got really bad Sunday, Monday, Tuesday etc. I think it making it to the front of the newspaper triggered it. Ilana Gratch’s report on the campus would come right before which is why they thought it would be good news to put there.

Senator Raber: I want to echo Senator Toy’s response. It’s shocking to read that people would write that. We want to congratulate you on everything that you’ve done. I’m confused on what the inclusivity bill is: in terms of the statements we’ve talked about.

Senator Rainey: The resolution to President Patton and the SGA.

Co-Chair Chang: We authored a recommendation through Community Council and because CC unfortunately is not comprised of just students but also faculty and staff who expressed anti black racism, it was voted not to vote on the recommendation. It was essentially the same thing that came through here. We separated the two and also voted to not vote.

Senator Rainey: Which is why they need to be more connected. We did not know that this was happening in Senate.

Senator Gogineni: Two quick announcements. We all received an email about green dot training. Katie Mayopoulos asked if 2 or 4 people could come to training this Friday. Are there any one of you who are planning on going already? (Senator Aaron, Senator Edwards) Ok so she would like those people but it would be great to also have the Senate have its own consolidated training in addition to the full training. That could be done in an hour. She asked me to gauge interest for those going. All those who would be interested in on-hour consolidated training? (Everyone interested).

Senator Sohn: I was green dot trained one and a half year ago. Contact me about training if you have questions.
Senator Gogineni: Dan Detora – I have a meeting with him about issues I have found in dining services. I was going to talk about dining hall overcrowding but if anyone else has something they would like to add please come talk to me.

Senator Boyle: I asked Doug and it’s because Ross dining hall was originally only supposed to serve students in Ross. We then lost a lot of money on financial downturn and the project was never completed.

Senator Gogineni: I’m meeting to discuss what we can do. Some ideas I had was maybe use Proctor basement but it’s a passing idea.

IV. Old Business

Senator Gogineni: Ok moving onto old business: The Election Reform Bill – it is just voting on it. There didn’t seem to be points of contention on this. For a review it’s just moving the election process up two weeks. Motion to vote?

Senator Boyle: Seconded.

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of voting on this bill right now: Everyone except Proxy Parikh and Co-Chair Chang.
Against:
Abstaining: Co-Chair Chang, Proxy Parikh

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of pushing back the deadline? 11 votes: (President Gratch, Senator Raber, Senator Toy, Senator Sohn, Senator Boyle, Senator Aaron, Senator Grandas, Senator Bhakta, Senator Edwards, Senator Chen, Senator Singh)
All those against? 0 votes
All those abstaining? 2 votes (Senator Rainey and Co-Chair Chang)

Senator Gogineni: It has passed.

V. New Business

President Gratch: This is the SGA Restructure Bill: Just a quick overview of what it is. What this Bill would do would mean that the student body would vote on this Bill and approve it. This is a huge challenge. If this was voted on affirmatively in Senate, the student body would be able to vote on it. Right now there are 17 voting members. This Bill would make it 21: President, Community Council Chair, 5 class presidents, 5 commons reps, Presidential staff and Executive positions. This essentially would consolidate the senate and the cabinet into one body. Commons representative would be one per commons. If 21 is too many I’m open to seeing if it makes sense to have a commons representative. But I would need input on that because I have never been a commons representative. I’ve considered having one representative to represent the commons as a system – I don’t know if this makes sense though. The executive positions would be elected by the student body. That’s it. Why? The primary reason is that I think
the SGA has the ability to be more effective than it is. There are some things I thought I could overcome – it’s hard for the Senate and Cabinet to know what each are up to. It’s impossible. Then everyone in SGA doesn’t know what SGA is doing and I honestly don’t even know everything that has been going on in SGA. Goals would be 1. Making it a more effective body in that everyone is in communication. 2. I think there can be a perceived lack of accountability on everyone’s part. The Cabinet members are only accountable to me which is weird. Class senators (I think class president is more empowering than a senator) 3. The student body doesn’t have much say in determining SGA’s body each year except that they elected me and you. They probably don’t know each of the individual senators’ platforms. Imagine you were electing someone making textbooks more affordable or getting syllabi out to students earlier. I think this would be really effective. It would allow people to run on a ticket. This is similar to how they do it at Pomona. They made a progressive ticket and all the goals were shared. I think it would make the way elections work more interesting and less based on popularity.

Senator Rainey: Just a heads up: I’m sending another bill banning Yik Yak. I know I don’t have a Bill but I’m writing one. Please think about it and consider it. Talk to you constituents referring two past events: Sombrero girl and me: both freshman and being attacked for very different reasons.

Senator Gogineni: Thank you guys. I know we still went to 9 o’clock but this conversation has been must more efficient. Thank you for your cooperation. I don’t like cutting people off but you want to get to things on the agenda.

VI. Adjournment

Senator Gogineni: Motion to adjourn?

Senator Rainey: Seconded.

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of adjournment? (Everyone) Meeting has been adjourned.

Meeting end 9:00 PM.