

# VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY

## General Assembly 2/13/2023

1. CALL TO ORDER: 8:00pm
2. ROLL CALL:
  - a. Present: 22
  - b. Excused: 1
  - c. Unexcused: 0
3. PUBLIC COMMENT: (15 minute limit)
  - a. Erica Castillo - library - students with disabilities negatively impacted by the new early hours at the library - grade was impacted by the new close time - students with accommodations may need it - this is important for adhering to the honor code - having space available to study and take tests at the library is very important for some students, including students with executive dysfunction - even a couple of hours later would help
    - i. Anna Mason - will bring this up to the honor council
  - b. The beeping noise on the new locks is a problem for students with sensory issues - can we look into a quieter system
  - c. Is there a new PR team because of this sale? We don't know anything about a new team, the university has a communications staff/admin
  - d. Sophie Duray -
    - i. Hello Sophia, Lucas, Allison, and Hannah. We as Valpo students come to you to voice our concerns with the most recent email President José Padilla, Eric Johnson, and Robert Hansen sent out regarding their plan to sell the Brauer Museum of Art's most valuable paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe, Childe Hassam, and Frederic Church to (quote) "pay for [freshman housing] through a practice we will use for other parts of the strategic plan. We will consider assets and resources that are not core or critical to our educational mission and strategic plan, and reallocate them to support the plan." (end quote) We recognize that there is legitimate concern about current and future enrollment, as the institution is expecting the lowest enrollment in its history once the class of 2023 graduates. Rather than discrediting our beloved art museum, we urge the president, provost, and board to consider sitting down with the Association of Art Museum Directors to find a creative solution and compromise to this decision.
    - ii. If these paintings are sold, what is the university going to do to commit to and uplift the fine arts? Many of our parents were involved in benefit dinners, interviews for commercials that reflected our mission statement, and professional videos to raise money for the Valparaiso University Center for the Arts to be built. This proved to be very successful. Valpo has a strong Christian tradition and we use Christ as our identity. Most notably, our motto is, "In Thy Light We see Light." We have recently declared ourselves the beacons because of this motto. The arts are one of the more pure and soulful ways we are able to grasp and shine our Christian identity. Regardless of whether or not these paintings sell, the arts need to be a primary focus of Valpo's advertised identity if the university is to be in congruence with its motto. As a liberal arts college, Valpo has historically valued the arts and humanities, which has set it apart from other institutions. As art schools and programs are closing throughout the country (see Harvard Ed. Magazine), it is evermore important, for both the success of the university and of the students and future professionals, that Valpo continue to hold its humanitarian identity. Leonard Bernstein, a famous composer and conductor, said, "Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable."

STEM fields are so very important, but the arts and humanities have the ability to communicate truths that cannot be communicated in other forms. If Valpo is to remain strong in its Christian and humanitarian identity, the arts and humanities need to remain at the forefront of its education. Selling paintings for funding does not demonstrate a strong commitment to the University's historically valuable and unique identity.

- iii. Every employee of this university makes a commitment to ethics, stating that "Valparaiso University believes fair and ethical practices are fundamental to a sound academic environment and appropriate business practice. In order to be successful, the University must achieve and maintain a high level of public trust and respect. This trust can be sustained only if the University's directors and employees model the highest standard of ethical behavior." This means that they have already committed to these ideals and the support of the humanities and the fine arts. They are worth uplifting so we can send well-rounded ethical people into the world. With all of this in mind, we ask for your support in these statements and beliefs through a letter to President Padilla written on our behalf."

#### 4. SENATORS' REPORTS:

#### 5. OFFICER REPORTS:

##### a. PRESIDENT: Sophia Behrens

- i. Thank you to our constituents for bringing their concerns - what questions do senators have?
- ii. Anna Mason - is the sale legal? We do not know the legal pieces - this question be directed to our General Consul - paintings were purchased by the university? Ashley - one of the paintings was a direct donation
- iii. Manju Vairavan - is there anything else to be done? Student Senate was not consulted, but this seems to be a done deal
- iv. Katelynn Hillebrand - should we have been consulted? Administration isn't obligated to consult us
- v. Daniel Owens - can we come up with more creative ways to raise this money? Many engineers signed because many engineering students come to Valpo because of the emphasis on the arts - we can differentiate ourselves by continuing to prioritize the arts
  - 1. Nieman - do we have the data? - Advisor - we can ask for the data
- vi. Nour al-Hajjeh - Is there anything we can do? Reach out to the president's office
- vii. Anna Mason - Is there anything beneficial for all of us to know? - money was given to the University. Padilla talked to us a lot about it in November. This is a 20 Million dollar project and it is on a short timeline (needed for 2023-2024)
- viii. Alex Nieman - asked about student survey data and if housing was the reason why students didn't come here - Advisors said data is collected and they can ask admissions for that data
- ix. Meshach Melton - email mentioned "non core resources" - what does this mean? President Behrens can ask, but he hasn't said anything - the email did not really give information about what the university considers a core resource
- x. Jacob Mack - In the plan there was nothing about the arts - what are we doing for the arts - Museum will continue to operate and there are no current plans to terminate any arts programs.
  - 1. What about Art/Psych building? - insured and not in 5 year plan because was insured
- xi. Manju Vairavan - will it affect students and their education - unsure. Museum will still be open for all classes to use, however we don't know of any other information

- xii. Nour al-Hajjeh - The arts at Valpo are feeling very disrespected by the institution
- xiii. Meshach Melton - what is the timeline? We don't know - it hasn't been made public
- xiv. Alex Nieman - accreditation of museum and how it works - (Ashley Vernon - director's aid at Museum) accreditation allows the university to use and lend art with other museums. The Museum will not be able to lend art, pull all art from other museums, and give back all art on loan for 6-8 years.
  - 1. Is this actual or speculation? -- it is actual - AMDA has made a statement about it and is fully prepared to enact harsh consequences
- xv. Meshach Melton - does university have timeline for selling art - we do not know, board might have own timeline but we are not aware of anything
- xvi. Alex Nieman - can we get someone in here to talk about the hard facts for the next meeting? - Advisors suggest exec gets together and make questions we can send to the president's office and maybe get some solid answers, also allows us to get some faster responses
- xvii. Manju Vairavan - knowing the consequences makes a difference to how students will feel about this
- xviii. Lucas Lennen - this has created a lot of uncertainty about the future of the arts at Valpo, but currently all we know for sure is the information released in the email
- xix. Riley Sedlar - please keep coming to meetings and talk about what is happening on campus
- xx. President Sophia Behrens - getting concerns as they come in makes it easier to connect people with solutions - always welcome to come give a public comment or email board members
- xxi. Sophie Duray - very frustrated that there isn't more communication from the university about what is happening with the arts program - Can we ask for more transparency from our administration and leadership?
- xxii. Can Student Senate be more involved in decisions? We are working on changing our bylaws to get students on university councils
- xxiii. We are working to make Student Senate helpful to students - a place where students can voice concerns and impact change - being involved in these committees should make a difference
- xxiv. We are happy to see so many students here - we want to hear your concerns
- xxv. Singles in the dorm halls next year - any information? Individuals with medical accommodations can still get single rooms (all accommodations)

- b. VICE PRESIDENT: Lucas Lennen
  - i. We will end this meeting no later than 8:45, so committees can still meet
- c. SECRETARY: Hannah Williamson
  - i. Over 300 signatures from current students
- d. PUBLIC RELATIONS COORDINATOR: Aixa Sanchez
  - i. No report
- e. EXECUTIVE TREASURER: Allison Plachta
  - i. Budgeting is going well - orgs on track with submitting

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. EXECUTIVE: Sophia Behrens
  - i. Aixa is our new PRC. she will be joining us in exec and then next general assembly
- b. OPERATIONS: Aidan Walton
  - i. No report
- c. STUDENT EXPERIENCE: Meshach Melton
  - i. No report
- d. DIVERSITY & INCLUSION: Riley Sedlar

- i. No report
  - e. ELECTIONS & OUTREACH: Makenzie Ward
    - i. Retention Meetings after GA today
- 7. NEW BUSINESS:
- 8. OLD BUSINESS:
- 9. ADVISORS' REPORTS:
  - a. Campus wellness survey - complete it and encourage other students to fill it out, as well
  - b. March 1 is when orgs can book major event spaces for next year - meeting at Christopher Center at 7:00 pm
  - c. April 1 - EMS opens up for faculty and staff to book spaces
- 10. QUICK ANNOUNCEMENTS:
  - a. Please do fill out the survey! There are great prizes!
  - b. Fill out both surveys! Even the one without cool prizes
- 11. ADJOURNMENT: 8:43