These minutes are not verbatim but a summary of the statements and conversations that occurred

Student Senate Meeting Agenda
April 18, 2017 – David E. Johnson Boardroom

Call to Order

Roll Call

Approval of the minutes

Special Orders
Sindy Fleming - Director, Center for Multicultural and International Engagement (CMIE)
Greta Fure - Associate Director of College Events
David R. Anderson - President of St. Olaf College

President David Anderson started with general updates about the college. The first of these updates, The president indicated his excitement about a recent grant. The college recently received a $800,000 Mellon Grant, called To Include is To Excel, that will be used to studying best learning practices for students in the coming years. This grant will enable research on how students at the college are learning and experiencing the academic programs. This grant will feed into consideration of the GE program and revisions of teaching practices and learning environments.

President Anderson gave was on commencement, which will be held on the Quad this year. This will give all attending a better and safer experience.

Another update President Anderson gave was on the upcoming national college decision day. The goal is to admit 758 students commit to keep the college around 3,000 students. President Anderson explained that this year they have an increase in students from Minnesota, International Students, and a large increase in female students.

Another update President Anderson gave was a recognition the college received from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA).

The next update from President Anderson was on four building projects - specifically a St. Olaf & Carleton joint-venture on a new Northfield hotel, Holland Hall’s opening next fall, the ice arena, and Mohn Hall renovations.

A final update from President Anderson was about the college’s current campaign, called For the Hill and Beyond. The goal is to have 200 million dollars by January 2020, with 194 million going towards endowment (to support financial aid and academic programs and 6 million going to the ice arena. President Anderson explained that every extra dollar the college has in the endowment is a dollar the college does not need to take from families.
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The President then took questions.

Senator Cha inquired about research that will be conducted as a result of the Mellon Grant. Acknowledging that previous research done that shows low-income students as the least likely to succeed in college, and that student support centers prove to be most helpful.

President Anderson indicated that while there has been previous research done on this subject it has not been conducted with the scope the college would like. President Anderson is hoping to gain insight about this school and its students specifically.

Senator Spanjers inquired about plans to renovate Hillboe-Kittlesbee and for more details about the Mohn Hall renovations.

President Anderson responded that Hillboe-Kittlesbee will be renovated sometime in the future and that this summer Mohn hall will get a new sprinkler system and elevators.

Senator Webster inquired about the dropping admissions acceptance rate.

President Anderson indicated that the admissions acceptance rate was not an accurate measure of school effectiveness. What matters more to the college, is finding the right students to enroll.

Senator Kaldjian inquired that if money is being added to the endowment if this would help keep tuition at the amount it current is in, or if it could lead to a potential decrease.

President Anderson responded that the two largest things the college pays for is providing salary to those who work here and giving financial aid to students. The best way to decrease the tuition cost is by funding the unfunded financial aid which helped by an increasing endowment.

Chair Bresnahan inquired what our endowment looked like compared to that of other schools.

President Anderson responded that out of the comparison group of schools the college looks at, St. Olaf is just below the middle and that a goal of his is to raise that as fast as possible.

Senator Lind inquired as to how the Mellon Grant would affect classrooms.
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President Anderson apologized that he does not know all the details of the Mellon Grant, as its use is still being finalized. Mary Carleson, who will be directing the grant, is a good resource for any questions.

Senator Lussenhop asked if there was thought given to adding more and different student supportive services on campus and if the Mellon Grant could help with that.

President Anderson responded that he would be surprised if that grant didn’t result in new programs surrounding student success. When any student does not flourish at St. Olaf that is a problem. As the college becomes more and more diverse President Anderson acknowledged that there needs to be a continued dialogue on how to be adaptable to all learners at St. Olaf.

Senator Mettler inquired about any plans to move the nursing department from Ytterboe.

President Anderson responded that the department will be moving to Regents Hall of Science very soon. The other departments in Ytterboe will also be relocating.

Senator Benning inquired about plans to have active student involvement in the Mellon Grant.

President Anderson responded by guaranteeing that there will be student involvement in the grant.

Senator Verdoorn inquired about what President Anderson sees as the largest challenge to the college and to student experience and what the college is doing to address that challenge.

President Anderson responded that internally a largest challenge is that our expenses are growing faster than our revenue. The other challenge he addressed was the amount of time spent on the college reputation. President Anderson expressed concern that the public is placing anxiety about the future specifically in colleges. The college must be attentive to what the environment is actually like, what can be said, and how much is in our control.

Senator Freyermuth inquired what would happen in the case that the Mellon Grant came back with outcomes that were still not met with the newly revised reformed GE system. She also inquired about taking down the Ginko tree due to it’s smell. This questions was answered with a discussion about the trees historical value.
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President Anderson responded by saying that both the grant and the GE task force have attention on the same questions. The timelines of the two projects will line up and they will be complementary to each other. The grant is a great resource for the GE task force but also goes beyond what the curriculum requirements are.

Senator Zaghdoudi inquired about any ideas for Steensland hall.

President Anderson responded there are many different possibilities all of which require a large amount of upgrades to the building and the college open to any good ideas.

Senator Vojcak inquired for more details about the hotel project. He also mentioned and asked for more details surrounding a recent EPA recognition.

President Anderson informed senate that Jan Hansen, VP and CFO for the college, she is most informed on details of the hotel project and to reach out to her. The EPA chooses the most sustainable school in each athletic conference and that is what the recognition is about. There will be a feature on the website but students can inquire to Katie Warren for more information.

Senator Freyermuth inquired about the racial tensions on campus and concrete ways the administration planned to respond.

President Anderson responded by asking what the students would like administration to do when they are unable to undo the incident and cannot find the perpetrator. The college is able to state that racist actions violate the colleges values and principles. President Anderson acknowledged that what stops these incidents is students coming forward. Anderson understands that the students are seeking a larger systematic solution and one way to do that is to become a more diverse community and to increase education surrounding the issue. President Anderson concluded his response by explaining that in many ways it is a student issue.

Senator Lind responded that while she appreciated President Anderson response she did not agree that it is only a student issue because all members of the community play a role. She also inquired if the Mellon Grant could be used to address racism issues on campus?

President Anderson indicated that the application for the grant is publically available. By addressing the learning environment through the grant, it will also help answer the issue of racism. President Anderson acknowledged that racism is a national issue and that while no one has found a way to eradicate it, but no one is giving up.
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Senator Benning inquired about faculty involvement and indicated that that is important.

President Anderson responded that there has recently been a sustained dialogue presentation at a faculty meeting and other work sessions that faculty can attend are available.

Senator Khaleel stated that while racism is not a problem unique to this school it does not mean we should stop efforts to decrease it. She inquired of any initiatives to increase people of color in leadership roles throughout the college.

President Anderson responded that within college’s strategic plan there is a focus to increase diversity across students, faculty, and staff. The college has recently have been focusing on staff, trying to understand why staff came to work at St. Olaf and what causes them to stay. The college is trying to understand why staff are drawn to St. Olaf and why they stay or leave.

Senator Faure inquired about the existence of a statement from the college that is more self-reflective and proactive about institutional racism in nature and plans to address those issues.

President Anderson replied that he believes the colleges values have been expressed in a number of places, mainly located in sections about harassment and discrimination. He acknowledged there is not something specific to that topic.

Senator Spanjer inquired about sustained dialogue and the possibility of making a requirement for freshman.

President Anderson responded that that suggestion has been brought up before but it is a matter of enforcement and means of doing so. Ideally, everyone would want to partake in those conversation.

Chair Bresnahan inquired what the President has learned from his experience leading this community.

President Anderson responded by highlighting his own graduation from St. Olaf in 1974, his time as a professor, and his return to the college as a president 2006. Indicating that while students, professors, building, etc may have changed, the way people interact is the same today as 40 years ago. President Anderson spoke of a glass half-full mentality, high student aspirations, and an authenticity about the way people live in community together.
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Reports and Announcements

Consent Agenda

Old Business
- Student Alumni Liaison Bylaws Proposal - Senator Kabbeel (Student Alumni Liaison), Senator Mettler (Gender and Sexuality Senator), Bylaws Committee
- Student Life Senator and Curriculum Senator Bylaws Proposal - Senator Benning, Bylaws Committee

New Business
- Non-Discrimination Policy Student Senate Proposal - Senator Mettler
- Capital improvements Proposal - Senator Webster and the Capital Improvements Subcommittee

Hill Hype

Senator of the Week
- Senator Lind to ____________?

Good Times

Adjournment