SGA Minutes: 11/13/2016

I. Attendance
At the time of the attendance, Co-Chair Pesquira is out.
Senator Duran sent a proxy.
All other Senators present.

II. Acceptance of the Minutes
President Toy: “Motion to accept the minutes.”
Motion is seconded.
17-0-0
The motion is passed and the minutes from last week are accepted, and recorded.

III. Announcements
No announcements.

IV. Senate Checkins
Senator Boyle is looking into the CCI and some funding there.
Senator Waddell is working with a dean to get funding for his project.
Senator Hayes states that the first year committee is meeting at 9 for the first time.
Senator Ou is working on a plan with the Education Committee that would look at first years and not having their grades “counted” towards their GPA. From the meeting, he states that “a lot of faculty” are in a approval of it. He is still looking into more research and hopefully it will become the future as he will be working on it more. He also might be interested in creating an ad-hoc committee.

President Toy asks the Senators to think about their J-term and to plan ahead with her.
“There are only two more times that the Senate will meet. With December 4th being the last time the Senate will meet. EatReal is planning to come next week and we will not meet on the 27th… email me any bills or topics or forever hold your bills.”

Senator Wright states that the first years from Stew Hall are asking about the dryers because it takes multiple loads to actually dry their clothes. He states that students are frustrated because with the price inflation, needing to dry their clothes for longer is costly.
President Toy: “Are these old machines?”
Senator Wright states that they are the new machines.
President Toy and Doug state that they will “add to the thing to talk about.”
Senator Ou asks about the Grille menu and some items taken off.
Senator Pustejovsky answers his question by stating that following a “student-like focus group and survey” that Dan stated that there was a call for healthier options. She also states that it should take “like five years for people to stop ordering.”
Senator Aaron states that the reception from the Black Lives Matter banner has been accepted nicely. She asks the other Senators if they had heard any reactions.
Senator Wright agrees that he has only heard positive reactions.
Senator Duran states that the only conflict heard is about some alum who called the administration to state that they will not be donating but that this was not a worry to the administration.

Senator McCarthy reiterates this point by stating that she works in the Office for Advancement at Middlebury and that the calls were few and that the “office is not super concerned.”

Senator Aaron thanks the Senators who brought the resolution forward.

Senator Hayes brings up an event that happened in Ross about a Trump flag and a “Don’t Tread On Me” flag, also known as a Gadsden flag.

Senator Duran states that the Trump flag was only up for the election and the Gadsden flag was put in a place that made people feel uncomfortable so they were asked to take it down. Senator Duran reiterates that they were only asked to remove the flag because the hall community felt uncomfortable and so they were kindly asked to put it inside their suite.

Co-Chair Pesqueira arrives to the Senate meeting.

V. MiddSpeaks Initiatives

Co-Chair Pesqueira introduces the resolution stating that him and President Toy have been working on the language for the resolutions.

President Toy: “We changed the added signatures before your flag proposal is brought before the SGA to 100 student signatures.” President Toy notices that this has possibly added more “bureaucratic steps” but this means that the resolution and proposal would come off more meaningful.

Co-Chair Pesquira reiterates that the idea behind the Flagpole initiative is to “transform the power from the administration to the student body.” That these will proposals will be centered on the student body.

President Toy: “We took out the language about retaliation…” President Toy states that the community standards already has that statement but also that the SGA itself can come up to conclusion themselves as to what “retaliation” is.

Senator Goldfield asks President Toy to talk more about her previous statement. President Toy states that it will be a decision made by new Senates. Rather than making an executive decision, it will continue a discussion throughout the years.

Senator McCormick asks if we should take out the language about wanting to use the Athletic Center as a space to raise the flags because of what the administration has stated against using that space in the past.

Co-Chair Pesquira states that he is not opposed to taking the language out but he understands that it is not likely but should keep the language in just so “to see what happens.”

Senator Aaron talks about how we should respond to flags that make people “feel uncomfortable.”
Senator Pustejovsky states that the initiative is trying to facilitate constructive conversation on campus. She states that this is a great proposal that is an opportunity to join peer institutions in facilitating difficult conversations but also the different issues that affect students here at Middlebury. She states that nothing will make “everyone to feel happy” but this will facilitate, hopefully, constructive conversations.

Co-Chair Pesquira reiterates that people will always disagree but only flags with 100 signatures will be raised so there will obviously be a significant amount of people behind each flag.

Senator Wright states that he “appreciates” the concern raised by Senator Aaron. He states that this will be a great constructive space for students to raise their voices. He speaks of a very “white narrative” on campus so these flags will be charged at challenging that distinct narrative that seems to be the dominant discourse of campus. He also reiterates that the 100 signatures makes the proposal “airtight” and really provides an outlet for individuals to have a voice for themselves.

Senator Goldfield: “Should there be a discomfort, then should we take the flag down?”

Senator Cohen talks about how the SGA are open and anyone can come to the meetings so the SGA should practice being “proactive rather than reactive.” Rather than a “back and forth” rhetoric, “we should just attack it and then discuss it.”

President Toy states her agreement with the statement made by Senator Cohen. President Toy states that the word will start to spread once a proposal goes out so we as a Senate should be prepared to be an instrument in facilitating these discussions.

Senator Aaron states many of her constituents have posed questions about the proposal and that she can’t vote for it because many of the constituents she has talked to seemed very concerned about the way the language standards. She talks about the whole campus being a “common room for all of us.”

Co-Chair Pesquira asks Senator Aaron if any of her constituents have raised any suggestions or is it the “idea as a whole?”

Senator Aaron states that the Black Lives Matter banner is a valuable thing but she states that the Flag Pole itself might not have the reaction we want and might divide the campus. She states that we should just address the idea itself and have more discussion about it.

Senator Boyle asks what about a possible joke flag that comes to committee even after getting the 100 signatures.

President Toy states that if there was no flag on the pole and the joke was out of good humor then she see’s no problem with hanging a flag that is in good fun.

Senator Boyle questions the tone we want to have for the space.

Senator Wright states that the opposition for the Flagpole about making students feel uncomfortable would actually be better used in when we talk about “the wall” (meaning the Creative Space set out in the second resolution of MiddSpeaks)
Co-Chair concludes the discussion and states that the Flag Initiative would also be discussed about in community council and that this is just a good way to reiterate the steps we want to take as a student body to have constructive conversations.

Motion to vote.
Seconded on voting.
All Senators are in favor of voting on the resolution.

15-2-0
Senators Goldfield and Aaron voted against the resolution.

The resolution is passed.

President Toy introduces the second part of the MiddSpeaks Initiative which would request an “aesthetically pleasing wall” that would serve as a center for creative spaces. Right below, where the Black Lives Matter banner is placed it would be easy to make a wall that was ADA accessible. Also just a final note about scrubbing it clean, more of a physical thing that has to be looked at due to the many layers of paint.

Senator Wright thanks the resolution for looking at ADA accessibility account of the wall.

Senator Aaron proposes to change the name to MiddSpeaks Creative Space. Also, Senator Aaron brings up the questioning about disciplinary action taken against people who write on the wall something that might “offend” another student.

Senator Cohen states that this wall should be treated like any other place on campus and that if you write hateful things you will be subject to the consequences.

President Toy states that the Community Standards will reinforce this idea of making sure that the wall is still a place where you can’t just not listen to the the standards.

Senator Pustejovsky also reiterates that it should be “logical to just be nice to each other.”

Senator Wright brings up the question about the high potential of anonymity and that we should not discredit the potential of something bad like this happening. However, he states that anyone who does “something like that” should understand that there will be judicial process.

Senator McCarthy uses an example from her old high school when another rival team came into their Senior Space and wrote “awful things.” These kids were subject to the judicial practices of their own school when caught and that people should understand that everything they do might have some sort of repercussion especially if it is in poor nature.

Senator Aaron reiterates her point that the community standards might be too vague for people who are truly just trying to express themselves.

Senator Cohen states that it is all about “intent versus impact” and that this space is for people to start conversations but they have to hold themselves to these community standards everyday at Middlebury.
Co-Chair Pesquira finishes the conversation by having the Senate look at a wall at Pomona called the Walker Wall that was an example that was the inspiration for the wall.

Motion to Vote by Senator Wright
The Motion is Seconded
13-3-1 (The Vote on Voting for the Resolution)

15-0-2
Senators Andrews and McCormick abstained from the bill.

The resolution is passed.

Motion to Adjourn
Seconded.
17-0-0
All in favor.