

S.E.P.C.

Minutes for September 30, 1993

Present: J. Rose Shaap (chair), Jenny Zeuli (Secretary), Brian Dunn, Mary Springer, Catherine Wenglowksi, Tina Gross, Sandra Mendes, Mikel Wadewitz, Giles Lewey, Jonas Omberg, Jay Metz, Ian Jelineck, Melissa Feldman, Amy Huff, Andromache Chalfant, Matt Connors

SEPC QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"When I came here [to Bennington] I felt sort of a solidarity, like, 'You were the freak in high school and so was I....' There are millions of freaks out there who are being ignored!"

--Matt Connors

Meeting called to order at 6:35

RATIFICATION OF MINUTES:

Last week's minutes were found to contain no bizarre misunderstandings or unfortunate spelling errors. They were therefore ratified without much discussion, although I've given the matter some thought, and decided that from this week on I won't quote anybody directly without asking permission first. I'd like to thank Matt for this week's gem.

FACULTY REVIEWS:

The following faculty members are up for review this term: Arthur Brooks, Sue Ann Kahn (music); Mansour Farhang, Avraam Koen, Sally Sugarman (Social Science); Jose Cordova, James Lasdun, Richard Tristman, Alvin Feinman, Ted Hoagland, Stephen Sandy (Lit/Lang); Tony Carruthers, Michael Gianetti (Drama). The review process will begin next week--you know, canvass letters and all that stuff--so be prepared. Also, it's time to begin urging classes in your divisions to **elect class reps**, and you should also think of some way to **make yourselves more visible and accessible** to the general populace. Rosie doesn't want to have to revert to Lizbet's practice of taking Polaroids of everybody and hanging them up in Commons, but she's already in a bad mood because she lost her backpack, and she'll do it if she has to. Protect yourselves and put up flyers or something. You could also look into **visiting classes**--at least freshmen classes--in your division to explain who and what you are. And remember, see me if you need posterboard, markers, etc., see me.

"SYMPOSIUM":

While one or two members of the committee had a favorable reaction to the first meeting, which was held last Wednesday, the general sense was that it left a lot to be desired. There were **numerous problems**. It was felt that the meeting lacked direction, although we discussed the question of whether or not it was necessary to begin with something so broad-based and formless. It was also mentioned that a good number of students, perhaps even most, are experiencing a strong sense of frustration and lack of faith, which makes patience with the process...well...difficult, to say the least, and most agreed that it's hard to talk about the future when the present is such a mess. Everybody who was at this first meeting agreed that attendance needed to be better, and we wondered whether it would be possible for the Committee to put out some sort of letter clarifying the "symposium" process, in order to encourage more students, particularly freshmen, to come. However, we're pretty vague about the whole thing ourselves, so it was decided that such a letter would be impractical at this time. There does need to be better advertisement, though, so I'll publish all the dates in the minutes as soon as I find them.

On the topic of the "Symposium" in general, as opposed to this first meeting, we discussed the role the Committee could play. We would like to look at **academic policy**, or some aspect of it, and write up some sort of proposal. It was also suggested that SEPC publish a **questionnaire** dealing with an area of student concern--FWT, for example--and thus have concrete statistics, as opposed to mere speculation and personal testimony, to present at a "Symposium" meeting.

PHYSIOLOGY:

With one or two exceptions, the entire committee admitted to feeling "ill and weird" this week. Maybe it's something in the water.

ADMISSIONS:

This stuff actually belongs under the "Symposium" heading, but I felt the need to break up the paragraph a little. We wondered about **Admissions tactics**, and whether or not they have changed fundamentally over the past two or three years. It's an old topic, I know, but oddly compelling nonetheless. Rosie pointed out that for all its claims about being unique, Bennington has enough in common with a number of other colleges (i.e. Bard, Antioch, Hampshire, Sarah Lawrence) to be called "comparable", and the fact is that all those colleges are doing better than we are. Hmmm..... So we talked about the kinds of students Admissions is admitting, and whether or not they are more "mainstream" than they have been, or should be. Not only are SAT's required now, but they are apparently looked at relatively closely. There was even a little quip in the most recent *Quadrille* about how this year's incoming class had exceptionally high scores. A number of **questions** were raised, among them: are people who need to be here getting here? Is there a noticeable difference between older and newer students? What kind of picture does Admissions paint of the school, and is it an honest one? It was proposed that there be **more student contact** with Admissions; possibly students could make an Admissions video, or even help design the catalogue. Hmmm.....

TRUSTEES:

"They're baa-ack..." The Trustees will be here on October 15. Apparently--and this is a slight departure from last term's procedure--anybody who wants to meet with Them can submit a request, in writing, to Elena Bachrach, detailing their reasons for desiring an audience with the Board. Rosie says that she'll see what she can do about setting up a meeting between SEPC and a few Trustee representatives. More news on this as it develops.

DIVISIONAL NEWS:

The **Lit Division** has some questions about the two studies that the Trustees ordered in the wake of Their displeasure with the Division's self-study. There are two--one about the Division in general, and one about the teaching of languages--to be conducted by outside sources..."distinguished men and women of letters", to be exact. Anybody, nobody really seems to know what the deal is--whether those studies are going forward or not. The Division also wondered if there was some way to get information from **interdivisional majors** about the strengths and weaknesses of that type of plan, since that is the direction the College appears to be moving in. Along those same lines, the **Social Science Division** is discussing reorganizing their curriculum in a way that would break down the barriers between different disciplines.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35