Colby SGA Informal Minutes

I. Standards and Professionalism

- **What is professionalism?**
  - Being accountable, showing up when you say you’re going to show up
  - Representation (what we do outside of this room as students can be tied back to the group as a whole)
  - Not all members of SGA are professionals, but we all act professionals

- **How is that different in SGA v other settings?**
  - We should encourage speaking up about everything and sharing opinions (we should all respect each other’s opinions)
  - We also have some moments where we aren’t necessarily as professional (i.e. class dinners and events - we need to be professional when we plan those events and in terms of ensuring that they’re
  - We have some moments when we have to be more professional (when we work with administration etc.) but some other moments we should be a little more relaxed and try to ensure that there is a positive fun atmosphere on campus

- **Are we professionals?**
  - As elected representatives of SGA we are professionals and we have to think about the weight that our role carries

- **Key things going forward:**
  - **Attendance SHOW UP!** If you’re going to miss something you need a legitimate reason and you need to tell the appropriate people that you will not be there. **Always be on time**
  - **Accessibility** it is important for you to be available for your peers to access. You should be available to listen to those people and to follow through on their comments and ideas (if we do not follow through we lose credibility and don’t fulfill our role of making people feel listened to)
  - **Job responsibilities** you must complete all of the responsibilities of your job! If you don’t understand your job and responsibilities, come to Taylor or Sam. If you need help or cannot complete your responsibilities, please work with others, tell those above you, and find help (class council and others)! There is an impeachment clause in the constitution - there are consequences if you do not follow through on your responsibilities.
  - **Professional Consciousness** our actions are public; faculty, staff, administration, and students see everything we do. As elected representatives we make actions on behalf of the entire school and SGA. When you make decisions, a part of your job is to have a consciousness of what it represents to the entire school and whether it aligns with the values and goals of SGA as a whole.
- **FUN!** We also want to have fun and have the best possible environment!

**II. Other News**

- **Color Run**
  - This Sunday - registration 9:00 am! 5K. Laura will be tabling in the spa. There will be music and fun. You do not have to run.

**III. Free Speech Task Force**

- **Joe Reisert**: co-chair of the task force along with Professor Jilkes. Task force formed last December to think about what policies regarding free speech and expression the college wants to embrace. The task force has some members of staff, students, administration. We want to think about the values of our college and then the policies that would support those values. We produced the document [handed out to all SGA members]. We want to hear from you as to whether or not these policies represent your values and the community’s values. We can also talk about how we see these values being implemented.

- **General structure**: Colby is a place of education and higher learning and growth and for that we need to foster and value free speech and expression. There must be limits: falsely defaming individuals (libel/defamation), genuine threat of imminent physical harm, harassment in violation of college policy (*think about what defines harassment), violates confidentiality, or is otherwise incompatible with the functions of the college (*this part also has space for interpretation). College may also regulate time, place, manner of speech so that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the college. “College may sanction expressions that target for substantial gratuitous insult or abuse any individual, or a group protected by federal or state law, for example by using disparaging epithets with the intent to cause distress.”

- **What do we think?**
  - Shivani: End of paragraph 4, how do we force people to apologize and reconcile differences?
  - Joe: My hope was that in terms where incidents become polarizing, people can have actual discussions about why they are offended or hurt by an incident - that is the educational thing that we want to have happen. We are not talking about compelled apologies, we are talking about attempting to have discussion and being vulnerable and honest with one another.
  - Richard: The idea of this portion of the document is that there might be something incredibly stupid or irritating, but the point of this sentence is that above all we need to remember that we are a small community and that in certain polarizing situations that we need to have opportunities to heal; we may agree to disagree, but at least we aren’t left telling one another that we are bad people.
  - Tyra: The way I read that sentence was not that everyone will have to go and apologize, but, rather, that individuals understand that our campus is dedicated to understanding one another and not simply hating each other for our differences.
  - Taylor: I was surprised not to directly encounter where the college stands in terms of title IX/sexual harassment cases where private information is revealed to the community. Is that within the free speech scope?
- Richard: There is a portion of our sexual harassment and misconduct policy that addresses this and prevents the dissemination of certain information.

- Taylor: I was also struck by the portion of paragraph 8 where you stated that it references hate speech, it didn’t seem extremely clear that it was referencing intolerance and hate speech - should this be more explicit?

- Joe: There is some amount of awkwardness and intolerance and offensiveness that is inherent in living in a diverse society, and there is a line that we need to figure out where statements are damaging to the point where they prevent individuals from being fully contributing members of a society. Going after somebody on the basis of their race, sex, religion, etc. that is more egregious; however, we don’t want it to be so broad that any dean can expel you for anything you said that they don’t like.

- Richard: there may be speech that is extremely egregious and offensive but that does not reach the level at which the college will take action. If something very offensive and horrible is said but it isn’t said with intent to cause distress, then the college will not sanction it. There may be a reaction from the student body and society as a whole, but the college might not engage in action.

- Taylor: I feel that hate speech and intolerance should be brought up sooner and addressed sooner in the policy. It should be addressed that there may be things that might not be punishable by the school that are still not tolerated in a more broad way by our community.

- Shivani: in paragraph 8 it says “constitutes harassment in violation of college policy…” what exactly does this mean or refer to? What is the standard?

- Joe: one way to think about harassment is that it is not defined subjectively by someone not liking what someone else said to them, but, rather, it is determined by an outside observer to constitute something that is so pervasive and objective that it denies you the educational opportunities that you expect and deserve at Colby or another college.

- Diego: The last sentence of paragraph 8 talks about reasonable regulation of time place and manner - who regulates that and decides it. If I chose to host a protest outside of Eustis because Eustis is the location of the administration and that is what I’m protesting, can the administration move my protest to Cotter and defeat its purpose?

- Joe: so this would be up to the administration, but this is actually a rather broad sentence and the fact that we said “materially disrupt” that actually leaves room for a large amount of disruption still

- Sam: will there be a separate committee created in order to determine punishment related to free speech or will that be under the student conduct board committee or another body?

- Joe: we haven’t fully addressed this yet, but we were initially thinking of using the traditional means (student conduct board)

- Ali: Paragraph 4 - did we end up determining who enforces the apologetic and reconciliatory community section in paragraph 4?

- Joe: again, we don’t want this to be forced apology. We want it to be a conversation and this is just a suggestion and statement that that is the sort of campus that we want. We are not
necessarily having someone particularly enforce this - we do not yet know whether it’s going to be a situation where a dean brings in students from both sides of an incident and says ok sit down and talk it out.

- Richard: There won’t be some body or person who determines that it is appropriate for people to have to sit down and apologize to one another.

- Ali: Can we have a little more explanation about the AAUP quote in the 5th and 6th incident?

- Joe: this is meant to be advice to faculty. Sort of like a warning to faculty not to say things that are ridiculous and inflammatory in whatever setting (i.e. twitter). It is a reminder that whatever they say may seem to reflect on the institution… this is more of a warning and a piece of advice.

- Ashlee: paragraph 3 says that the school will act vigorously to protect from infringement its members’ rights to free speech. What does vigorously mean?

- Joe: ok so an example would be that a feminist radical from the early decades of feminist movement but then right before the event she opines in a very negative manner towards the trans community. Imagine that then students protest and sign a petition saying they don’t want the speaker, but David Greene would protect and allow the speaker to come, but would allow protesters to protest the event but not interfere with it. Imagine that the day of the event there is disruptive chanting and nobody can hear the event. A presiding faculty member would allow the chanting to go on for a while and then at a certain point they would allow security to come and start asking chanters to leave.

- Ashlee: so in terms of student safety what is the line for what security can do?

- Joe: well if it comes to the point where students are still chanting and disrupting and not leaving when asked to leave and student protests are essentially shutting down an event, those students will be sanctioned. The idea is that everyone should be able to exercise free speech rights on either side, so the only way to have equal freedom for everyone is no shutdowns, and if you are in a situation where student protests are actually fully preventing an event from occurring then it could be brought to the point where security may have to physically remove people.

- Matt: how does this apply to faculty members protesting? For example what about classes being cancelled as a protest of an election or other political event?

- Richard: paragraph 6 tried to emphasize academic freedom and if someone cancels class and the cancelation relates to the point of class and there is a lesson that the professor is trying to teach, then maybe. However, if someone’s boss decides that there will not be cancellations and the faculty member cancels anyway, that may be different. There will always be shades of gray.

- Tanner: it seems like a lot of these things are case by case, so being that they are so unique, how would intent be determined? How would this not become a court of opinion? How does a group of inherently subjective people issue an objective decision?

- Joe: determining intent is something that has to be done in the law all the time and in other disciplinary realms (including academic dishonesty etc). Some questions to be asked are whether there was premeditation etc. Sometimes there just has to be testimony. Also to go back, the idea of these values is very largely a hope that people’s immediate response to things will not be
defcon 1, you are a terrible person, but, rather, it should be that people immediately say ‘okay, I
don’t agree with this. I’m offended by this, but I want to hear where you’re coming from and understand your side and to help you to understand my side.’

- Sam: are you looking for us to approve this?

- Joe: We’re not looking for full approval, but we are looking more to see if you guys think this is sort of close to our values, if it is completely inconsistent with our values, if you have some feedback on how it could be closer to our values, etc. We are simply looking to see how well you think this aligns with our values and to get feedback so that we can then alter it, fix it, improve it, and then hopefully sometime in the spring we want to have a full version that we can present to the administration and the students.

- Richard: the statement here will be refined, policies will be created based on this (i.e. when can professors protest and do certain things). We are hoping to have another student body town hall in October. We are also hoping to see PCB soon and all club presidents and team captains. We will talk to all faculty at some point. We will bring it to the deans. We will have a lot of meetings.

- Joe: we would also like to come back to this group if necessary, or we would love written feedback from you.

- Richard: again if you have comments or concerns you can get them to us. Either send them to Joe or send in comments on our website. We are favoring free expression even at times where it kind of hurts a little bit - that is the direction of this current statement, and we would like to know how you feel about this sooner rather than later