Council lauded for dedication to students

Dear Editor:

While deleting reserved students email Monday, we were surprised to see "[reserved students] BOARD OF MANAGERS MEETING SUMMARY: 9/19-9/20", an email sent early the next day by the Student Council Co-Presidents Anna Morgan and Emiliano Rodriguez. The letter informed students of some pressing issues discussed by the board, including the living wage, the financial status of the college (the progress of the capital campaign and potential budget cuts) and the possibility of increasing the size of the student body. The letter has already sparked discussion among students on campus. We want to take this opportunity to draw attention to the subtle brilliance of their letter.

In spite of restrictions placed on their participation, Rodriguez and Morgan have used their role as observers of the Board of Managers to draw students' attention to what seems often ignored: those issues of great importance to students over which they have no formal control. By creating awareness of these proceedings, the co-presidents have begun to work toward greater transparency of the administration and thus taken important steps toward making the board accountable to the student body. That our elected representatives have interpreted their duties as observers of the board in this way is laudable. What is so outstanding about their letter is that it is the first time in our memories that Student Council representatives have so appropriately politicized the role of the council in bridging the gap between the student body and the board.

It is this savvy and long-awaited politicization of Student Council that distinguishes the leadership and responsibility of our current co-presidents. We hope that encouraging dialogue about the board will be a catalyst for continued struggle on the part of the council to most effectively represent the student body in all aspects of campus life. In sharing with us the proceedings of the board, the letter illustrated the extent to which Morgan and Rodriguez's leadership can differ from that of past councils. Their conception of leadership creates an opening for the redefinition of Student Council’s relationship to the administration. It is clear that student body representatives should be given a substantive voice in the proceedings of the board, not merely allowed to observe some yet be excluded from other (non-confidential) discussions. Indeed, everyone in the community, administration included, should work toward facilitating a more dynamic role for Student Council.

The possibility of change at Swarthmore requires subtle brilliance. The council members have begun to show theirs. Their leadership opens a prime opportunity for all members of the community to critically engage the issues before us. The work of others, however, is required to facilitate this engagement, in the press, in conversation, at fireside chats, at board meetings and elsewhere. To effect needed change, we must start somewhere; we call on all to make this a beginning. As students, we thank our representatives Rodriguez and Morgan for this beginning. Student Council is clearly behind us.

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