SGA Minutes 10/1/17

I. Attendance
Senator Andrews is absent for today’s meeting and sent no proxy.
All other Senators are present for today’s meeting.
Speaker Aaron is present for today’s meeting.
Co-Chair Wright is present for today’s meeting.
President Sohn is present for today’s meeting.
The First Year Senators are not present because their election has not occurred yet.

II. Acceptance of the Minutes
Senator Pustejovsky motions to accept the minutes.
The motion is seconded.
14-0-0
The motion passes and the minutes are recorded.

III. Announcements/Senate Checkins/ Old Business/ New Business

President Sohn wonders if she can motion to make a couple changes in light of the President’s cabinet members that are waiting for their cabinets to be ratified by the senators. She motions to move the senate member ratifications before senate checkins.
The motion is seconded.
14-0-0
The motion passes and the senate member ratifications are moved to before senate checkins.

President Sohn continues her announcements with discussing the open forum that will occur on October 3rd. She describes the forum and the various admins that will be at the meeting. She then states that a reminder will be emailed to the student body this week. Also, there is a facebook event page that the senators will, hopefully, be invited to tonight. She reminds the body to invite their friends and constituents because this forum is for student.

Senator Pustejovsky asks what time the forum is.
President Sohn states it is 7 to 9 in Wilson Hall. She reminds the body that they “don’t have to stay the whole time.”

Speaker Aaron says the last one was not well attended so she tells the body to get the word out to their constituents.

President Sohn states that the conversation will talk about the social life survey that was conducted last year and how it can be implemented in the community. She continues by stating that it would be a great opportunity to ask questions about dining and finances since most members of the SLG will be there.

President Sohn asks her Directors of Membership to give the body updates about the first year elections.

Diego states that 16 to 19 first years have showed interest in the election but as of now only 1 has handed in all the forms to be completely in the running for the election.

President Sohn reminds the body that they have to get their emails approved during the election cycle and to urge first years to vote because that is the most important thing as of now.
Speaker Aaron asks the body if they would be interested in having Senator Chris Bray come talk to the senate to give a talk about local politics and its relationship to the college. She describes him as very down to earth and, after an unofficial strawpoll that illustrates the majority of senators would be interested in him coming in, she states that she will contact him and invite him to talk to the body.

President Sohn then moves onto ratifying cabinet members. She pulls up the list of the new members so the body can look at the names and then vote on ratifying them. She asks the cabinet members if they have any comments.

One member says “approve our nominees please.”

President Sohn asks the Directors of Membership if they want to talk about the process about choosing the new committee members.

President Sohn yields to Diego. Diego states that the process went differently from past years that needed a word document instead this year the application process used Google form. He states that their hope was to make it easier for people to submit an application which he states it did because they have seen a record number of applications. He states that this process should continue throughout the years.

Senator Mahboob asks how many committees are students allowed to join. She yields to Diego.

Diego states that students could apply to as many as they wish. The maximum is 3 that a student can be apart of.

President Sohn reminds the body that the students do not know yet if they have been accepted yet and that the body needs to ratify them first before the students are notified. She then states it’s the body’s job to look at the names and see if there are any extreme outliers that they could see. Also she reminds the body to not congratulate anyone until the cabinet directors let the student know.

Senator Fleischer asks why senators names are not on the list. Are they not official he asks.

James, the other Director of Membership, replies that senators are “officially” on committees but that this list is just showing the student applicants who were accepted to the committees.

Senator Pandey asks if the list has photos associated with the name. He states he does not know many of the names on the list and wants to know if they need to have a picture with the name.

Senator McCormick clarifies that the cabinet directors have already critically looked at all the applications. It is this body’s job to look at the names and if the body sees a name that might not be “worthy” of sitting on a committee then they mention it. If not then the senators mention it during this time.

Senator Pustejovsky motions to ratify the members to their new committees.

The motion is seconded.

14-0-0

The new cabinet members are ratified.
Co-Chair begins the checkins by discussing the application process for Community Council. He has only received five applicants so far and is going to send another reminder email this week. He asks the body to also reach out to their constituents who might be interested in joining Community Council this year.

Senator McCormick asks the Directors of Membership if emails have to be approved this week because of elections.

James responds by stating that they do have to be approved but it should not be a problem just do not mention the election which “should be easy.”

Senator McCormick has no checkin this week.
Senator Koontz has no checkin this week.

Senator Gosselin announces that he will be meeting with the President of the Computer Science club about his bill and will hopefully have a revised bill next week.
Speaker Aaron asks if it will he will present one bill or two bills.
Senator Gosselin responds that it will be one bill.

Senator Salas has been working with Amnesty International and they have brought up a couple different ideas like a 5k or a trivia night where everything could be donated to a specific organization. He states that one topic Amnesty International is looking to pursue refugees rights this year. He states he is going to another meeting this Thursday to see if there are any more thoughts about organizing something soon. He asks about logistics of organizing a possible 5k.
Senator Pustejovsky states that MCAB does a run in the spring and that would be a great place to start a discussion with. She also states that “go/refugee” are not continuing as an org this year because they do not have the membership. She just wanted to tell the senator.

Senator Salas then asks about spaces for putting posters about your fears because the club is interested in doing that.
Senator Pustejovsky replies that it's not “officially” regulated. She then asks what happened to the freedom of speech wall.
President Sohn responds that the space of expression is the Crest Room’s new service.
Senator Fleischer states that there is new furniture in the room and he has seen freshmen using it.
President Sohn states that Tammy Grant is also a great person to speak to about space on campus.
Senator Vijayakumar states she met with the publicity committee and she is excited to work with it. They also just ratified really eager new members that want to work with the SGA snapchat and website. She states that the SGA will be very well advertised.

Senator Goldfield starts by directing a concern from an RA who has a “few issues” with the Res Life program this year. The RAs have not been paid even though they were told they would be paid. They were also given “a lot more responsibility” that was not in their original job description and with these new responsibilities they are not getting compensated.
any more for more responsibilities. Also, the role of the CRD is still unclear to the RAs and other reslifers.

Co-Chair Wright has an “immediate response” and describes the situation as a “complex issue” that he is working on extensively for the past three weeks in a number of different meetings. These are all sentiments that he is very aware of and that he is currently working on to make more admins aware of. He states that he has a letter from Res Life with 35 signatures from Res Lifers which reflect these sentiments and he hopes to bring to Baishakhi-Taylor and he is working on a pay change for Res Lifers too. Additionally, with the work from SGA and Community Council he is working on discussing these issues.

President Sohn urges for Senator Goldfield to tell the student who made the complaint to come to the open forum and discuss their issues with admin.

Co-Chair Wright asks the Senator Goldfield to tell the student to get in touch with Co-Chair Wright.

Senator Goldfield replies and that it is “great to hear” that someone is listening to those concerns and will for sure put those people in contact with the Co-Chair. He then finishes by stating he has heard complaints from his constituents about 10 o’clock Proc or Ross. He asks the body if anyone else would like to spearhead the movement.

Speaker Aaron states that she would like to work on that too.

President Toy states that other are working on meeting with Dan Detora and see what student initiatives can also be involved.

Senator Fleischer states he has been working on his bill that he will present today.

Senator Warfel states the Dining Committee meeting with Dan Detora was moved to this Tuesday. As of three hours ago, the Junior senators still do not have access to their email lists.

Senator Pandey states he is working with the Student Wellness Committee on a survey to understand people’s needs and also working with MiddCore. He also states that he hopes to work on having a SGA workshop that works on financial literacy.

Senator Mahboob states she met with the Student Educational Affairs committee and have a couple things they are working on like shadow grading which is like a “grade free first semester for first years” also introducing financial literacy workshops.

Senator Pustejovsky met about getting new furniture in Crossroads which is “more comfortable” and also getting bigger tables and more lights. She also received the numbers for lunches on Tuesday and Thursdays which was around 1400 people which is far more than the other days. She is looking to reach out to the Registrar's office to discuss class timing because there is simply not enough space. She also has not met with the Institutional Diversity committee because the committee was not fully formed yet.

Speaker Aaron discusses the “Envisioning Middlebury” talk she went to, which was the same day as the luncheon with President Patton, she says that it is “coming along.” However, most of the work from the talk will be down when many of this body is gone. Also she states her interest in working to bring 10 o’clock Ross or Proc back.

President Sohn motions to move the SGA luncheon takeaways to the end of the meeting so the guest Will Dowling can do his presentation first.

The motion is seconded.
Will Dowling is the Student Liaison to Student Endowment Affairs he begins by thanking the body for the role and bring him in for the meeting today. He continues by giving background on his role. He states that the first part is to pass along to the Board the interest of this body and also to “give a scoop” of what actually happens during their meetings. There are three meetings during the year. He states the second part of his job is more “student body focused.” In regards to the student body, his role is to communicate pressing issues to the student body while also making sure the student body feels well informed on the work that the Board does. He cites a survey that a majority of the student body feels like the endowment is a subject that they are not well versed in so his hope with President Sohn too is to make sure the student body is an active participate within these conversations. He is hoping to hold more open forums on “broader information about the endowment” and also to hear any feedback. There have been no meetings so far in this academic year but he states that one is coming up in October. He also has made up a survey that he sent out that would gage the student body and have some target questions answered. He wants to make sure that he constructs an approachable position this year so students feel comfortable reaching out to talk to him so he can communicate as well our needs to the Board and other admins.

Speaker Aaron gives some general background on choosing will for the position. He was chosen at the end of last year by last spring’s senate. The position was created because there was not a lot of information on the subject and people wanted to open up more communication with the endowment.

Dowling continues that he was talking with the student who held the position last year on expanding on the presentation that was given to the student body in general and how he might organize his presentation. He reiterates that he wants to make sure his position is seen as approachable as possible. He is a resource for direct communication to the Board and other admins.

Senator Fleischer asks Dowling if he has “the most recent numbers” for the endowment. The senator could only find data dating back several years.

Dowling states that many of the “numbers” are confidential and he does not even get to see the numbers and where they are directly invested. He would like to work on this transparency. He continues by stating that he was supposed to be at a meeting last May but he was told an incorrect time.

The body asks Dowling if he could send them the presentation he did last year for the senate.

President Sohn asks how many responses he received on his survey.

Dowling replies stating that he has only received 5 response which are great responses but that he would appreciate more feedback. The meeting is not until later October so there is still time to take survey which only take a minute or two.

President Sohn yields to her Chief of Staff Ish. Ish asks Dowling if he has any plans to send the survey to the broader student body.

Dowling states that based on the responses from the senators he his hoping to refine the survey and then send out a new one to the whole student body.
Senator Fleischer states that he is working on constructing policy for the Institution's investments since there is policy for everything including trademark and honor code. He tells Dowling that he is looking to make a committee and that Dowling will “probably be on it.”

Dowling states that it's a great idea and that his goal for the upcoming year is to spread awareness.

Senator Warfel asks when the survey was sent out.
President Sohn tell the body to check their notifications on slack.
Speaker Aaron finishes by stating if anyone has any questions they can email Dowling at his email.

The body thanks Dowling for his presentation and coming in for the talk.

President Sohn continues that Karen Guttentag sent a message to her and the Co-Chair on the subject of an “Academic Integrity Committee.” She begins to explain the committee as essentially providing and strengthening academic integrity, and the honor code. This committee would address the issues with the honor code and “how it is becoming outdated.” The committee will look at different areas including: student educational training and the different resources available. The idea is to teach and promote a culture that continues Middlebury’s commitment to academic integrity. She continues that Guttentag wants student representation on this committee as well. There will be one member from the SGA, one member from the Community Council and then one member from the larger student body. The member from the SGA, Guttentag might be interested in having the member come from the cabinet but that this can be a later conversation. President Sohn asks the body if they have any ideas about nominating a student from the larger student body.

Speaker Aaron states that it could be effective if this body nominated students.
Senator Mahboob states it could be effective to have faculty nominate students.
Senator Pustejovsky states it might be important to get first years involved and since there was such an interest from First Years in the election that we could engage them in this committee.

Speaker Aaron reiterates the faculty nominations as they would “take it seriously.” President Sohn thanks the body for their feedback.

Senator Fleischer thanks the body first. He begins by describing the current options that a student has when they are undergoing the judicial process. First a student can choose a “disposition without a hearing” and this is pretty much receiving a “punishment and that is what they will get” or they can choose to go to trial with the Academic Judicial Board. The students have the option of an open or closed trial if there is an open trial then the student chooses to waive their confidentiality. He then continues by describing the last open hearing that occurred at Middlebury in 2012 with students who were fighting for the divestment cause at Middlebury. They were charged and later elected for an open trial to take place. The trial took place in Dana Auditorium and it was filled with a suspected hundreds of students, faculty and community members. He describes this trial as no one disrupted and the whole community got to see the process. These open trials occur “once in a blue moon.” In the spring of last year, two of these trials occurred where students elected to have an open hearing. It was publicized in a school wide email “without details about what they were being
charged with.” Also, it was advertised that those who choose to enter the lottery would have to sit through the entire hearing. Then he continues to describe the lottery system which has never seemed to occur before and only allowed for a small number of people to witness the trial. The space was also in a room that could not hold a large capacity of students. He describes his bill to restore the trial system back to scene that occurred in 2012 and before that. He states, “when a student elects to have an open trial it must truly be open.” He has spoken to Brian Lind on this bill and Lind stated that student input is always valid when it comes to the judicial process here at Middlebury. Although the bill ratifying by the sga would not be the final point of the conversation it would definitely act as a good beginning point for a positive step for the community. This senator finishes by stating he has “worked tirelessly” on the bill to accompany all sides and too look at all sides. He hopes the legislation will pass through this body.

Co-Chair Wright thanks the senator for the research he did to construct this bill. He states that his statement might “sound funny” but he is not sure if this legislation “goes far enough.” He describes the events last spring as an “anomaly” and that the whole process was not our “best practices.” He describes that many details were left out to students who were being charged and furthermore there was no real ability for students to contest or appeal these charges. He wonders if there is a possibility for a larger resolution for the protests last year.

Senator Fleischer agrees with the Co-Chairs sentiments. He wants to see how this small change affects the community. He hopes that this bill passes and would like to possibly work with the Co-Chair on drafting a more contentious bill.

Senator Gosselin describes the bill as “great.” He describes his experience at the public trials which he attended last spring. He states there were ten minute breaks every hour and half where people could leave the trials if they wanted too. He reflects on some of the writing in the beginning of the bill that describes that people would have to sit through the entire trial.

Speaker Aaron asks the senator if there is a specific amendment that he is suggesting. Senator Gosselin states he will work on the wording. Senator McCormick questions if this bill might violate confidentiality at some trials like sexual assault charges.

Senator Fleischer states that there are some violations that would not be permitted to have an open trial in the first place due to confidentiality. President Sohn thanks the senator for writing the legislation and doing the research, especially for talking to Brian Lind. She asks the senator if he spoke to Karen Guttentag. Senator Fleischer states that he “couldn’t.” Senator Goldfield adds that he looked up the email from last spring and it did advertise that that there would be a ten minute break.

Senator Fleischer states that Brian Lind liking this idea “made him excited” and that the passing of this legislation would not be direct policy change but it would be a great way to start the conversation.

Senator Mahboob states that it would be great to add the facts that the senator talked about in his opening remarks about the open trials to strengthen your case. Senator Pustejovsky states her concern that there might not be enough context in the introduction but that the senator should include the information he discussed about today.
Senator McCormick adds that it would be a great idea to look at specific places in the handbook and to cite those within the introduction so people can understand what he is referring to.

Senator Fleischer states that “it’s there” and that the body is not amending the handbook it's not like the body is passing law. Rather it would be a great symbol to start this comprehensive conversation.

Senator Gosselin presents his friendly amendment that changes the wording of the fifth “whereas” in the introduction of the bill. It adds that there were ten minute breaks during the spring trials.

Senator Goldfield states that it would be important to just put explicit facts in the bill and he states that “yes it is in the handbook” and that the legislation should point out where it is.

Senator Pustejovsky states that they did change the layout of the handbook this year and that she sees it as important to point out specificities from the handbook in the introduction. She also motions to limit the conversation to 5 minutes.

12-1-1
Senator Fleischer opposes the motion.
President Sohn abstains the motion.
All other senators are in favor.
The motion passes.

President Sohn asks a question about how they made decisions in the past about how many people, “logistics wise,” would they have planned to come to these open trials and how they figure it out. If too many people come or show interest then it would be a point of contention and could prevent the trial from happening.

Senator Fleischer states that it hopefully just look at using whatever high capacity location is not in use because they have the ability to use these spaces for the open trials. Also, of course it would have to safely accommodate people at these trials.

Senator McCormick proposes possibly forming an ad-hoc committee to get more people involved.

Senator Fleischer states they do not need an ad hoc committee because the idea is “pretty fleshed out.” He hopes to vote next week after he changes some of the wording.

Senator Pustejovsky tells Senator Fleischer that she hopes he does not think “we do not like the bill.” She thinks it's a fantastic bill but wants it to be as “strong as possible.” She wants to make sure this bill is an accessible resource.

Speaker Aaron wants the senator to know that the body knows how much he worked on the legislation because it is very well written as someone said early. She reiterates the need for more specifics.

Senator Mahboob echos the point that most people are in support for the bill but that they just want to tighten the language.

Senator Fleischer agrees with the comments and states that he will keep the conversation on going of wording on slack and would love to meet with anyone who wants to speak about it.
The proxy for Senator Pandey, Charles Rainey, who arrived around 7:45 states that the bill is great and has good content and he hopes it goes through this body.

Senator Fleischer motions to table.

13-0-1

Rainey abstains.

All other senators are in favor.

President Sohn thanks the body for coming to the luncheon with President Patton. She begins by stating that some of the takeaways were having “more traditions at Middlebury.” There were conversations happening in the cabinet meeting about the Institutional Diversity Committee to look at traditions. She states that she heard MCAB is not accepting new traditions. Then also at the luncheon, there was conversation about commons system and Res Life at Middlebury. Also finding ways to desegregate the campus especially in the areas of sports and finding a way to change the spaces. Then also there was conversation about finding student groups who do not have much in common and “providing a middle space” for conversations and that there was conversation about getting specific funds for these spaces. Then talking about space the conversation about art on campus and critically about what art is purchased for the campus and looking at possibly forming a committee to look at the space. There is also the conversation about acknowledging the past of Middlebury. Especially the problematic history of Middlebury, and illustrating more non-white historical narratives of Middlebury. Then there is the subject of seeing how Middlebury “actually works.” Including conversations about working better with student and staff relationships. President Patton is also interested in a “Mountain Day” type day here at Middlebury which would be a day that the president would call off all classes and urge the student body to get outside to enjoy Vermont. There is just a conversation about convincing the faculty to get on board with this proposal.

She finishes her comments by stating that President Patton wants to remind the body that the most powerful changes come from a good student alliance between students and administrators.

Senator Pustejovsky states that she loves the idea of a Mountain Day and that the body should consider the accessibility to outdoor activities at the snowbowl like hiking the whole way up. She cites the Mountain Day at Mount Holyoke as an example where they send the student body to seven different peaks around the area on busses.

Co-Chair Wright also talks about the accessibility of a Mountain Day just when in context to a “white ableist narrative” and the pressure to explore the mountains. The key could be necessarily just exploring all the beautiful nature around us not just one thing in particular.

President Sohn states the environmental affairs committee is also working on breaking down those dominant narratives too. President Sohn asks the body if there is anything she forgot to mention.

Speaker Aaron says they talked about administrators coming into Dining Halls with other administrators to talk to students. Since most students don’t see admins unless they are around Old Chapel.
Senator Goldfield states that when admin were in Dining Halls it was not well attended and he felt bad but that it was not very appealing to go and just speak to an admin over lunch.

Senator Pustejovsky feels similar about the admins in the Dining Halls and states that it felt “unapproachable.” Also she states that MCAB would love to do more traditions but they do not have the funds for it. They don’t want to take any more funds too because it takes about 32-percent of the SGA funds.

President Sohn also brings up the subject of what needs to be revised for Winter Carnival.

Senator Pustejovsky states that they have an idea to meet with AFC possibly regarding a showcase that would occur on Friday when the comedy show was kind of like the ISO show. There is a push to not center Winter Carnival around skiing.

Rainey comments about Winter Carnival and states that a lot of students want to do these activities but that they are not financially accessible too. It is expensive to get a pass to the ski bowl and for the equipment. The big conversation should target those students on financial aid and the students of color. He cites working with the CCI to fund scholarships to do winter internships and how it's helped many students of color on the campus. This body should also look at the ways to make the Snow Bowl more accessible to low income students working something out like allocating funds towards this.

President Sohn agrees with the ideas and the ways to expand getting those students on financial aid to feel more comfortable, especially students on financial aid, doing extracurriculars on and off campus. She cites skiing as an important part of the culture on this campus and making it more accessible because it is so expensive and we can all enjoy something together.

Senator Fleischer states that there should be some kind of group with submitting these ideas, it could be structured like the environmental council which submits something at the end of the year which they have the purpose of doing something and talking to admin.

Speaker Aaron motions to table the conversation at 8:30.

The motion is seconded.

14-0-0

All senators are in favor.

The motion passes.

Senator McCormick discusses about Winter Carnival conflicting every year with their nationals and possibly the idea of another weekend for athletes that have never been to a Winter Carnival.

Senator Pustejovsky responds that the date is set and it is worked out with other schools and that it just will probably line up with their nationals too.

Rainey questions the shifting of culture from skiing because it is so set in Middlebury, he cites that Febs ski down the mountain for graduation. He says there should be conversation about how expensive it is and that it would beneficial to look at the affordability of this.

Someone propose using the Friday off for Winter Carnival for the Mountain Day to work with the faculty.
Senator Pustejovsky questions taking the day in winter just do to accessibility concerns.

It would not be that Friday but rather than having that day off it would be another random day the President chooses.

Rainey states that he has spoken to first year students of color who were interested in running for the first year election and that they did not receive an email about the mandatory meeting. He was just hoping to get more students of color involved.

President Sohn states that there was a couple different advertisements at the Student Activities fair and that they sent out multiple emails specifically to first years about the elections.

Speaker Aaron states that there is still time to apply for Community Council.

There is a motion to adjourn.
The motion is seconded.
14-0-0
The motion passes.
The meeting is adjourned.