

## Harmon Room - Library

November 30, 2023. 12:00 PM CST



MACALESTER COLLEGE  
STUDENT GOVERNMENT

## Legislative Body Meeting Minutes

---

[Land Acknowledgment](#) (We are on Indigenous land) ~ *Reagan Kimzey* ~ 2 minutes

[President Rivera](#) ~ *Mariah Loeffler-Kemp* ~ 45 minutes

- Today we have President Rivera joining us
  - She is an important factor in everything we do in MCSG
  - Introduce yourself and explain your connection to MCSG
- President Rivera
  - I don't know why my role is important to MCSG, but MCSG is important to the college
  - Arrived in June of 2020
    - It was a rough start, and in recent weeks there have been echoes of the feeling that the world is hard
    - Inspired by the way that this community grapples with the things that are difficult
    - Almost all early interactions with students were on Zoom
      - Not as satisfying or meaningful
      - Difficult to demonstrate trustworthiness
    - Over the last 3.5 years, it has hopefully been more apparent that the goals and values are evidenced in the policies of the colleges
    - Things can't always move as quickly as people like, but we are working on patience

- It takes time to make meaningful and lasting change, build consensus
  - If you believe in the principle of shared governance in the academy, you know it takes a while to get buy-in for the changes that impact the community
- MCSG is the group that has been entrusted by their peers to make changes
  - We have been given the responsibility of representing the student body and working with staff, faculty, and senior leadership to make the college even better
  - Every group of students that comes here identifies new ways to make the college even better
  - The way we interpret the values of the institution change, and it is important to keep the lines of communication open
- SLT tries to show up for capstones, athletics, and other events to demonstrate how deeply they care and want to create an environment where students can flourish
  - Cannot afford to be presumptuous about what students need because it has been a long time since they have attended college
- Will do as well as possible to respond to questions, but you don't have to wait for a formal MCSG meeting to reach out
  - Email and President Rivera will respond
- Sean: The Inclusive Access Course Materials Program will be implemented this coming fall semester. A lot of students, within MCSG and beyond, have voiced concerns about the effects of this program on the student body. Can you explain what led to senior leadership making the decision to switch to this program?
  - President Rivera: The conversation about inclusive books, supplies, and courses started in 2020
    - Created a working group that involved students, faculty, and staff to meet for 6-8 weeks to come up with the top priorities and barriers that were posing the greatest challenges to highest needs students
    - If we are taking care of the highest-need students, then everyone will be doing okay
    - Working groups highlighted books and course expenses as one of the greatest challenges to students at this time

- Students have been choosing courses and majors based on how expensive certain courses were
- We don't want students to feel restricted by money when choosing courses
- There has been an uneven distribution of problems because some courses and majors require field trips and materials that are not always apparent
- Even though the course reserve program exists, checking out a book for 24-48 hours on reserve from the library is not the same as having unlimited access to materials
- We wanted to examine this problem from an equity standpoint
- College bookstore market
  - Barnes and Noble is one player, but it is not the only one
  - Colleges have been changing their approach of how to provide access to books
  - Watched other universities go through this, then Barnes and Noble reached out
    - Stated that the college must either engage through this program or they will not work with us
    - Tried to check the cost of Macalester running its own bookstore and found that we would lose money
  - We brought this idea to students and faculty
    - Heard several objections to work through
    - It is important that people can opt out, people should not feel aggrieved by this new system
- Folding this initiative into tuition makes access to books and supplies a lot more like other aspects of campus
  - We don't charge access to library based on how much time each student spends using it, we just fold the average cost into tuition and allow each person to use it as much or as little as possible
  - You can opt out of this plan, but having this as a part of tuition to be covered in the financial aid package is going to make academics much more accessible
  - This is part of the process of wealth distribution of the tuition structure
    - Fewer than 30% of students pay the whole cost, and when they do, that is used to help pay for the students who can't afford it alone

- After two or three years of doing this, people will get used to it
    - Also happy to take follow-up questions
- Mikayla - Senior and chair of SOC: At our town hall, students expressed that they feel confused about where we are in the strategic planning process and how students and MCSG can continue to be a part in the decision making process, outside of being a part of working groups. How do you plan on keeping students and MCSG informed and involved in making strategic planning decisions?
  - President Rivera: I feel very encouraged that students want to be continually involved
    - When creating this plan, we promised to be as inclusive as possible and took a very unorthodox approach by allowing everyone to have some say
    - Most colleges take a few weeks to draft a plan without hearing from students
    - We invited students to be “Strategic Planning Champions”
    - We were also very transparent about iterating drafts
    - [Imagine, Macalester](#) website is updated whenever there is more for people to look at
      - New pilots or initiatives are sent by email
      - We will continue to have various working groups in the years to come, always with students
        - You won’t be interested in everything, but you can join the groups about the topics that do interest you
    - Working on a dashboard with quantitative and visual representation of process
      - Report on the outcomes we want to improve
      - Retention rate, involvement of alumni
      - Once this is finished, we will announce it
    - Students have the opportunity to be as involved as they want to be
- Willow - he/they/she, sophomore Cabinet Chair of MCSG: Over the past month, there has been an abundance of student organizing in the forms of protests, petitions, and an MCSG resolution. How do you respond to students who feel that Macalester’s response to the escalation of violence in Israel & Palestine is insufficient?
  - President Rivera: The college’s response has been focused on supporting individual students with needs and concerns

- Are there students with loved ones in the regions who have been directly affected?
- Are there students who need to be redirected to resources?
- Have been extremely supportive of students' rights to freedom of expression
  - Responded to many calls and emails asking to squash student voices
  - People are angry about what students are saying and doing, but SLT supports students' rights to expression
  - Will not censor
    - Not the place of the institution to tell students what they can and cannot say
- SLT has already demonstrated rights to freedom of expression
  - Not one person has been punished for speaking up and out and it will continue to be that way
- When President Rivera first arrived, made statements about importance of freedom of speech that resulted in death threats to family and bomb threats to the college
  - Would make her very sad that people are questioning commitment to freedom of speech
- Did see petition asking to withdraw from study abroad programs in Israel
  - Sent from email of If Not Now
  - Dean Wilcox tried to reach out and meet with students, but those students did not reply
  - Our answer is that we are not pulling out of study abroad programs in Israel
- Reasons not to pull out of programs
  - This is an institution committed to global citizenship and peacemaking
    - It is not about shutting people out
    - When the decisions of another country are disagreeable to us, that does not mean that all of its citizens agree with their government
    - The government's actions are not equivalent to those of colleges and students
  - Family comes from Cuba, which has been contested and boycotted at great cost to individuals

- We are not forcing anyone to go to Israel, but you don't have the ability to interfere with somebody else's rights to attend if they want to
- This is not a decision we are going to make at this time
  - If it were a problem of safety, that would be different
  - Even if we disagree strongly with one another, we must keep talking
  - For the time being, we will not close our doors on these programs
- Kathryn Kay Coquemont: would like to add that every single semester, there is a group of folks who gather to determine if there is anything unsafe about our programs
  - Last semester, we asked someone studying abroad in Israel to return due to safety concerns
  - For next semester, there were some places we could not allow students to go
  - This is not the same as the petition
- President Rivera: for those who have been here for three or four years, you know that we did have to pull a lot of people out of their programs for safety reasons
  - Disagreeing with the choices of a government are not reasons to pull people out of a program
- Reagan: So now we have a few more minutes to open up discussion or any follow-up questions that people might have
- Alec - class rep, sophomore: When you say that the fees of the textbook policy can be folded into tuition, if we opt in is it folded in?
  - President Rivera: the default is that everyone is included unless they opt out
  - Mariah: in the AAC meeting with Patricia Langer, we learned that it will be similar to the insurance policy in that it is automatically folded in unless you choose to opt out
  - President Rivera: it is a work in progress that we will figure out as we go
  - Alec: This is just out of curiosity, but what's your opinion or thoughts/feelings/vibes on notebooks?
    - Because everything is digital now, and we are really moving away from a book-centric, text-centric world
    - Do you see in ten years down the line that we won't have books or a bookstore?

- President Rivera: not everything will be online, a sculpture class won't be online
  - Things are being digitized but we don't see the end of books in ten years
  - I don't have a crystal ball, maybe in ten years we'll all have a microchip put in our heads so that we can download information directly
  - In the current environment, academic freedom requires that we defer to faculty about the materials to use
  - We cannot enforce digitization
  - We are engaging with paper less because more things are online
  - Given the realities of late-stage capitalism, online does not mean free
    - More things can be open-source, possibly reducing the costs of this policy for everybody in the future
    - We engaged with Barnes and Noble to get the average cost for students
      - If this decreases, we may be able to expect the fee to go down
  - If this works properly, MCSG can repurpose some of the funding that goes to the reserve program for other things that students need
- Rola - junior, she/her: Quick question about study away
  - You mention that we shouldn't stop people from studying away in Israel
  - Our understanding was that we wouldn't be stopping people from studying away, it would just be moved to a non-Mac program
  - Our petition was about ending official collaboration with the programs that are directly involved with the military
    - We don't want to stop everyone from going, but we wanted to stop official collaboration with such programs
  - President Rivera: understand and appreciate this clarification, but our other reasons for staying engaged still stand
    - We cannot hold students and faculty at these institutions accountable for the decisions the government makes
    - If we value global citizenship, we must have continued collaboration, even if we don't agree with the decisions that are being made
    - We don't support breaking collaboration

- Brady: This isn't a question, but we wanted to thank you for relaying your information about the textbook policy
  - In the past, we haven't been receiving as much information as we wanted
  - The fact that this policy would be involved in financial aid is important
    - It is nice that senior leadership is committed to increasing equity
    - Had been concerned about the price before— \$1000 is a big deal to a lot of people
    - It's just nice to know that you're devoted to underrepresented communities, which actually matter
  - President Rivera: I am glad you feel that way, but I am regretful that this had not been clear from the very start
    - Had hoped that it would be clear that anything to increase tuition could come from aid
    - We are committed to meeting the cost that every student needs
    - Almost 70% of students get need-based aid, and we even give it to international students
      - This is quite rare, and this is why philanthropy is so important
    - Even when we make increases, we are focused on equity
    - I am glad that it is more clear that we want to help students
- Reagan: Thank you so much for coming today, and you are always welcome back

### **Org Charter** ~ *Mikayla Giehler* ~ 5 minutes

- The organization is not here yet, but they said they would attend
- Reagan: Since our org is not here yet, we will move to Resolution R0014
  - Just kidding, the org is here
- Mikayla: here is a rep from the Human Rights at Mac org
- Rep: this came about during the last couple of weeks of feeling uncertain and helpless about world events
  - Mac needs an org that can work towards making space where people are comfortable sharing their ideas
  - Want to have a conference every academic year with panelists and discussions for a whole weekend
    - We will also have smaller events for Mac students to continue their engagement
- Reagan: any questions?



- Sean: this is less about the org and more about the conference
  - You are looking to reach out to other schools
  - At what stage in the process are you guys? Have you started reaching out to schools?
  - Rep: we are fairly far in the process
    - Should have large details settled by January
- Vote
  - Mikayla: I motion to approve the Human Rights at Mac Org
  - Owen: second
  - In favor: 22
  - Opposition: 0
  - Abstaining: 0
  - Reagan: With that, Human Rights at Mac has been chartered

**Resolution R0014 ~ Emma Kopplin ~ 5 minutes**

- Reagan: We discussed this resolution two weeks ago, but we have some time today
- Emma K: With this resolution, it is not asking anything, even as amended
  - There is no one specified for it to be sent to
  - It is more of a statement, and I don't know if it is MCSG's job to make this statement if it is not making tangible change
    - For that reason, I will be voting no
- Willow: has any resolution been used as a statement before, or is it the very first one
  - Laurie: yes, and more specific examples are online
- Mikayla: beyond that, there are many pieces of this resolution that a lot of people don't agree with
  - If we don't all agree and we are not asking for anything specific, it is best to vote no
- Willow: Haven't we passed statements like that before already?
  - Reagan: yes, we amended Resolution R0013 to condemn anti-Semitism and Islamophobia
- Andrew: If we pass a statement like this, we may have the responsibility to make statements on every global atrocity that occurs, which is not feasible
  - This is not a productive use of our time when it is not asking for anything and there will be no result
- Aditya: the second statement on there is quite controversial
  - Is it possible to re-vote on this?
  - Andrew: No, it is not possible

- Eliora: As all of you know, I was one of the authors of this, and will be abstaining because of this second statement
  - We cannot re-vote on an amendment that has been passed
  - For this reason, I will be abstaining and encourage others with mixed feelings on this resolution to “[vote with your conscience](#)” and abstain
- Vote
  - Mikayla: I motion to vote on Resolution R0014
  - In favor: 0
  - Opposition: 13
  - Abstaining: 10
  - Reagan: with that, Resolution R0014 does not pass
    - Thank you all for your participation in the democratic process
- Mariah: I know that this has been a very tense time in MCSG, but we are proud of you for being able to engage in these conversations
  - None of the adults on campus seem to be having these conversations, so thank you for participating

### **Announcements ~ 2 minutes**

- CEC Update ~ Mathilda Barr
  - CEC is working on our newsletter, which will be distributed at the next meeting
  - If you haven't yet, please take the time to fill out [this form](#)
  - If a representative has reached out to committee members and you don't get back, then CEC will be forced to just write whatever they want
- Mariah: We have a new member of MCSG!
  - Andrew: Hello everyone, my name is Andrew Snider and I use he/him pronouns
    - Recently won special election for class of 2024 reps
    - Some of you may recognize me because I would just go to these meetings anyway and be a watchful eye over the legislative body
      - I look forward to continuing my advocacy and working with you all
- Mariah: next meeting is the last of the semester
  - I made a [feedback form](#) because I wanted to start planning for next semester and how we want to run LB and how we want to continue to figure out all the constitutional changes and new positions
  - Take a few minutes to fill out the [feedback form](#) and [CEC's form](#)