***SGA Plenary Meeting 09/29/2013***

Natalie calls the meeting to order at 12:00PM.

4:34 PM

Natalie Kato ‘14**:** We have a couple questions to pose to you. We want to ask if anyone has suggestions for what to do in the future.

Sarah Ames ’14: For fall Plenary, you should make knowledge more readily available for freshman.

Danielle Arad-Neeman ‘14: Most of my freshman asked what Plenary was. That’s an important part of Customsweek.

Colin Baumann ‘14: Not just during Customsweek, but even a hall programming, reaching out to hall advisors and have SGA people talk to individual halls or dorms would be a good idea.

Kate Hinchy ’16: I’ve been interested in Plenary since I found out what it was. It was difficult to find out when Plenary was. There was no information on the website. I needed to be able to plan ahead. Other McBrides don’t really have information about what Plenary is. Even one email would be nice.

Angela Motte ’17: We should watch a movie while we wait for quorum.

Ming Lee ’16: Please offer some kind of food!

Serena Pierce ’15: There is a lot of trouble getting international students and students of color. We should make the process more accessible to those students and reach out to them.

Rebecca Reiss ’15: I don’t understand why we can’t do this online. Why can’t we set up voting online and writing opinions online and it is considered quorum with enough people?

Natalie Kato ’14: There are a few reasons why we can’t do it online. It is in the spirit of self-governance that we are able to get one-third of the student body in a room to vote and approve or disapprove on resolutions that can make change. Another reason is that the difficulty of amending a resolution would increase.

There is an issue with accessibility – will everyone be able to reach the link? How long would voting be open for? If there are different amendments, then what?

We don’t want to discourage online Plenary, but it needs to be discussed as a student body – voting for resolutions online or continue to have a gathering of one-third of the student body.

Delaney Williams ’17: I’d really like water here.

Archana Kaku ’14: Provide coffee.

Christine Cho ’14: Shut down the wireless.

Natalie Kato ’14: This is a misconception. Haverford does not shut down the wifi.

Anastasia Kyriacou ’15: This is a long question/suggestion: Hold Plenary earlier in the morning, before the dining halls are open, then don’t open the dining halls until Plenary is over.

Colin Baumann ’14: We did that before, and it stopped working so then we went to this system. The timing of the dining hall not being open *and* serving brunch have both been tried.

Ming Lee ’16: I am in favor of an online presence. Students who are abroad can also vote. Just because the are not on campus doesn’t mean that they stopped caring.

Sarah Lovegren ’14: Quorum would be higher then.

Kathy Kimpel ’16: I’m wondering why Plenary can’t be earlier in the school year. For lots of people this is an inconvenient time. It’s right before fall break, and Sunday afternoon is a popular time for TA sessions. Half of my friends had to leave at 4. I think it’s more convenient to do it earlier in the year because of less schoolwork and fewer TA sessions.

Natalie Kato ’14: Plenary is held this time during the year because the process of writing a resolution and workshops must occur two weeks prior to Plenary. We tried to push it back a week after classes started but it limits when we can have the first Plenary. This is per the Plenary bylaws.

Kathy Kimpel ’16: Maybe after fall break? Before fall break is the busiest.

Sarah Lovegren ’14: We do pledging in Erdman, but we should do it earlier. If by a week before Plenary we don’t have quorum reached through pledges then we should reschedule.

Alizeh Amer ’16: I feel like if Plenary is such an important issue for everyone to be here I feel like we should close the dining halls and other facilities so that people do not have to go for work. Spring Plenary there were posters. I feel like we didn’t have that. I’d love to see a flash mob.

Lee McClenon ’14: I actually put together the survey that Natalie mentioned. The highest suggestion was to have a time limit on Plenary. If Plenary didn’t go past 4 we wouldn’t have people leaving. If we start at 12 and don’t get quorum by 2, we cancel it. It’s hard to see what happens in this room actualized at Bryn Mawr. Every Plenary while we’re waiting we should have a report back about last semester’s Plenary resolutions. What happened with them? What’s going on? That would show people what Plenary can do and what makes a good resolution.

Airen McClure ’16: Are the people who are currently abroad part of quorum?

Natalie Kato ‘14: They are not.

Rachel Ofili ’16: To combat stress we should have a yoga instructor, some massage chairs, a punching bag, some painting and art… de-stress!

Colin Baumann ’14: On the flip side, if self-governance is something that Bryn Mawr counts as ‘we initiated this’ – if we’re not here by a certain time there is an underlying problem. Having Plenary as something fun seems to detract from the meaning of Plenary. We should reach out – why Haverford can do it with the same restrictions that we have – talk to them about how their culture is different from ours and have conversations.

Jess Nahigian ’15: It’s the idea of speaking to a larger problem. Everyone came today and everyone is invested and interested in changing the message. I hear people saying “Just come, it won’t last that long!” but it should be more about the positive message about what we do here.

Nkechi Ampah ’15: Part of the larger problem is that a lot of measures that we would be taking – closing the dining halls and wifi – are not in the spirit of self-governance. Self-governance is us doing things for our school that we care about. Forcing people to come is not in the spirit.

Christian Sumner ’17: I didn’t know that one-third of the student body had to be here. I didn’t know why Plenary was important. I was just told that it was. It seemed optional.

Sofia Oleas ’15: Maybe during DLT training, or when people are arriving, inform them of what Plenary is and why it is so important. First-years don’t know to come. During DLT training we should be told what to say about Plenary and if there is an email we should send out.

Natalie Kato ’14: Incorporating the DLT is something we will take into consideration. I was invited by Dean Balthazar to attend a “Hallmark of a Bryn Mawr Experience” panel and there I was able to talk to the first-year students and I did describe and explain Plenary and what it was. We tried to emphasize it during Customsweek.

Gwendolyn Vary ’17: At Haverford, Plenary is mandatory for freshmen. I’m not sure if that’s true but 1) it gets people to come and 2) freshmen know about it and come. I ended up knowing more about Haverford Plenary than Bryn Mawr Plenary. It seems optional.

Amanda Beardall ’14: Maybe we should talk to the libraries – a book on reserve could last for the entirety of Plenary because people might be staying in the libraries, and also look into having laptops checked out because not everybody owns their own laptop.

Natalie Kato ‘14: Are there any other comments regarding improving plenary in the future and making it more attractive?

We wanted to ask some yes/no, raise-your-hand kind of questions.

Everyone raise your hand if you would like plenary to start before 12.

Everyone raise your hand if you would prefer plenary to start after 12.

I also want to know if the improvements we made from last to this Plenary were impactful: making the teaching theater a quiet study space, changing the time to 12 PM instead of 12:30 PM, increasing giveaways - Traditions mistresses were kind enough to pool their resources and give away 75 t-shirts – lots of raffles, Plenary 101. That was an event about two weeks ago. It was prior to the resolution workshops so that they could come to the workshop after. Can I get a show of hands if people agree with these improvements and a show of hands if they think they were not impactful?

We are also looking for suggestions for getting information to faculty/staff/administration. There was an email sent over the summer and also a week ago.

Alexandra Cooke ’14: I have a question. Where are faculty counted as members of the student body?

Natalie Kato ‘14: They are not. Some of them assign things due on this day. Some of them have study sessions or TA sessions. We were hoping to make them more aware and more incorporated into making this a really cool event.

Melanie Bahti ’16: I have a comment about improvements: I remember taking the survey but don’t remember what decisions were made. I didn’t know that there would be a quiet study space.

Chris Lichtenstein ’16: We should move the resolution for professors to not schedule exams the Monday or Tuesday after Plenary weekend, and signs to show where the teaching theater is, and power strips for outlets.

Natalie Kato ‘14: Power strips cannot be supplied by Conferences and Events.

Hannah Nacheman ’15: Someone mentioned earlier that setting a specific shorter time frame is a good thing to consider. When people know that it’s more spread out, everyone gets diffused and they come in and out or don’t come at all. If we have a shorter time frame, they will come because they know they have the rest of the day.

Chris Lichtenstein ’16: I was wondering if someone had an answer to the question they had before. The problem with 12-2. What if we don’t get quorum? Haverford didn’t get quorum so they had to schedule an emergency Plenary to ratify their Honor Code. What would happen if that happened?

Colin Baumann ’14: Point of information – it’s not that they didn’t have quorum. They have to ratify the Honor Code by a certain amount of people and they did not get that. Getting quorum was not related.

Emma Rosenblum ’14: Reach out to people who may be able to engage with faculty: major reps. Have them talk to faculty in the department about self-governance. That might have more influence. They’re mostly juniors and seniors who have been here for a while.

Natalie Kato ‘14: We have 376 people in this room. We are off quorum by 65. We are thinking about taking a vote from the people in this room. We have some options to that vote. One would be to table the discussion and proceed. How to proceed would be decided on by the Representative Council who are in elected and voting positions. Another option is to wait 30 more minutes. If we get quorum then we will proceed; if not, we will table the discussions. The third option would be to wait for quorum until it is reached. The fourth option is to abstain. Given what time it is and how many people we have, it would be in our interest to vote.

Abstain and no vote – those two terms get confused. No vote is not raising your hand and not being counted towards quorum. This could matter if the votes are close. Abstain means that you don’t have a preference between the different options but your vote will still go towards quorum so you will be counted.

Any questions? Please approach the mic.

Airen McClure ’16: Abstain is if I don’t care about the resolutions – I could abstain on all of them and leave and still count as quorum?

Natalie Kato ’14: Say we had 20 people in a room. 7 vote for something, 3 vote against, and 10 abstain – whatever the 7 people approved would occur. We would still have quorum – we still have over one-third of the people in the room based on the majority vote.

Colin Baumann ’14: How is this constitutional?

Natalie Kato ’14: This was based on consensus of the Executive Board and Plenary Committee. If anyone has any other suggestions we would love to hear them. Any other questions, comments, or additions? I think we will give you two minutes to think over the different options and then move to a vote.

I received some questions about what it would mean if Plenary was tabled. I would like to clarify. My idea that if we table the discussion and how to proceed will be decided on by the Representative Council, there will be some options posed. We could have a special Plenary similar to what Haverford did. We could also table the resolutions until the spring semester. We will leave this decision up to the Representative Council who represents the student body. That is what I meant. This discussion for how to proceed will happen at the SGA meeting on Sunday October 6th or we might feel the need to call an emergency SGA meeting for the Representative Council and hold it during the coming week. That will be announced through the listserv, on Twitter, on Facebook, and on Google+. We will also notify the DLT if there is an SGA meeting during the week to discuss. If we do not hold the emergency we will hold it on October 6th.

Sarah Gilmour ’14: Should voting members of SGA vote now?

Natalie Kato ’14: Yes and you are representing yourself.

Kate Hinchey ’16: Does it have to be an emergency plenary?

Natalie Kato ’14: In the constitution it says that we have two plenaries a year, one in the first semester and one in the second. If we were to have special plenary, it could happen.

Kate Hinchey ‘16: Does it count as plenary if we never reached quorum?

Natalie Kato ’14: Good question. Any other questions or comments?

Airen McClure ’16: Can we add to the possibilities a vote to just reschedule it but specifically this semester rather than leaving it up to representatives?

Natalie Kato ‘14: All in favor of adding the option have plenary this semester to the list?

Karina Siu ’14: Can we decide to vote and then vote on what everybody would like – to see the majority, for sure this semester, so that the Representative Council can take it into consideration? It’s important that everyone in this room has a say.

Colin Baumann ‘14: I like every suggestion but I hesitate on the constitutionality as to whether we can have another Plenary this semester. What could be useful is to take a straw poll so that the Representative Council has a better idea of what this body wants rather than allowing just this group to vote. We represent everyone on campus, but individuals just represent people in the room.

Natalie Kato ’14: We are going to have a straw poll. Anyone in this room can vote, representing yourself.

Options:

I want to have plenary happen this semester.

I do not want plenary to happen this semester.

I abstain.

I would also like to ask everyone in the Representative Council to stand up and wave your hand. These people represent you at SGA meetings. If you want to see something talk to them!!

Representative Council, please take that vote into consideration.

Move on to the second vote.

Options:

To table the discussion.

To continue to wait for quorum for 30 minutes and then table discussion.

To continue to wait for quorum.

Abstain.

Alisha Pandit ’15: This vote is just to move it to a different day or just do it today, correct?

Natalie Kato ’14: That previous vote was a straw poll.

Move on to this next vote.

Table discussion.

Wait for 30 minutes to reach quorum, then table discussion.

Wait to reach quorum.

Abstain.

We will table the discussion. This will be an agenda item at the SGA meeting on October 6th or during an emergency meeting. Thank you for coming.