

# Bowdoin Student Government

BOWDOIN COLLEGE

Meeting of the **Bowdoin Student Government**

*9 April 2008*

- I. **Call to Order** at 8:35 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call:** Leah and Carly are absent. Welcome Hannah Peckler.
- III. **President's Welcome:** Dustin says that tonight should be a short meeting, even with the discussion after the official business. He hopes that some people have looked at the article. Credit/D/Fail is pending. Dustin beat John at Wii bowling.
- IV. **Approval of the minutes:** Dustin asks everyone to look at the minutes. Minutes are approved unanimously.
- V. **Public Comment**
- VI. **New Business**
  - a. **Gender and Sexuality at Bowdoin:** Dustin asks how many people looked at and read the article. There is a decent showing of hands. Dustin says that there was a transgender student here several years ago. She might have been class of '06. It went relatively well, considering the limited resources that are in place. This issue becomes tricky in choosing gender on the application and in terms of housing. He wonders how people think Bowdoin is in these gender issues.
    - Lindsey wonders if other schools have boxes like ours on the application. Dustin says that some schools leave a line, some don't have anything, and some have male, female, and other.
    - Sam K says that this is a question that they get from current and prospective students once in a while. It comes from gay students as well, because there are other alternatives for housing at other schools. The ResLife policy is that we are a small enough school to deal with these things as they come up.
    - John asks Sam K about the roommate-pairing system. If someone were to go to ResLife, could they pair with the gender that they identify with? Sam says that ResLife would do as much as possible to accommodate to this.
    - Nicole asks about bathroom issues. She thinks that there could be some unisex bathrooms, whether they are singles or not. We could make some bathrooms less gendered.
    - Will mentions the policy about ADA. They had to upstream the buildings once these students came. The college should be considering this actively. ADA became an issue, and this could as well.

- Greg worked on a case one summer where a man went to prison and wanted to become a woman. If you are admitted as one gender, how do you change your status? Can you make these demands of the college? Dustin says that it depends on the college. Bowdoin would probably say “yes, we’ll do what we can.”
- John asks about club sports. What would we do in a case like this? Will doesn’t think that there is. Sports are part of leagues or unions, and it is up to them. Will says that it seems like their rules are pretty open. Greg asks how the NESCAC works. Liza says that to get into Smith, you have to be born a woman. Sports may work like this.
- Justin says that ResLife seems awesome and pretty accommodating. Tim Foster would also be responsive. To him, the social dimension would present the issue. This is what we should focus on.
- Rutledge thinks that it’s nice that this topic is being addressed, but he doesn’t think it’s relevant right now. One-quarter of one percent of the population is transgender. He wants to cross this bridge when we get there. He doesn’t think that there’s much we can do to change the social atmosphere. He thinks that it is based on personal feeling toward someone who is an “it”.
- Lindsey wants to consider the prospective student visiting Bowdoin.
- Nicole thinks that she views this conversation as a discussion of how we could make it easier for a transgender student. This is part of a larger discussion about how Bowdoin deals with non-normative gender issues. There is a lack of dialogue, and she thinks that the campus is actually fairly conservative in terms of gender and sexuality. We could be the catalyst for dialogue.
- Greg has an idea, suggestion, or question: Are there Out Nights at the pub? He thinks that many social events are scary anyway. Isa responds that there are about 10 openly gay people on campus, so they all pretty much know each other.
- Alison doesn’t think that it has to be only for out people, but just an environment where Trans/Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual people feel comfortable, so this includes people who are supportive of them.
- Bryce speaks to the estimated percentage of people who identify as transgender...it should average out to 4-16 people on campus. We don’t want it to be less than the average. There is an uprising. Bryce is not saying that we should set quotas, but we should strive to have a student body that is representative of the population at large. People shouldn’t be afraid at all. Dustin says that another thing to consider is the people at Bowdoin. This is a time when people change and determine how they want to identify.
- Justin says that they brought a gay performer to campus and it was awkward. He agrees with Nicole in that they should focus on making this atmosphere accepting. He thinks that 1/10 people are not hetero-normative. He understands what Rutledge is saying about dealing with this when we get there, but this is also a bridge that we can see in the distance. This is a time of a lot of exploration. We should start a dialogue, and he thinks that there are a lot more bisexual or gay people than are out.
- Greg doesn’t want to be quoted. At Bowdoin 1/10 of men play football. It is a hyper-masculine culture. They do need to do something. It is a unique challenge.

- James says that we won't be able to pass a resolution and change the culture of their school, but getting people to talk about this is worthwhile.
- Rutledge says that he brought this topic up at dinner and there doesn't seem to be a lot of information out there. People are covering their mouths all the time because they don't want to offend anyone. He almost feels like he can't speak because the atmosphere is overly liberal. Rutledge can think of 10 people he knows are gay who are not out. He thinks Bowdoin has done everything to create an atmosphere to accept people who come out. It is within these people themselves to raise the confidence to come out in the comfortable setting that Bowdoin provides.
- Lindsey wonders if Bowdoin has had an alum panel of gay/bisexual alums. She says that her high school had a panel of gay alums come back and talk about their experiences.
- Dan thinks that a conversation like this is important. He thinks that it is hard for someone who isn't gay to think about what it would be like to be gay at Bowdoin. What should inform our discussion is how people who are gay at Bowdoin feel, not us presuming that we understand their experiences.
- Dustin asks who never wants to hear about this: there are no hands. There appears to be mild interest. Sam K thinks that this conversation would be great if paired with a step. Rutledge wants to cover the gay/bisexual ground before we get to the transgender issue. He doesn't know what it would be like to be gay, but he can say that he fully respects people that he knows who are gay.
- Justin says that Dan is right. There's no way to know if you aren't gay. There is a difference between being gay-tolerant and being gay-friendly. We should show that we are interested and accepting and open, not just tolerant. Rutledge agrees. This is more difficult when you have a friend who you know is bisexual but avoids the issue. It makes him uncomfortable because the other person isn't comfortable.

- b. Credit/D/Fail: Alison says that they talked about the deadline for Credit/D/Fail in their Committee. Right now it is six weeks. Dustin says that the concern is that the deadline will drop when we open the discussion. The current sentiment is to make people understand that two weeks to declare Credit/D/Fail does not make sense. Because of the large event, a mess started (Sam enters). We wanted a non-recording option, but lost something else. We can now talk about something else but need to be ready about what we expect and how we stand. This explanation is rather convoluted at best.
- I. Sam says that coming off of the vote removing CDF from Distribution Requirements, there was a group created to work on these issues. He is curious about the deadline to declare CDF. In the talks last year, they talked about everything from 0-14 weeks.
- II. Greg thinks that it is ridiculous to move this before when midterms would occur. In taking academic risks, you need time. Sam says to remember that CDF is not there for grade protection: it is there for exploration. It's hard to argue this going into discussions.
- III. Dan H wonders how many weeks are in a semester? About 14. He thinks that it is pretty good where it is. There should be some sort of grade by this point.

- IV. Bryce thinks that it should be increased. He didn't get any grades back in any classes before 6 weeks this semester.
- V. Rutledge agrees about 6 weeks. He thinks that our best argument is for the student who gets an A in a class that they didn't think they would do well on, but loses the grade because they already declared.
- VI. Liza says that its okay to see that you're not doing well and then decide. It's important to get a feel for how the class is going to be if you're exploring something unfamiliar.
- VII. Sam K thinks that everything is about grades. The only way it protects exploration is in protecting grades. Professors don't really care about GPAs. If we want to be successful, we can't come from the "took a risk" standpoint.
- VIII. Greg says that you can send in the CDF declaration, get a good grade, and have no incentive for the rest of the semester. It takes away incentive to learn if you have to decide early.
- IX. Sophia thinks that a big thing in this issue is that a CDF class can't count toward a major or minor. You could decide very late to add a minor, for example, and declaring something CDF would ruin this chance.
- X. James says that you have two weeks to completely drop out, so we are fighting for the weeks after that.
- XI. John says that if we were to limit CDF, students would drop classes more if they aren't comfortable rather than taking the risk and opting for CDF. You probably won't know enough after two weeks, and it will encourage uncomfortable students to just drop.
- XII. Dustin emphasizes James' point. You could be on the waiting list for something, join a class at the end of two weeks, and have to decide then.
- XIII. Kyle says that we have been talking about Grade/Credit/Fail, the number of weeks wouldn't be as big of a concern. We should focus on Grade/Credit/Fail
- XIV. Jess thinks that we should extend add/drop to three weeks. There are some classes that are once-a-week. There aren't enough classes to know at that point. She's afraid to ask for 14 weeks because we might get the time reduced. Someone told her something once about why Bowdoin students have to make these decision early: There is a difference between USM and Bowdoin. Bowdoin is a better school so we have to work harder.
- XV. Will thinks that we need to recognize that this is a two-way street. Professors can change their syllabuses, etc. If our options are going to be restricted, then there should be a balance on the professors side as well. They have liberal policies and ours are becoming more and more conservative.
- XVI. Nicole asks Sam where this conversation came from. There is a working group looking at CDF. They started looking at this in October 2006. These are the issues that will be decided on. What are the changes of this being cut to two weeks? Sam says that there is interest. There is also interest in the 14-week plan as well. There is willingness to let it stay as it is as well. There will be people pushing to move it, though we have some solid arguments.
- XVII. Nicole likes Sophia's argument because everything else is focused on grades. She wants to keep CDF and look at some faculty policies to equalize the sides.

- XVIII.** Rutledge says that the bottom line is that CDF exists for a reason. People have different ideas and use it differently, but it is an educational asset. We should be able to make an educated decision in using this tool. We should have a fair change to use it well.
- XIX.** Greg reiterates that the 14-week plan is in the faculty's best interest. This would encourage semester-long engagement.

## **VII. Committee Reports**

- a. **BSG Affairs:** John says that they worked on an Informational thing to give freshmen that tells them about BSG.
- b. **SAFC:** Nicole says that they have allocated a lot of funding for the next couple weeks.
- c. **Student Affairs:** Dan met with someone from the Health center. They wanted to talk about Birth Control, and it seems like there are a lot of good options, though you can't get for free as before. Talk up the fact that you can get birth control really cheap (\$5/month).
- d. **SOOC:** Will says that charters and constitutions are coming in. There are about 60% of clubs that won't be chartered next year at this point. He did the pamphlet, so there is lots of recycling going on.
- e. **Academic Affairs:** Sam says that they talked about CDG and GCF. They talked about getting a whiteboard in the library like the ones in the dining halls.
- f. **Facilities:** Dooley is talking about smaller things and has a few big meetings coming up (SafeRide). There is an April Fool's edition of BCN. Dustin will say something funny.

## **VIII. Member Reports**

- a. **Class Officers:**
  - i. 2008: Liza says that they set a date for Senior Week sign-ups.
  - ii. 2011: Hannah says that they are handing out shirts and want to do something in Reading Period.
  - iii. 2010: Bryce says that they have a Relay for Life contribution (half the fee covered for people that sign up with them). They are having a Super Snack for the class on the Wednesday of Ivies.
  - iv. 2009: Sophia mentions a sweatshirt extravaganza
- b. **IHC Representatives:**
  - i. Lindsey says that they are sending amendments to the housing. Info sessions are happening for officers. Elections are happening Sunday and Monday.
  - ii. Dan H says Ladd is hosting a Halo tournament. Burnett is babysitting for faculty. Howell is planning Legends of the Hidden Temple over Experience Weekend.
  - iii. Greg says that Reed is having their first Open House in a while. Quinby is Quinby. They had a party.
  - iv. Dan says that Mac has a party. Helmreich has an affiliate thing.

- c. **CSC:** Alison says that it's No Poverty week. There are speakers and whatnot. There is also a women in public life conference.
- d. **A-Board:** James says that Battle of the Bands was fun. GirlTalk is the week before Ivies.
- e. **ResLife:** Sam K says that the housing lottery is coming up. There are new per-building websites with blueprints up. Apparently folks who forward email to Gmail don't receive all-student emails. You can go to IT, where you may or may not work it out.

**IX. Adjournment** at 9:34 p.m.