Bowdoin College

Meeting of the Bowdoin Student Government

8 November 2006

I. Call to Order at 8:06

II. Roll Call perfect attendance

III. Approval of Minutes

a. Kristen says that it was Baxter, not Ladd that was planning the gov. professors dinner.

(Dustin interjects that “as to the linens and water,” they are misplaced indefinitely. He mentions that the rugby team that used the room prior to the meeting may or may not be in some way involved.)

b. Approval of Minutes passes

DeRay explains that there are changes in the agenda, just to “keep things exciting.” Reports will be included in the meeting packets to be reviewed with the minutes. He asks for comments on this system. Carolyn asks if people with exciting or important announcements would still be able to make short statements. DeRay responds that the “Announcements” portion of the agenda may be an appropriate place to do this.

IV. Reports

a. DeRay says that in light of the Orient article, that way that people have started to think about Student Government is changing in unanticipated ways. We are a strong body with important views, and with this in mind, he begins by asking if there are any comments, questions, or concerns about the coverage last week. This is the time for people to open up about their views.

i. Alex is new to BSG but thinks that this is a room of incredibly strong leaders and that we need to take or role as a liaison between students and administration seriously to make sure the goals of both groups are aligned. We need to continue to question and challenge and make sure that needs are met and voices are heard.

ii. Ben echoes Alex’s statement and says that it is time for BSG as a body to become a student voice with increased communication with the student population. He suggests regular forums and mentions that at this point, the Orient is the only form of communication.

iii. Alicia suggests more effective utilization of the BSG commentary website and relays a story of an acquaintance who left a comment on the site that was not responded to.
iv. Mike feels that in a group of strong leaders who are good at what they do, people should not think about holding back. The mission is to be that voice of students, and if this is taken to heart, we should step it up in terms of intensity.

b. Becca indicates that the SAFC had a relatively slow week, with only 2 groups coming in. There was an allocation to the African American Society for a one-man activist show, Richard Wright. Up Until Dawn has a fundraiser for Children’s Hospital, and there are also letter writings, parties, and a Danceathon.

c. Alex comments that IHC is working on winter carnival and working together to make it larger and more well-known. The houses are running fantastic events (parties, dinners) Quinby had restaurants open up to community this past week. Everything is going smoothly.

d. Burgess says that contact with Dean Judd is not official, and that they will be talking hopefully before the end of the week. There has also been talk about helping sophomores pick majors and bringing leaders from departments together to do this.

e. Steph says that SOOC has not met this week, but that they will be meeting with the new charter groups. A date has been picked for a spring semester activities fair.

f. Will mentions that there has been work on the platinum parking pass as well as communicating with administrators about upperclassman housing. The Shuttle business is fun as always.

g. Dustin invites people after meeting to talk to Travis from the Orient because they are publishing early this week (Thursday). This weekend is trustee weekend, so let Dustin know about any concerns so they can be resolved quickly. There is a meeting in Boston that some representatives are going down to or that they are participating in by conference calls. A potential forum needs to be next week or later.

i. As far a Darfur goes, we are going to hold off one more week because this weekend the focus at several meetings will be on a specific response, so the week after this one there should be some permanent, progressive steps up for consideration. Leadership development is also coming up later. This evening we will be discussing Sexual Assault, so feel comfortable leaving if necessary

ii. Mike: $15758 dollars, after tonight $14958, so it could be a big night, sending us below $15000

(DeRay mentions casually that Barry will be at next week’s meeting.)

h. Carolyn discusses the resolution for the Athletic Support table funding request. She then introduces dean Mary Pat McMahon.

i. The Colby bus is leaving at 11:30 from College St. by Baxter house. There was a high response from emails, and we will be giving out foam paws. On Friday there will
be support-poster-making for Field Hockey if funding is approved. Women’s rugby won’t be here, but we want to prepare stuff for them on the way.

ii. Nametag Day—HeadsUp, we will need help as far as putting them in mailboxes and manning tables for decorations are concerned. There is no pizza at the pub because it is thanksgiving dinner and the pub couldn’t do it. There will be a meeting with the Friends of Bowdoin Assoc. over dinner soon as an opportunity to meet community members.

iii. Seniors are planning beer with professors for nametag day, and other classes should program something appropriate as well. Wednesday night and Thursday are the times when the most help will be needed.

V. Old Business

a. Dean Judd issue: Dustin says that the BSG Affairs committee thinks that this is a hard issue because it is trying to be too many things—both a plan for the future and a response to what happened. The feeling in the room was that the situation had been responded to, and that it would be awkward as a future policy would be awkward. However, general, informal guidelines could be helpful for people to feel comfortable.

i. Ben wonders if these informal guidelines are finished in what was written already. Dustin replies that there will be a new statement drafted.

VI. New Business

a. Carolyn reintroduces dean Mary Pat McMahon, saying that she is here to answer questions about the new Sexual Misconduct Policy.

b. Dean McMahon explains that this has been in process for quite a while. It is adapted from the University of Virginia’s policy, which received national attention for its clarity (Hopefully everyone finds this adaptation to be clear. Mary Pat asks who has read the document and receives indication that every member of the body has reviewed it. She is pleased, as questions will therefore be informed) She mentions that one problem in drafting a policy like this is the definition of consent. She also highlights two definitions: sexual assault is more intentional and grievous than sexual misconduct. This document also calls for three options of procedure in the case of a complaint instead of the current two. We currently have mediation and a formal hearing, but this calls for mediation, a formal hearing, and a new option, a structured meeting. Its benefit is that it is structured similar to disciplinary meeting, but will be used when discipline is called for but the defender is not necessary eligible for removal from the college. The dean’s office does not get near the amount of reports that twould be expected considering the statistics regarding sexual assault on campuses and within the age bracket. The fact that the process is not used much is an indicator that it is broken. The old policy is convoluted because of all the faces that it tried to take, like staff situations, etc. It lead to general confusion. Dean McMahon opens the discussion to questions.
Sam wonders why the J-Board is involved (MPM responds that they were involved in the past, too. They have experience with the process and know about leading questions. They are familiar with the hearings and adjudication processes.)

Ben has heard positive feedback on campus and wonders what faculty and staff say (MPM has heard from students that policy is somewhat dense. She thinks that a two-page summary needs to be put into place as a general briefing. Faculty has concerns about the staff harassment policy, because the new document doesn’t cover situations where someone else besides a student is concerned. Staff-wise, there is a working group formed for the purpose of looking at this—a group directly connected to introducing policy and providing information and making people aware about it. Overall the staff is pretty ok)

Emily H has questions about how a complaint is followed and if it differs from before. (MPM says that there is a form in the handbook that is an anonymous report form that is also available in other places. This option stays the same, with the drop-boxes and everything. Mediation is not initiated by this, but there can be a conversation about mediation that can start in counseling or in our office. Formal written complaint would start the process of a meeting or adjudication.)

Torri asks about the definition of consent. She has the understanding that they allow other organizations to help, and feels that this is not a very specific definition (MPM describes the consent campaign, whose focus is in understanding this issue and definition more broadly. As far as the system goes, they match the words and actions of the complaint to the definition according to the way it is written. They basically look at the situation to understand what words and actions were involved. There will almost always be a grey area, but broad campus understanding important. The consent campaign follows this understanding. They have ideas about what they want to do about publications, stickers, events) Who is on the committee? (MPM: Joanne, Bernie the counseling director and Sandra from counseling. She lists a number of people, including the leadership of BMASV (Kevin, Zack) and sometimes members from V-day (Whitney) There are a number of guest appearances, as this is an evolving group. The goal is to get people from a number of different areas of campus involved.)

Emily G likes the idea of covering different contingencies. Her concern is that a student who has the bravery to come forward and is given options and must make decisions should have someone there for support. (MPM says that they will train interested students for this type of support role as well as faculty who are familiar with this but not connected to the office.)

Mike is wondering how the policy works with Maine state law (MPM says that she needs to check back with the attorneys because she recently heard that according to state law, a person can’t give consent if that have had any alcohol and are under 21. Also, they want to provide a clause that allows a person in a structured meeting to bail if, for example, they realize that the situation is more serious, new things are remembered, or new information is presented. This option is being considered as part of the text or subtext.)

Steph wonders what the purpose of the adjective “effective” is in “effective” consent. (MPM says that the understanding is in the case of actually getting consent vs. thinking you get consent—both people know that it happens rather than one person thinks it)
Kristen questions the J-Board involvement. How would a student be selected? Isn’t this issue different than the academic ones that the Board deals with? (MPM indicates that it is a different issue, but that members of the board are assigned based on maturity, and that there is a gender balance. With this in mind, the should be able to maturely deal with what is involved. Part of their job is also to deal with social cases, harassment cases, etc., so it is a continuum.)

Burgess’ issue is in terms of gender equity if there is 1 not 2 student who would inevitably be either male or female. (MPM explains that the way it works now is that there are 3 people on the panel and a 4th chair that does not vote, which is a faculty member. There are a total of ten people talking about a difficult and challenging personal story. They have taken back the number of people so that the dean of student affairs chairs a three person board. It is a good question as to why there are not two students, but it must be understood that this is a lot to go through as a panelist. The idea is to have one student, a staff, and a faculty member represented. Everyone is trained and the panel is picked according to the specific situation and the persons involved.)

DeRay says that under procedural options B1d is says that there are four in the panel (MPM: The chair doesn’t vote and there are three additional members. What outweighs this in composition is that board is too big now as it is. We want different perspectives but the flip side is that with more people the experience would become traumatic.)

Dustin understands the need for people to feel comfortable, but wonders why it is decided on three instead of five. This is a limited amount of voices and a big jump from before, and we need to look from both defender and claimant’s point of view. (MPM says that there is a balance of talking to bunch of people about how things happen, and that the general wisdom is that more people asking outweighs the viewpoint issue. There is tension in this questions. Also, both parties can have students as support. Student voice is important, and if this is a concern they could consider revisiting the construction.)

Alex adds that the students sitting in the room are trained and have been on the J-board for a while. They should be able to make judgments based not on gender but policy. Her question concerns a structured meeting vs. mediation. How does mediation move the situation forward? (MPM responds that the mediation process is voluntary and would not be used in sexual assault cases, nor would a structured meeting. These options are more for misconduct. Both have to want to be a part of this process to talk about their perceptions about what happened and how to go forward and get along on campus. They need to sit for a long time and hear each other out. It would end in a written agreement with terms about contact, which would be the only record of the conversation. A structured meeting is not voluntary, and both have to come so that they can do something with issues like those concerning issuing housing changes, contracts, etc.) Who would the mediator be? (MPM says that it would either be somebody from the counseling staff someone certified in mediation and hired to work for this purpose)

DeRay wonders what happens if a person drops out? (MPM says that then it’s over—both people have to volunteer, so it is back to the drawing board)

Avery supports the decision to have a counsel of three because it is a lot to ask of a person to come forward. She wonders of there would be an option to have a delegate (MPM: From ten people, three are appointed to hear a case. It doesn’t have to be the survivor who brings complaint. It could be someone on their behalf, like a witness, etc.)
• Torri brings the conversation back to consent. Her concern is with how make sure that the starting group reaches all students on campus. (MPM says that they have been talking about meetings and groups to get people in parts of campus up to speed. This is somewhere where BSG could step in and try to help people understand this better. It is difficult to require something, but there could be serious publicity. There is a student summit on Dec. 1 with BMASV, safe space, etc. to keep working on these questions) For students who don’t want to be concerned, what happens when they become part of the process (MPM says that it is the obligation of all students to know this material. Ultimately, they will sanction a person whether or not they claim to know this or not)

• Burgess comments about the unclarity of Section A in the 4th paragraph. To whom does it refer? (MPM: The respondent) The phrasing is a bit unclear (MPM explains that it means that if they choose to make it possible to meet, she will be available, but that they have the right to say that they are not participating in the process)

• Kristen wonders about the role of the private investigator and the effects of this person on privacy. (MPM indicates that anyone involved in these processes is under the impression that anything under the procedures is confidential. Anyone involved signs something about not re-disclosing information, and understand that it is at their own risk. They can be sanctioned if they break confidentiality, as this is someone else’s privacy rights.)

• Dustin revisits the consent issue and questions how alcohol and drugs play into the definition. (MPM says that it is hard to sit down and define a concept like this. From a legal perspective this is not vague at all. Though independently the language may be vague, it is very clear when tested against a situation. Intoxication falls into the category of taking advantage of someone when impaired.) Why is it not in D? (MPM says that they don’t want to limit it just to drugs and alcohol, because as soon as they limit it something happens just outside the definition—it must be free to dependency on the details of the situation)

• DeRay suggests adding something about the council or trained person because without it the likelihood for choosing this declines (MPM says that this is great idea to add in the introduction so that they know that could be with someone separate from the dean) He also wonders about the make-up of the committee and the concern of ending up with a single-gender board. (MPM says that everybody is appointed with that in consideration, and that though it will be ensured in practice, they are considering codifying it in the subtext) What happens if a non-student complains? (MPM says that student affairs is just to serve students and that mediation in particular is available to Bowdoin students as a setting to reach an agreement)

• Lynzie wonders if a person could go above the college and straight to police (MPM replies that this is absolutely an option) Will it then always go back through this process? (MPM says that they encourage everybody to go through the police and that this is not meant to replace legal actions. The school will only follow-up if they know about it already) Sophia asks if this means that if someone was named as a Bowdoin student in the media the school would step in (They reserve the right to do something)

• Emily H wonders if it could it be mandatory for people to attend something to understand consent. (MPM says that it is a good idea. One option is to have the definition online so that students must log-in and complete something. There are a number of ways they
could go about this. Again, other groups could get involved and organize something, because the office cannot make students attend functions.)

- Alex mentions that this is the perfect opportunity for BSG to step up.
- DeRay asks MPM to paraphrase a paragraph (MPM explains that it means that if somebody gets arrested for a felony, there will be a process of some sort. Someone like the president could take action to get this acted upon in the absence of the people specifically delegated this task. Independent action will be taken even though the official process is not under way.)
- Torri wonders how much longer they will be taking comments from students (MPM says that there is a governance issue and that there will be a meeting tomorrow about how this impacts the process. If they get a green light they are set to go and should have this enacted by next semester.)

c. Dustin introduces the joint program for Leadership Development with the Student Life Office. DeRay says that there is no vote, but just a general discussion on this topic. It is a series of 5 skill session for leaders)

i. Charlie voices the question that perplexes many of us: What are the practical advantages of being certified? (Dustin responds that these are legitimate valuable skills and can be carried and referenced elsewhere.)

ii. Ben is skeptical that a person’s people skills could be changed within hour-long meetings. (Becca says that there are professionals whose work is centered around this very kind of work, and that there is basic knowledge that can be easily applied, but that people just don’t think about.)

iii. Alex says that letters of invitation would suggest that this program is something of an honor, and that there have been suggestions for two sets of programs for lower and upper-classmen.

iv. Avery wonders of many of the invitees won’t already be leaders, and why the meeting is necessary in these cases. (Becca relates stories of contact with student leaders in which they just lack basic skills to put on events ad prepare for meetings.)

v. Emily G. recommends that this be required for house leaders, where she feels enthusiasm leaves something to be desired.

vi. Emily H. points out that many adults do similar sorts of things and that it can only be positive.

vii. Avery worries that it will be preaching to the choir and that it could turn into something that people only attend for the certification. (Dustin says that they will certainly target people who need this)

viii. Lynzie agrees so far as to suggest making this mandatory.

ix. DeRay says that the next steps are to bounce these ideas off people so that something can be endorsed in the future.
d. Carolyn says that the group has heard plenty about NameTag Day. The bottom line is a request for $550 for Nametag supplies, food, and decorations.

i. Sam wonders how much was spent last year ($990, but it included pizza. There were very different expenses last year)

ii. The classes are encouraged to sponsor raffles at NameTag Day tables.

iii. vote on funding passed unanimously

e. Carolyn introduces a funding request for field hockey and rugby fan support (posters, cards, etc.)

i. Ben supports this but wonders what precedent it will set. (Carolyn says that Polar Bear Nation is involved but has not checked in)

ii. Mike wonders in what capacity they will be involved. (They will be at the tables)

iii. DeRay says that this is important because they have not targeted women’s sports. It is the job of the BSG to help PBN get up and running.

iv. Steph says that there is already a precedent from involvement with male sports.

v. Torri is skeptical about attaching the BSG name with PBN when they are not active, etc. (DeRay says that the goal is to help them become legitimate)

vi. vote in funding passes unanimously

DeRay opens the meeting to feedback and comments about the meeting. Alex says that it was fantastic and that it followed according to what was outlined last time. Kata says that Dean McMahon was a breath of fresh air in her response. The follow-up questions and hypothetical situations received better replies.

Ben returns to DeRay’s indication that Barry is coming next week. DeRay says that it will be a general Q & A and that he will send an update. He also briefly mention the retreat at Bates on Saturday that the officers will not attend because of the trustees meetings.

VII. Adjournment at 9:57