November 27, 2007

After missing a meeting for Thanksgiving break, Student Caucus opened up with a short session of committee reports, wherein the Spiritual Life Committee summarized its discussion on upcoming events, the creation of a website, and the idea of creating a spiritual life center on campus.

Two new voting members, Kate Putnam and Emily Standridge, were voted in unanimously, though one vote was withdrawn when Emily claimed not to like dinosaurs. Nevertheless, both were issued their own official Magical Caucus Mug of Power, which will allow them to vote on all proposals brought forth at this meetings and every meeting to follow, so long as the sacred oath of the Caucus Mug is not forsworn. So mote it be!

Immediately following was a short presentation by Justin Levy, who submitted a grant application in representation of the Conscious Alliance. Justin was the only applicant present; therefore the co-conveners gave a brief summary of all of the remaining grant applications before turning the meeting over to the Grant Committee.

The Grant Committee consists of six volunteers given the task of evaluating the grant applications in order to form a suggestion on the proper allocation of funds. The Committee proposed splitting the $1200 between the rowing team, the Peace and Social Justice resource library, and the project in New Orleans. They explained that these decisions were reached by evaluating which initiatives would most benefit the study body and/or campus, and whether or not funds could be attained elsewhere.

In the following discussion, students questioned the inclusion of funding the project in New Orleans due to its distance from the campus. Many students expressed a desire to fund Food Not Bombs as well, though the committee replied that this use of grant money would not benefit students directly, while other grants should be easily available to them. Some students suggested that, since the grant is much larger this year than in the past, Caucus should fund most or all of those who applied instead of just a few. The Committee replied that one of the purposes of the grant is to fund those who cannot get funding from somewhere else, not to simply fund anyone with a worthy cause. Cathy Kramer reminded the students that, in the past, Caucus promised to help fund the athletic department after deciding not to partner with Pepsi. After a brief discussion on precedent, The Grant Committee moved to vote on the current grant package. The proposal was one vote short of being passed, and the Grant Committee will meet again to formulate a new package that will be voted on in two weeks.

Because heated discussions are fun, Caucus then moved on to the subject of constitutional review, wherein the Review Committee presented the various changes that have been proposed, including changes to the attainment and loss of voting member status, and asked for feedback. The discussion itself focused mainly on the definition of quorum and how many votes are necessary to pass a proposal. Though students generally agreed that consensus would be impractical, simple majority and two-thirds majority began with fairly even backing. After a brief discussion on protecting minority opinions, however, most students seemed to favor a two-thirds majority. Some students expressed a concern that this standard would defeat the purpose of voting against a proposal, as every failed vote will be sent back to committee, causing every proposal to be passed eventually. The Constitutional Review Committee agreed that more discussion is necessary before the new constitution can be adopted.
As an end note, Cathy noted that Planned Parenthood will no longer be coming to campus due to a lack of usage. The Health Center will still be providing transportation to Planned Parenthood in town, as well as subsidizing the cost.

Because end notes, like heated discussions, are also fun, the co-conveners reminded those present that elections will be held next month, and applications for committee members and co-conveners are being accepted now.