



## **Student Government**

### Senate Agenda

October 27, 2015

- I. Present: Launa, Laura, Peter, Ben, Halle, Grace, Valentin, Danielle, Reena, Achieng, Zach, Duane
- II. Processing issues/opportunities between Senate and the Record, facilitated by Peter (8min./section)
  - A. *It seems that there is a conflict going on here between the poles of a desire for complete freedom of the press, and an obligation that all people have (as we see it) to work actively for a more just world, and we would like the Record to elaborate on its position in that framework of understanding a little bit more explicitly, with possibly some back and forth with Senate.*
  - B. *We are at a point at which we understand that one thing that precipitated these meetings was a bandying about of the word "racism," which The Record felt was an unjust accusation. We would like to delve into this a little bit farther-- There is some disagreement within Senate about whether or not that was appropriate, but we feel it is a thread that needs to be pulled on. Currently, the majority opinion in Senate is that our language was justified.*
  - C. *Student Senate has a certain frustration with the removal of our minutes from The Record. We would like a chance to make our case, as we feel that the GC context is a bit different from the broader world, and as funding a competing paper with this much access to the student body is not really reasonable, and as having more transparency in governance simply makes for better governance.*
  - D. *There is, additionally, some confusion over where the lines are that delineate appropriate journalistic integrity from a lack thereof-- having an explicit statement of this would be very helpful for Senate as we consider how we would like to*

*proceed in our relationship with The Record, especially given the arrangement that we heard was reached in the last meeting with SRC and Senate.*

- E. Grace, through a written response: “First of all, I want to thank you all for the hard work that you’re putting in this year. Believe me, I know how much time and energy goes into being a student leader. Before I jump into Peter’s four points, I’d first like to give you a little bit of background on my job.

I’m editing the Record for one semester as the senior project for my English major. Each week, I spend between 15-17 hours on the Record—sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on how things go—and I have had to organize, delegate, think on my feet, make last minute decisions, take criticism and acknowledge and apologize for mistakes, as well as manage content and personnel. It’s a huge job, but one that I have loved and take great pride in. I hope you all have read all of the 7 issues that we have already published, and respect the huge amount of work the team puts in each week, as I respect your work. That being said, as the student in charge of the Record, this conversation has been very personal to me and I have approached it with self-reflection and the hope that we can come to an understanding of each other’s viewpoints.

Peter’s four points:

1. Record as “white space” and treatment of nonstandard writing:
  - a. I would love to see a more diverse Record staff, and I worked very hard at the beginning of the year to bring in as many writers as possible. I advertised on the Record Facebook page, printed fliers to hang around campus, held an open house night where anyone who was interested could come, ran several Communicator announcements, asked professors for recommendations of students, and personally emailed around 20-25 students. The writers that I have are the writers who agreed.
    - i. What I have asked for and would love to receive are recommendations of more students who are interested and willing to work for the Record. I’m always open to more writers. Preferably, these students would have a working knowledge of journalism, but I’m willing to help bring anyone who is interested in writing up to speed.
    - b. I hear a concern with the selection of articles in reference to “nonstandard” English (which is of course, a loaded term, but is a technical term that will be useful here). I think the misunderstanding here is the idea that articles which do not meet the Record’s standard of publication would be rejected, which is not at all the case. If the article is at a point where a copy editor and I can make small changes in order to clarify,

we will do so and print it immediately. If we are concerned that the amount of changes we feel should be made so that the author is represented as clearly as possible exceed the amount that we can change without altering the author's voice, we will delay publication for a maximum of a week and offer to work with the author on their article, or give time for them to work on it on their own. As yet, we haven't had to do this, and we have happily printed several articles from students for whom English is their second language.

## 2. Use of the term "racism"

a. The frustration in the use of the term "racism" came predominantly from the fact that it was published in a public forum, by a group with power on campus, without first reaching out to me for conversation that could have clarified the situation. At one point in this discussion between the Record and Senate, Ben (as a Senate representative) apologized very sincerely for what he admitted to be a serious mistake, and the apology was accepted and the conversation moved on. I take my responsibility as the editor very seriously, and have put a huge amount of work this semester into drawing out important stories and maintaining a high-quality, professional publication. Of course, I cannot separate myself from my cultural identity, and so at times I will imperfectly represent voices on campus. I feel that this conversation could have been more efficient, productive, and community-building if instead of going directly to labels in public space, we had gathered together as people who care deeply about the subject to talk about what work has already been done and in what ways we could all improve. This being a small campus means that we need to work even harder at maintaining positive, productive relationships with our peers—this is not saying that we shouldn't speak up when we feel something is unjust, but that we should approach it in a way that can build relationship rather than accuse.

## 3. Publication of Senate's minutes

a. Of course we all have an obligation to work to make the world a more equal place. However, I'm not convinced that a weekly column for a student government group is the most effective way to do that. Allotting weekly space to cover a meeting inherently says that these students having a discussion is more newsworthy than other events that are happening on campus during the week, and could take away valuable space from other voices. I am thrilled that Student Senate is working so diligently to connect with the student body, and I have offered several times to cover your newsworthy achievements as they happen. However, the idea that students will not care enough to engage with Senate

if the minutes are not published each week in the Record is not the Record's responsibility—my responsibility is to report campus news as ethically as possible.

4. What defines “journalistic integrity?”

a. I apologize for any confusion about the boundaries of asking students for articles for the Record. As Duane and I have discussed it, we have come to the conclusion that our initial hesitancy with the articles that Senate suggested was that it felt like Senate was sponsoring a series of articles that would all follow the same basic arc, rather than Senate simply encouraging students who have stories to tell to submit to the Record. I am always more than happy to take student submissions, as long as there is recognition that I am obligated to balance each issue, and that if there are multiple articles on the same subject and I have other articles also waiting to be printed, I will spread them out so that each week's issue shows as many perspectives as possible. So, in short—always encourage students to write and I will do my absolute best to publish what I receive, but please recognize that I also have a job to do, and will continue to do it to the best of my ability.

F. Duane, through a written response: “I'd like to add my thanks for the work that you're doing with Student Senate. Serving on a government body, attending committee meetings, is often thankless work – but you're the important frontline representatives for the student body. I also want to thank Grace. She has been one of the most dedicated, conscientious, smart and kind editors I've worked with over the past 15 years. We didn't know each other before this fall, but I quickly came to see that I could trust her editorial skills – and her judgment. The past few weeks have been challenging for both of us. Though I trust this wasn't intended, there's been something – well, it's felt almost like bullying and prosecutorial about the exchanges with Student Senate. And it really came all of a sudden. My wife and I were away last year in Peru. I gather that the Student Senate and The Record began something new last year – printing Student Senate minutes in the paper. I was taken aback when I looked at the first issue and saw that the minutes were printed there, straight from a committee meeting. Grace and I talked and agreed that it really wasn't appropriate. That's not meant to disrespect or devalue your work in any way, truly. If the President's Council came to us and asked us to print their minutes, we would politely decline. We would promise them what we promise you – The Record will do its very best to fully and fairly cover news. But running minutes is a kind of bulletin board service.

It's not regarded as professional in journalism. The President's Council regularly sends its minutes to all faculty via the dean's office. I wonder whether Student Senate might not do something similar – at the least to all students, and maybe, if you'd like to all faculty and staff as well. Sometime after word went back to Student Senate that the paper would not be publishing the Senate's minutes, the issue of racism at The Record was raised. I hope there's no connection, but what followed next was really hurtful. I'd like you just consider what it's like to be working on an enterprise, putting in long hours, for little praise (people tend to approach The Record when they have complaints – that's been my experience over the years) and have little bomblets dropped. That's how it felt – suggestions in the minutes and in conversation that the paper was shaped by racism. By extension, that charge carries to the adviser, to the editor, to staff members. In Peter's note he referred to “a very white space” on the staff. That's one of several accusations made without explanation or evidence, what I'd call bomblets. Is the staff largely white? It is, too often. But it's not for lack of trying. The doors at The Record are meant to be wide open. The biggest challenge is usually trying to find editors and staff writers each semester. It's not fair to simply look at the masthead and conclude that The Record is tainted without really doing research and having thoughtful conversations about what is and what could be. I'd ask you to be fair and careful in speaking for others. Though I'm sure it was not intended in a racist way, Peter's note makes a sweeping statement: “minority students are more likely to come into college with a lower level of writing experience as a result of being in a system that underprivileges them for years.” If I were a minority student, I don't know that I'd appreciate that. In my experience, there's definitely a handicap that many students have when English is a second language. But I would not make such a statement about students of color in general. If you sensed resistance on The Record's part to publishing perspectives pieces relating to diversity, it was because it seemed like Student Senate was launching a campaign in which the paper might get a steady stream of articles. And the language we were hearing was directive, almost arrogant. I can't imagine The Record presuming to tell Student Senate how to spend its money or time. Looking over the fall issues, I see a semester that is above average in terms of attention to people and voices that reflect the diversity of Goshen College. That's my impression. I can't speak definitively, not having conducted a systematic content analysis across time. But I think back to recent special issues as well, including one on Native Americans and another on

Goshen as a sundown town. Both contributed to conversations and may have played a part in recent city decisions. I'd argue that Grace and I are as committed to diversity and racial justice as are the members of Student Senate. How would we know? How would we measure that? Maybe by a readiness to work together for goals that advance justice in measureable ways. In no way should that be taken to mean that all is well. To read in The Times this week about African-American motorists being pulled over at much higher rates than whites {the disproportionate risks of driving while black} in North Carolina and a white sheriff dragging a black girl out of her seat in South Carolina is to reminded of work that remains. Here at Goshen College, we also have work to do. Changes are happening among the student body. We should soon be at 25 percent Latino and growing. We want to be sure to also pay attention to the recruitment of African-Americans. And we need more professors of color and staff members of color. There's to be a new initiative announced at the next faculty-staff meeting on Nov. 16 – some financial incentives to recruit, I think. It's easy to accuse, to find fault, to lob bomblets. The bigger challenge, the real work, is in setting clear goals and building alliances to achieve those goals. When she was asked to give advice to young women, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg said: "My advice is fight for the things that you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you." I love Martin Luther King's poetic declaration that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." To which Ginsberg added in one of her many dissents, yes, but only "if there is a steadfast commitment to see the task through to completion." The Record is a natural ally of Student Senate, in fighting for justice in all its forms, including standing up to racism and recognizing racism and seeking better ways of living together. And let's not forget that the work is not just about addressing structural wrongs. It's also about relationships. People can be hurt or helped along the way, and our intent should be to build up whenever we gain, not to leave people as so much damaged goods along the highway that we think leads to justice and truth. This is not just theoretical. We're talking about our friends and colleagues on campus. Collaborative thinking and shared work – that's the best approach. "

- G. Grace: As concrete and clear suggestions as possible would be helpful. Discussion has been theoretical, so suggestions as specific as possible
- H. Peter: Before Q and A, thank you very much for taking the time and sharing.
- I. Laura: Thank you. Want to clarify, from my perspective, understanding of racism. Not meant to call individuals racist. It's talked about in a systemic, structural way,

which affects everything in our current context in the US. There's not a specific Record article that's racist. The general feeling of uncomfortability about participating in the Record is caused by a greater context of racism. We have to make it a safe space, beyond opening the door. There is a tendency when people talk about race, and I do this too, to deny racism for various reasons. To say it's not fair for various reasons. But there can be a neglect of the person that might be hurt by it. I don't think that Deeksha was properly cared for.

- J. Zach: There's a tendency for people in general--I've been accused of racism and my immediate response was me reacting "I'm not racist" instead, "why did they say this to me, what was the reason behind this?" I'm too often personally offended by that charge. We live in a system of racial oppression, and it's hard to live in that.
- K. Ben: Let's look at the minutes--Deeksha has a line here from September 29th that began the issue over using the word racism.
- L. Grace: I think the problem was that there wasn't clear understanding of what was happening when the statement was made. I agree Zach that it is very hard --we've been very self-reflective. I have a question, Laura, about making it a safe place (The Record). Given what I said about hiring writers, what's your suggestion for change?
- M. Laura: One possibility: At a past ISC event, students felt the Record did not publish news about international students. Perhaps going to an ISC event and asking for writers and stories.
- N. Grace: I have asked students who wrote in the past, prof suggestions, etc. Need more ideas for how to make it more open.
- O. Zach: Going to ISC, LSU, BSU events. I don't think Student Senate is any better at this, and Senate needs to work at this too. You can't expect people to reach out when you are the dominant demographic on campus, you have to reach out to them.
- P. Achieng: It's pretty late into the semester now--you could shoot out an email to leaders of ISC, BSU, LSU and ask for writers and ideas and articles. And you could go talk to them at a meeting.
- Q. Grace: I think part of the reason we've been hesitant to do that because I don't want to tokenize anyone, but I do think going to the club leaders is a good idea.
- R. Achieng: So, you are the editor of the paper and pick what goes and what doesn't go?
- S. Grace: I edit/pick the content in the end but I've made it clear that I want ideas

about articles from more people than just me.

- T. Achieng: So for trying to get more people to write, maybe having a competition and say, "write about a certain topic" and then people will send the articles in and then the winners will get published.
- U. Grace: The problem is getting people to actually write, but that's a good idea.
- V. Zach: Could you clarify "send in ideas?"
- W. Grace: For example, a faculty person sent in a suggestion of an event to cover, and I thought it was a good idea, so we covered it.
- X. Duane: Your page editors are seeking out editors too and have their own networks.
- Y. Launa: Do your page editors help with content?
- Z. Grace: Sometimes.
- AA.Peter: Just to deal briefly with the question of student senate minutes, could you expand on what makes something newsworthy?
- BB.Grace: Changes on campus, events, speakers, surprising statistics, so things that are not necessarily newsworthy are things that happen repeatedly, or discussion that happened but no decision was made on it.
- CC. Zach: I know nothing in general about newspapers, but is a newspaper ever a forum for people--like can we have letters to the editors?
- DD. Grace: For letters to the editor you could sign it "student senate" but not in the perspectives page because they have different goals.
- EE.Zach: How are perspective pieces decided?
- FF.Grace: We have a hard time getting perspectives articles, especially at the beginning of the year. I did a lot of networking to find people; getting more now. Basically we choose each week how the articles are interacting with each other. Usually we don't have enough to cut any.
- GG. Zach: Do you ever contact people to do perspectives?
- HH. Grace: Ramona does, and she will just ask people if they want to write and maybe suggest a topic.
- II. Zach: So if I suggest a topic is that going too far?
- JJ. Grace: As long as you aren't telling people to write but asking if they want to write.
- KK.Valentin: I agree with Duane's point about not publishing the minutes weekly because it's not news. But if you publish articles about Student Senate passing proposals?
- LL. Grace: Yes, we can do that.



MM. Peter: Do you have anything else you want to discuss?

NN. Grace: No, unless others have questions.

OO. Valentin: I have a question--the Record only publishes news, right?

PP. Grace: On the news page, but there are other pages.

QQ. Valentin: So that's the only section that Student Senate news could be on?

RR. Grace: Depends on the news--piano on arts page

SS. Zach: How much money do ads cost?

TT. Grace: I can send that information to you.

UU. Ben: Thanks for taking the time to come and talk to us. My apologies that this felt like a personal attack and that you felt like there was bullying--that is necessary for us as a Student Senate to interact with people differently and change that. So sorry, and thanks for coming.

VV. Duane: Mennonite Historical Library keeps all past Record articles.

WW. Launa: The way the Record has been, I have been impressed with the level of professionalism and content. Because I can remember the day when it wasn't really respected. Thank you for doing that and maintaining that level of decorum and level of work. This has been a fruitful conversation and we've learned about how you do your work.

### III. Announcements/Organization:

#### A. Public meeting tomorrow, 9pm

1. Ben: Are we bringing food and putting in an announcement?
2. Laura: Will this be led by someone in particular? Do we know what we're going to say?
3. Ben: Who can't be there? Valentin, Achieng, Deeksha.
4. **Zach: Will write an announcement.**
5. **Achieng: Will put things on facebook**
6. **Halle and Danielle will get food.**
7. **Laura will write summary.**

#### B. Meeting with Corie Sunday, Nov. 1, 6-8pm

1. Put this in your calendar.

#### C. Meeting with PC Tuesday, Nov. 3, 8am

1. See supporting documents (e.g. organizational chart, statements.)
2. Launa: will send it via email, come with questions.

#### D. Intercultural Skill Building Nov. 8, 3-5:30pm

1. Launa: Ewuare is coming again for skill-building. In the Koinonia.
2. Launa: Another event to offer November 9 at 10 AM is the club leader and advisor meeting--Reena had said they could do it, it would be good to have representation there. Help them know there are additional funding opportunities.
  - a) Additional funding requests from Student Senate
  - b) Reserving event space
  - c) Risk management during events
  - d) Advisor and leader roles and responsibilities
  - e) and more!
3. Achieng can't go now. So Reena and Zach will go.

IV. Continuing Business and Quick Updates:

A. Bulletin Board/Suggestion Boxes

1. Ben: All went up.
2. Zach: Key can be picked up in maintenance building. There should be some decoration put on them
3. Peter: Put proposals on the board that we've passed.
4. Zach: Put some thought in what to put on there.
5. Achieng: The five point would be good. Student Senate sign, I can make. Put the picture of us.
6. **Achieng will decorate it, Reena and Valentin will be in charge of the bulletin board/suggestion box.**
7. Achieng: maybe put a pen out there with paper.
8. **Zach: Will write communicator announcement to advertise.**

B. Senate response to student on PC

1. Ben: Is there a way to get a digital copy?

C. Senate response to student on search committee

V. New Business:

A. Goal/Priority setting?**Next week**

B. Meeting with Ross Peterson-Veatch

1. Zach: He said that one of the things he's working on is committees and the hierarchy of committees and who they report to. He wants to meet with senate next Tuesday night because he'd like people from Senate to help him with that. And he'll give us a list of committees so that we can send proposals specifically to those committees. Maybe we wanted to touch base with Brenda Scrof. Did you send her that proposal since she's part of the search

committee. Profs should have that info in mind too.

2. Ben: will talk to PC about students getting minutes at the meeting
3. Ben: Suggesting that we do things digitally for responses .

C. Food Committee

1. Zach: suggestion--Phil will be part of the committee, but possibility of people getting food at the end of the day instead of composted. There are lots of places that do this and have never gotten sued.
2. Ben: AVI int he past has not been for that.

VI. Open Floor:

A. Peter: has GC Divest ever brought a proposal to pass?

1. Laura: Last year, student senate supported the proposal they sent to the environmental stewardship community.
- 2.

VII. Meeting Adjourned: 9:57