

Fall 2019 Work Report

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Disclaimer: This document is solely an effort to be transparent about my work during the semester, and is not intended to make policy suggestions or to evaluate others' work. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at vpsa@grinnell.edu. Please also refrain from citing or referring to this document in any formal setting or official communication. I apologize in advance for any inaccuracies or misrepresentations. Let me know if this is the case and I will promptly make the necessary changes.

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Committee Updates

1. Committee on Student Life

The committee on student life is a policy-making and review committee which considers issues of student life, challenges facing students and steps that can be taken to improve student life on campus. The VPSA co-chairs this committee with the Dean of Students. The committee includes faculty members, students and staff.

- **Workload requirements and syllabi.** The committee discussed the diverse ways in which students navigate their academic workloads, and the factors that disproportionately affect marginalized and low-income students' ability to find a healthy balance between school, work and social/work commitments. The possibility of conducting a syllabus study and workload requirement review was discussed.
- **Issue of belonging in student athletics, and barriers to diversity.** Students representing diverse backgrounds in athletics enlightened the committee about the issues facing students through athletic recruiting, subsidizing gear for low-income students and conversations around inclusion and bias among teams. In collaboration with the students, the committee laid out some potential solutions and action steps.

2. Harm Reduction Committee

The Harm Reduction Committee comprises a large, diverse group of campus stakeholders who have conversations around positive messaging, health-based programming and substance use on campus, among other things.

- **Safe behaviour during NSO.** The committee discussed New Student Orientation (NSO) and the ways in which students, staff or faculty had heard or known of first year students engaging in substance use during NSO. The committee also discussed how substance use and sexual respect education during NSO was successful and other ways of messaging during the semester could be, as well as ways in which to continue the discussions started during NSO (like FYE) and have first years engage in safe risk-free behaviours.
- **Substance-free living at Grinnell.** The committee looked at the history of and changes in substance free housing over the last few years. We discussed why different students choose sub-free housing and the importance of community guidelines in a substance-free space. The committee also discussed what 'sub-free' means on campus, who does and doesn't engage in sub-free events and how one can differentiate sub-free events from other events on campus.
- **Vaping, social norms and addiction.** The committee discussed vaping on campus, including incidences of behaviours, messaging and health consequences. A conversation around vaping, tobacco and other substance use on our campus

also led to a discussion around addiction and the resources available to students struggling with addiction or substance use.

- **Harris/Gardner + passing time.** After a look at the sexual health climate survey results, the committee discussed strategies to provide students with a breather between the end of a Friday/Saturday night Gardner or Harris party and the closing of the venues. As a result, a 30 minute passing time was decided on and implemented.

3. Outdoor Lighting and Safety Committee

The Outdoor Lighting and Safety Committee was formed to review, implement and update lighting fixtures on campus, in order to alleviate student concerns regarding lighting and safety on campus.

- **Baker Electric** was hired to implement the first set of campus lighting fixtures as recommended by the committee, in the area south of Bucksbaum on 6th avenue, between Bucksbaum and Burling as well as in the area under Burling's overhang.
- The committee is working to identify additional spots to follow up with a **second recommendation for new lighting fixtures.**
- In case **lights on campus appear to turn off** when a student approaches it, feel free to report the light (there should be a number on the post) to Facilities Management. It is likely that these lights are old and simply need replacement. Students are welcome to reach out to me with concerns regarding poor or malfunctioning lights, or if there are areas on campus which need better lighting.

4. Residence Life Committee

The residence life committee comprises members of Residence Life Staff, students and faculty who discuss ways in which to improve programming, outreach, policy and operations of ResLife.

- **Outreach.** The committee discussed barriers to student engagement in ResLife programming, as well as ways in which to improve programming and affinity building within clusters. Follow the ResLife instagram **@grinnellreslife**. Reach out to Dennis Perkins or Lauren Myers for further updates.

5. SHAW Staff Counselor Search Committee

I was part of the search process for a Staff Counselor at SHAW. Through the process, I engaged with a wide range of student concerns regarding the services at SHAW, and tried my best to represent student concerns in my views on the selection process. In addition, I was able to arrange for over 30 students to meet with the different candidates on their campus visits. These students' feedback will be considered in the hiring process.

6. Constitutional Reform Committee

The constitutional reform Committee is an SGA committee convened by the SGA administrative coordinator, which is taking a closer look at the SGA constitution, in an attempt to re-evaluate our values, structure, roles and responsibilities as an institution. This committee is **open to all students** to attend.

- **Mission and purpose.** In the first two sessions, we discussed values that SGA should represent through the constitution and the ways in which student needs must be represented by SGA. Two highlights of the discussion for me included the distinction between allocation of funds and programming, and the idea that SGA should take on a more active role in its interaction with students and administrators on matters of campus policymaking and policy communication.
- **New structure for SGA and Senate.** A new structure for SGA was considered, under which the cabinet would consist of a president, a vice president to whom four other cabinet members would report. Each of these cabinet members would work with coordinators who would deal with more specific portfolios. For Senate, the idea that senators should be elected representatives of campus-wide interest groups (eg. majors, residence clusters and class year) in a campus-wide election was discussed. Finally, there was a discussion regarding a shift in the SGA terms for positions from an academic year to a calendar year term appointment.

Programming updates

1. Bob's underground progress update

Based on the work I had conducted in the Spring of 2019, I continued conversations with the Division of Student Affairs to see if Bob's could be opened full-time with fewer limits on open hours, similar to many of the rooms in the JRC. Since they were open to this, we are working together on a proposal that envisions the space as a more lounge-like venue that can be reserved in advance, but that will otherwise stay open for student use. Unfortunately, due to past problems, issues caused by poor financial management and set up costs, a retail/cafe-style model is no longer being considered for the space.

2. Fall Fest Committee

I was involved in the planning process for Fall Fest 2019 along with many other students, where various events, outreach and scheduling were planned, in an attempt to include more student input in organising Fall Fest.

3. Programming board discussions

Over the course of the semester, SGA representatives have been having conversations with the Student Affairs Office about the possibility of instituting a Campus Activities

Board or a Student programming board, whose purpose would be to take charge of planning and executing large-scale campus wide events similar to Fall Fest and Winter Waltz.

4. Songwriters' Circle

I helped pilot a songwriters' circle in the community. This was intended as an event to bring together songwriting enthusiasts from the town and the college in an intimate setting to connect over a shared love for music and the songwriting process. The songwriters' circle was a success, and will continue at the STEW arts center more regularly next semester.

Other

1. NSO

During NSO, members of SGA had the opportunity to participate in a number of events, as well as engage with first-year students in different settings.

- a. Move in crew: As part of an effort to enhance students' experience on move-in day, various members of the campus community volunteered to help students and parents move in to their new dorms. This was a great way to get to know new students on campus as well as to answer questions about campus life.
- b. TinyDorm hosted in the SGA offices
- c. SGA ice cream social
- d. Self-gov community values session: I had the opportunity to address students about what self-governance meant to me, and the ways in which I had seen it practiced on campus.
- e. Opportunity to address international students about my experience as an international student on SGA and the importance of representation.

2. Water bottle fillers in Main Hall

I assisted senator Saada in reaching out to Rick Whitney and Corey Hammond at Facilities Management regarding concerns about the water pressure in the two water fountains in Main Hall, and the lack of water bottle fillers in Main. This project should be underway over spring break.

3. Downtown Residence Hall

An architecture firm called Adjaye Associates has been asked by the college to explore the possibility of constructing a residence hall downtown. I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the firm on a few occasions. In these meetings, they engaged with members of the campus and town communities to understand values, differences and perspectives that would help inform their design of this new space.

4. Student move-out policy

In the beginning of the year, four updates to the Student Handbook were published, one of which dictated that students would be required to vacate their rooms at the end of the semester 24 hours after their last final exam. Many students took issue with the implications of this policy for various reasons. However, the rationale behind the policy was sound. Over the course of the semester, SGA leadership worked with DSA to satisfy the concerns with disruptive behaviour in residence halls as well as to account for student concerns and to provide adequate flexibility for students.