SGA Minutes 10/08/17

I. Attendance
Senator Warfel is not present for today’s meeting. She has sent Charles Rainey as her 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.

II. Acceptance of the Minutes
Senator Pustejovsky motions to accept the minutes.
The motion is seconded.
14-0-3
Senators Schurer, Vargas and Mahboob abstain.
The motion passes and the minutes are recorded.

III. Announcements/Senate Check-ins/ Old Business/ New Business

President Sohn begins with the announcements. First is the subject of Open Forum Updates and Takeaways. She states that a good amount of senators were there so they should “step in” if she states anything wrong or if she misses anything. She points out that more staff and admin were there than students. She states there could be a “couple different possibilities why” more students did not show up but this can be discussed later, and how to get more students there for future forums. She describes the Open Forum as a “good discussion” that spoke on many issues that the Institution is discussing right now. These issues included: the “aftermath” of Charles Murray and rebuilding trust between admins and students, sexual assault reporting, student health and wellness, the dining system, and the college finances. She tells the body that The Campus wrote an article on the Open Forum that writes in detail the discussions that occurred during the forum. President Sohn continues and states that after talking to her cabinet she and her cabinet thought that “maybe a good idea” is to send an update out from the SGA about the Open Forum. She states that her Chief of Staff, Ish Alam, took notes at the meeting and they were looking to possibly send a specific email to help students “keep an open mind for the future” and to “stay engaged.”

Co-Chair Wright touches on a ResLife meeting that happened after the Open Forum that he wants to elaborates on since there were questions on record about ResLife pay and support. He describes the meeting as “productive” and that it was with Katy Smith Abbott and Baisakhi Taylor, all commons deans, all the CRDs, and around 25 ResLife staff. The meeting was actually larger than the Open Forum. They will immediately look at getting help for ResLife staff with providing better pay in the future and immediately working on getting ResLife staff paid.

Speaker Aaron touches on the topic of the school finances. She states that David Provost is looking at all the properties and how they benefit us, and if we are losing money on certain properties.

President Sohn motions to move the current announcement on the Common Agenda to be part c on the agenda.
The motion is seconded.
All are in favor.
The motion passes.

President Sohn states that “something has happened in our community” and that there will be an announcement on Monday to the student body. She reminds the body to “take care of themselves” and take time to reflect about on our community.

Rainey asks what “specifically” has occurred.

Co-Chair Wright states that they will not talk specifics at the meeting right now but that if it had effect someone they would have been contacted. He reminds the body to be supporting during these times.

President Sohn continues with the ratifying of a cabinet member Gareth Cordery for the Educational Affairs committee. She states they had forgotten to include him in the ratifications so he will sit on the committee for the fall semester and then will take over the duties of Co-Director Lucas when he goes abroad for the spring. She gives a brief background information on Cordery as he has been a part of the committee before and is looking forward to continue his work with committee. She motions to ratify Cordery.

The motion is seconded.
16-0-1

Rainey abstains.
All others are in favor.

Speaker Aaron continues with Senate Check-ins. She asks Senator McCormick if he has any new updates.

Senator McCormick has no new updates.
Senator Andrews has no new updates.
Senator Koontz states that she met with Matthew Curran about laundry and what the admins are doing currently with laundry. The laundry company changed their name when a new company bought them out so it's posing to take a little longer to work with the company. She states that admins are currently working on getting our IDs to work with the laundry system.

Senator Gosselin is working on a new draft for his Records bil and will hopefully have it to present next week. He is also working with committees this upcoming week.

Senator Salas met with Amnesty International and there will be a 5k on Sunday October 29th. Hopefully it will be on Battell Loop with food, speakers, and checkpoints that would illustrate like how long it takes a refugee to reach Turkey from Syria. He also states that he reached out to MiddRock and is working on the event request for his event.

President Sohn thanks Senator Salas for the “awesome work he is doing. She suggests that he talks to Derek Doucet who works on student initiatives like this and can help with event planning and moving forward.

Senator Schumer introduces himself as a part of Wonnacott Commons and he lives in Battell South. Senator Salas is his FYC. He is looking to get know more about the day to day life at Middlebury since this is “all very new to me.” He is really committed to getting to
know every single one of his classmates and truly getting to know what makes “them tick.” He wants to know their aspirations, interests and their identities, he calls this a “tall order” but that he feels very strong about doing this. He does not want to leave the thoughts of the minority get lost.

Senator Vargas introduces himself as a first year from Atwater Commons living in Allen Hall. He wants to address sexual assault issue on this campus since “a lot of stuff is going on at the federal level.” He also would like work with Senator Koontz on students laundry issues.

Senator Vijayakumar has nothing new to announce.

Senator Goldfield met with the Academic Affairs committee. He states that he received a few emails about laundry and an idea of having papercut money moved to helping students pay for laundry. Senator Koontz states that laundry and papercut are two different systems. The admin are working on papercut too.

Senator Fleischer has worked on his bill which he will be presenting later. He also plans on meeting with David Provost on working on creating guidelines for our investments. This meeting will be discussing creating a committee that will have a “dozen more meetings,” and the hopefully present something at the end of the year. He calls it “step one out of a hundred.”

Rainey states that Senator Warfel has nothing new to update.

Senator Pandey is still working on sending out their welcome email and getting permission for sending the emails.

President Sohn responds that many different people are working on it. Derek is working with the helpdesk but it is out of her hands.

Senator Pandey continues that he is meeting with the Wellness Committee this week and that he attended the dining meeting. They worked on getting the spice rack in Ross and more hot sauces. He is looking also at a Wok station too.

Senator Mahboob states she will talk about dining later.

Senator Pustejovsky is meeting with David Provost tomorrow about what it means to have the swipe system and working with the registrar's office about the lunch time too. Also looking at future plans for the floor plans and redoing McCullough. She also wants to get the ball rolling and meeting with the Institutional Diversity committee.

Co-Chair Wright has appointed the new members to the Community Council after some difficulty and access to the Community Council email. He states the names of the nine students appointed to Community Council including Senator Gosselin. He tells the body to come to the meetings on Mondays in Axinn 104 4:30 to 6:00.

Senator Vijayakumar follows up that she too does not have access to her email. Senator Mahboob also states she does not have access as well.

President Sohn states that she has sent “numerous” emails to the Help Desk and that Derek Doucet has also been working tirelessly on it too. She reiterates that it is out of her hands in the hands of the admins at the Help Desk.

Senator Pandey asks if there is a general SGA account that they could send the email from.
President Sohn responds that possibly they can send a draft email to her and then she can send it on their behalf.

Senator Vijayakumar has been sending emails with the help of her co-senator.

Senator Pustejovsky states that she was approached by a Sophomore Feb who is doing a fundraiser with help from his local fisherman that he worked with. He wants to send out an all school email so how would he get permission to do that.

President Sohn states that she received an email from the student and that she would like to open up the conversation on how the body wants to use the SGA email because it should not just be used by the president. If the body start sending emails out it will “set a precedent.”

Speaker Andrews responds that each senator could send out an announcement to their constituents.

Speaker Aaron states that senators can upload something on slack that they can later send out to the constituents.

President Sohn describes work being done by her Directors of Publicity on the bulletin board that is owned by the SGA where usually photos of the senators go up. She states that it is still important to get the senators face “out there” but that they are discussing how to make the space more interactive with a possible TV screen. This screen would display different events going on by students which would be another great platform. She points out obviously there are question about how this would work.

Speaker Aaron asks how much the screen would cost.

President Sohn states that she does not know an exact price.

Senator Salas asks if two or three senators would be willing to help with logistics for his event.

Speaker Aaron tells him to post his question is slack.

Senator Mahboob begins to talk about the Dining Committee Update. First is that there is a lack of sensitivity with nut allergies in the dining halls. They are thinking about labelling the panini machines to not use nut products but that most students are not being “mindful or careful.” Dan Detora stated an idea about possibly having a panini machine in the back where it would not be too visible so it can be used by anyone with nut allergies. She continues about the waffle maker that was taken away from Ross, although she has heard it has been reinstalled. She then moves to the topic about vegan options in the dining halls. She states that we do have a large meat-eating community but we also have a “loud vegan community” so it is a “tricky balance. There were a lot of responses for more vegan food and what dining is showing us is providing one cooked vegetable at a meal so that people who are vegan have some hot food. There will also be a cooked meat at every meal. She states that vegan options is up for more discussion.

Senator Fleischer reminds the body of two things. The first is the Meat Reduction Bill that Eat Real presented to the body and was passed through this body last year. He states the bill lays out “really thoroughly” about community members thoughts about reducing meat in the dining halls. Around 70% supported the bill which can be found in archives on “go/sga” and to look at the minutes about discussion that took place. He calls vegan options here “sparse” and states that “cooked cabbage is not a main dish.” He states there are a lot of
people to talk to about the subject and that Senator Mahboob is “in a more powerful position than EatReal” was in her place in the conversation.

Senator Mahboob thanks for Senator Fleischer pointing out the bill and connecting with EatReal. She also thanks the senator for sharing his experience.

Senator Pustejovsky tells the body that “EatReal hasn’t started working on it.” She states that it has been difficult for them to enact their plan since some members are abroad and the year just started. However, she states that “it’s going to happen” so we should be looking at seeing how it is integrated into the dining halls.

Co-Chair Wright thanks the senators who have been working on dining because the dining hall is “much more accessible” then it has ever been, he calls it a “huge improvement.” He also brings up the subject of students taking food that is reserved for students with severe food allergies and that the dining hall is having issues because these products are more costly for them.

President Sohn brings up the subject of reinstating the Dining Committee for one more year. She clarifies that because it is the second year of the SGA having a Dining Committee the body needs to vote to make it an ad hoc committee again for this year and then next year there should be a motion to make the committee “official.” She motions to reinstate the Dining Committee for one more year.

The motion is seconded.
17-0-0
All in favor.
The motion passes.

Rainey brings up the subject of 10 o’clock Ross/ Proc.
Speaker Aaron points out that it is already on the agenda to talk specifically about it. She asks Senator Mahboob if there is anything more she wants to add.

Senator Mahboob brings up the subject of having nutritional labels for cooked food and how Dan Detora got pushback when he brought up the subject last year.

Senator Pustejovsky responds that the body wants to be “hyper aware” of the effect it would have on the entire student body to put nutritional labels on food. She states that the body should be critically look at the issue of calorie counting since eating disorders are a “big issue” on the campus. She finishes by stating that the body was talking about having the nutritional labels electronically so it won't deter people from eating the food that is available.

Senator Vijayakumar tells the body that meats are not highlighted in the dining halls. She recalls that it takes her a long time to read the list because the meat is not highlighted. Specifically, she calls to highlight pork based things.

Speaker Aaron states that this conversation can continue and can happen online slack. Senator Pandey talks about the idea of having a “meal grading platform” so that the body can have data on it and what food to put out at the dining hall. Having this platform would hopefully help the dining halls make good decisions and he is looking to possibly working with the Computer Science club to work on such a project. He asks if there is a possibility of getting funding for the club to work on a project.
President Sohn states that she is not sure about getting paid for these projects and that it would be a conversation to have with Derek Doucet or Maria Farnsworth and talking to the Treasurer and the feasibility of such funding.

Senator Gosselin states he met with the President of the club, Aumit, on the functionality of the website and he seemed under the impression of getting paid for a project.

Senator Pandey tells the body he will email those names and let the body know next week.

Speaker Aaron asks if there are any last comments. There are none.

Senator Fleischer begins to present his bill by thanking the body for allowing him to present again. He states that the bill is looking at reinstating “truly open trials” that any community member could come to. He tells the body that these open trials lead to transparency but the trials that occurred last spring were “not truly open” because of the lottery system students had to go through to be apart of these “open trials.” This bill is making sure that Middlebury has language added to the handbook that maintains these trials as truly open. He states that the bill added quotes from the handbook for transparency and to make sure the legislation is accessible to all. He states “why not make it [the bill] as detailed as possible.” So he points out on the legislation where the language takes place in the handbook. It also quotes Karen Guttentag’s email she sent out last spring detailing the lottery system. The bill also elaborates the last open trial that occurred at Middlebury during the aftermath of the Divestment protests during the Dalai Lama’s visit in 2012. It quotes a campus article that estimates the crowds in the “high hundreds to a thousand” community members at the trial. He adds that the campus article added a “truly unique examining” of the trials that took place which displayed “a ton of biases” in the disciplinary process in the truly open trial which does not exist now. He also added language about if an open trial is disrupted multiple times that it could continue as a closed trial. He states that most the legislation is mostly “the same” but he also spoke to someone who is training to be a lawyer to help change some of the language in the legislation and how to cite law.

Senator McCormick presents a friendly amendment to change the spelling of Dalai Lama in the legislation.

Senator Gosselin adds that maybe adding a link to the campus article to make the bill more accessible.

Senator Pustejovsky worries about the disruptive protest portion of the bill as it presents the body to define language like “what is disruption” and “who should be disciplined.” She just wants to maintain this body is “hyper worry” of the language in the legislation.

Co-Chair Wright “understand what you [Senator Fleischer] are trying to do” with this bill. He states his concern with the legislation and the language in the handbook since there is a lot of talk with the admin happening right now. He does not want the bill to be “overridden.”

Senator Pustejovsky has a friendly amendment which would take the part about “disrupting protests” out of the bill. She states that “our bills get pulled apart” and so she is worried about the body defining what would happen if there were protests. She states that the body should just be here to support students.
Speaker Aaron likes the clause. She states that it does not need to define the disrupted protests but actually shows admin the body is critically thinking about this legislation.

Rainey responds and that the admin will be the ones defining this and that this body won’t.

Senator Fleischer states that he thinks the bill is good “with or without” the clause. The point was reflecting a major concern that came out of the Rainey trials about students who would possibly disrupt those trials and that was Brian and Karen’s logic to construct the lottery system last spring. He does state that he see the legislation “slightly stronger” with the clause.

Senator Mahboob questions who Brian and Karen are.

Senator Fleischer responds that they are the two disciplinary officers of the Institution.

President Sohn thanks Senator Fleischer for the work he has done on this bill and it is clear that he has put “so much time,” and she commends his work and the spirit of the bill. She asks if Senator Fleischer met with Karen and Brian in regards to this bill.

Senator Fleischer states that he met with Brian.

President Sohn states she was emailing Karen about Academic Affairs committee subjects and she sent her the bill, and asked her opinions. She had a very similar views in regards to handbook language change that it is going to be directed towards a committee that Baishakhi Taylor and Katy Smith Abbott are working on this year. Guttentag had a few hesitations about the language in the bill but did not give President Sohn the exact information on what. Personally, she states that it would make her feel better if the body, or the Senator, met with Karen to talk about recommending new handbook policy, and language. She does not want the legislation to “get lost in the pile of things” and she urges the body to get as much feedback on this legislation.

Senator Fleischer states that he does not “want to push this bill” but that there is a possibility of something “big coming up” and so this legislation would benefit what could be coming up. He states that talking to Brian it was made clear that this was not directly changing the handbook policy but would be a beginning stage of getting student input on policy and changing the existing language. He states that passing this bill would be a great “beginning point and a positive step” as Brian states. He states that the body can “nit pick every word” but that this body should have some response to what happened last spring.

President Sohn replies that she was just going off “what Karen told me.” President Sohn states that Karen is open to collaboration. She just wants to make sure that this body is working collaboratively with admin on moving ahead.

Senator Goldfield asks what specifically Guttentag pointed out as being “inaccurate.”

President Sohn states that she did not say which part was “inaccurate” but that there were a few aspects that were inaccurate. President Sohn reiterates that she would want to have a conversation with Guttentag before she feels ready to vote on the bill.

Senator Fleischer states that in the updated bill “everything is quoted and nothing is inaccurate.”

Speaker Aaron is concerned about passing this legislation without really thinking about the long term changes and she is concerned because of Senator Fleischer's want to have
this bill passed before next week. She reiterates the importance of working with the whole body to pass the best legislation this body can construct.

Rainey asks President Sohn to elaborate on her “added to the pile” statement if she could respond to that.

President Sohn responds that she is concerned about some of the language since there is the handbook committee working on changing the language of the handbook.

Senator Fleischer states that he feels that within the language that it is sort of implied. President Sohn expresses the concern about this implication when the language can be as exact as possible.

Senator Fleischer asks if she has a specific “friendly” amendment which would state her concerns.

President Sohn states that the committee that is critically looking at the handbook is not yet formed. She wants to continue having conversations before “we push it off to them.” She wants to just make sure that legislation associated with the student government is truly taking on the handbook as critically as possible.

Senator Goldfield echoes the points made by President Sohn about discussing with Karen. He calls to get her in here to a meeting. He also expresses his concerns to passing this legislation as quickly as possible and to make sure she is on the same page before this is enacted in anyways.

Senator Fleischer expresses his concerns because he states that he tried to meet with them and after dozens of emails he still did not hear anything. He calls for the importance of student voices and then “we will talk about the handbook.” He states that, not looking at “nitty gritty” wording of the bill, the central point is there in the legislation. Last Spring something “wildly undemocratic” occurred and student were not given a just voice. The trials were not truly open with the lottery system. He refers to his own personal experiences during these event that occurred last spring as “one of the non-violent protesters.” He was “alone” as a baby feb where they first gave him probation and then tried to suspend him. He recalls the experience as being “fucking unreal” and when he asked to have an open trial he was told he can’t have one. If he wanted to be apart of a trial it would only be open to a small number of community members. His friends would not be there for support and not anyone else. He states that, as the rumor goes, “someone big” has been invited back to campus and if this does happen then the campus is going to be dealing with more of these “open trials.” He wants to make sure that students have their voice heard in an open trial where the community can be there and reporters alike. He describes all the time he spent on this bill and that the “central message” is there.

Senator Pustejovsky motions to move the meeting into an executive session.

The motion is seconded.

17-0-0

All are in favor.

The motion passes and the meeting moves into an executive session.

Senator Fleischer finishes the conversation of his bill by reading the speech he gave when he first presented the legislation to the body. He refers to the bill as “very simple” either a student can elect to have a closed or open hearing. Theoretically, these “open
hearings” are open to all community members and he again points out the 2012 Dalai Lama trials. He quotes the Campus article that illustrates the large crowd that filled the auditorium in support of the protesters and those who just wanted to learn about the events. He then begins to talk about how the bill proposed would look at reinstating these to be truly open trials to community members, local media and students. He motions to vote on the bill.

The motion is seconded.

4-12-1

Senator Gosselin, Vargas, Fleischer and Rainey are in favor of voting on the bill.
Senator Pandey abstains.
All other senators are against.

President Sohn recommends that the body moves forward and try to speak to Guttentag this week. She motions to table the bill.

The motion is seconded.

11-3-3

Senator Fleischer, Co-Chair Wright and Rainey vote against the motion.
President Sohn, Senators Vargas and Pandey abstain from the motion.
All others are in favor.

President Sohn continues the discussion with the subject of the Common Agenda. She sends the body a message on slack about the Common Agenda. She asks the body if there are any ideas that should be completely off of the Common Agenda.

Senator Pustejovsky states that having an interactive way of like comments cards or rankings would really engage people even though it might seem elementary.

Senator Gosselin recommends the use of google polls and he cites the successful dining hall survey that used google polls.

Speaker Aaron states that sometimes it can be harder to get feedback on google polls and she does not know if anything needs to be surveyed since all the subjects are already on the minds of the top admins.

Senator Pandey recommends engaging students some kind of interactive thing before people get their meal which would seem very comfortable and would not be a high cost.

Speaker Aaron recommends emailing the Common Agenda to their constituents.

Senator Pustejovsky asks if there is a condensed document that they can attach to the email.

President Sohn states that the President office is working on a document like that which can be sent out. She recommends the SGA should send an email out. She states that the body is look to get feedback from students.

Senator McCormick leaves the meeting at 8:30.

Senator Pandey brings up that he will send out the email when he has access.

Speaker Aaron hopes it will be “fixed this week.”

President Sohn reiterates that it is “out of her hand.”
Speaker Aaron introduces the bill on “Vermont Exploration Day” which she “stole” from MiddView. President Patton is looking for student support on this to make it happen. Senator Gosselin motions to limit the conversation to 10 minutes.

The motion is seconded

16-0-1

Senator Pandey abstains.

Senator Pustejovsky states she “loves this bill” but that the only thing she wants to point out is the emphasis on outdoor activities. She states that it might be better to put in more of “taking a day off” like the name “Midd Day” so it takes the pressure off for people to do outdoor activities but that it emphasizes the need for rest and care of one’s mental health. She proposes of putting language that includes exploring Vermont’s communities and community based activities. Plus having some other appropriate activities and some sort of BBQ.

Senator Fleischer also states that he has friendly amendments. One one would look at getting a bus to the Bread Loaf campus to add more access to outdoor space and hiking trails. He also states the idea of having a lunch outside and then having only one dining hall open. He states that the legislation can be more specific in their illustration of Middlebury’s “sense of place” and where that comes from. He cites the Envisioning Middlebury which wrote about this subject. The final point is to include better sources than Wikipedia especially about the mental health benefits of outdoor activities and a day off. He recommends the use of easy-to-use sources like Google scholar.

President Sohn adds that the Wikipedia citation was illustrating other colleges that have the “Mountain Day”-like day at their institution. So it was easier than citing all the different institutions websites.

Co-Chair Wright emphasizes the need for details about making these activities accessible too.

President Sohn emphasizes the importance of days like this that are for not only students but for faculty and staff as well. They are looking to get feedback so that this day can be inclusive to everyone in the community.

Senator Pustejovsky states the idea of getting reached out to Orientation interns who know different community members and community activities that they have found through their work. She points to Amanda Reinhardt as a good resource.

Speaker Aaron speaks about the potential this day has for the whole community and an interesting idea about possibly getting first year seminars involved somehow.

President Sohn talks in terms of budget there is still a conversation about who is going to be “responsible” so that is something the body has to be mindful of. She states that her Treasurer is aware of these conversations.

Speaker Aaron reiterates that they just wanted to get student support first.

There is a motion to table the bill.

The motion seconded.

16-0-0

All in favor.

The bill is tabled.
President Sohn begins the conversation about 10 o’clock Ross/ Proc by giving a “recap.” She states it was something that started her sophomore year as a way to have access to food options after the dining halls closed like student athletes who have a limited time to go to the dining hall. It was also created to work on the situation of senators and their office hours but it did not get a “good” turnout for the office hours. There were great benefits to the system but also proved some accessibility issues too since most of the visitors were residents of Ross. After an incident that occurred at Ross with the monitors and students and possible drinking, the space was switched to Proc but that this did not work out well and was not a big hit like Ross.

Speaker Aaron calls it “admirable” as it was trying to create a study break at night too.

Rainey speaks to the SGA side of the conversation like office hours because he was a first year senator the first year of 10 o’clock Ross. He states that it was not working because it was the same people coming and then some senators would not show up. It was not structured well and not many people fully participated in the “office hours.”

Senator Gosselin states that “everyone he knows like it,” in reference to 10 o’clock Proc, and if there is a possibility the body should look at having it.

Senator Goldfield agrees with Senator Gosselin but that he knows the overwhelming response is in favor of 10 o’clock Ross since at Proc there was such a limited option. Even though the location might seem more central at Proctor, Ross had more options that students want.

Senator Pustejovsky asks about the admin support for this.

President Sohn states that after speaking to Dan Detora he did not say anything specific but seemed open to reinstating it.

Senator Gosselin states that he was there during the conversation and he seemed open to it. He also recommends moving it towards Atwater Dining because they have a lot of extra dinners.

Senator Goldfield states that it would be an interesting idea but that it is far way. He also brings up the subject of finding monitors who would want to be held accountable for what occurs during 10 o’clock Ross or Proc like when people brought alcohol last year.

Rainey states that the monitoring could be taken by senators and they could sign up on a doodle poll. It would have the office hours and also the responsibility of monitoring too.

President Sohn states her concern of having a once paid position then being passed onto senators who are not getting paid when a student who possibly needed the money could have worked.

Senator Pustejovsky also states her concern that it might be a lot to ask from senators who also go to cabinet meetings now.

Senator Goldfield states his willingness to do it once a week.

Rainey clarifies the “spirit” he was coming from. He does not want to force anyone to do it but that it would allow for senators to connect with their constituents on a personal level.

Senator Pustejovsky finishes the conversation with stating that she views 10 o’clock Ross or Proc as grabbing quick food and then leaving. Considering the body already went
down the route of having mandatory office hours it and it did not work she would not want to
go down that route again.

Speaker Aaron asks if there are any last comments.

There is a motion to adjourn.
The motion is seconded.
16-0-0
The motion passes and the meeting is adjourned.