

*Committee on College Life (CCL)*  
*Advisory Notice to the President*  
*December 3, 2008*

Dear President Hill,

As you are aware, the campus community has been engaged for some time in a vigorous debate regarding the sale of Coca-Cola products on campus. This debate stems from allegations that the company has committed human rights violations, contributed to environmental degradation, and has engaged in unfair labor practices. On February 18, 2008, Vassar's Campus Investment Responsibility Committee (CIRC) determined that the evidence regarding these allegations was inconclusive and elected not to make a recommendation to CCL to ban the sale of Coca-Cola products on campus. CIRC agreed to contact representatives from Coca-Cola and to monitor the situation. On November 2, 2008, the VSA passed a resolution:

- 1) THE VSA COUNCIL URGES the CCL to support the removal of Coca-Cola products from campus;
- 2) THE VSA COUNCIL SUPPORTS replacing the sale of Coca-Cola products on campus with a viable alternative company (or companies);
- 3) THE VSA COUNCIL REQUESTS the Food Committee to continue its work with the Vassar Kick Coke Campaign, the College Committee on Sustainability, and Dining Services in finding the most viable alternative company (or companies) to replace Coca-Cola.

Following the passage of this resolution, additional groups on campus (most notably MICA) have organized to protest the resolution and have urged the College to "keep coke." After careful consideration of the evidence supplied by the Vassar Kick Coke campaign, MICA's Keep Coke Campaign, as well as corporate responsibility information provided by representatives from Coca-Cola, the Committee on College Life concludes the following:

1. CCL wishes to commend our students for their concerns regarding corporate responsibility. Clearly, our students have worked diligently and passionately in promoting their causes. They have amplified their voices and pursued social action and engagement with the College on these important issues.
2. Given the preliminary analysis made by CIRC, the ongoing inconclusiveness of the evidence presented, the information supplied by the Coca-Cola Company, and the apparent lack of consensus in our community on this issue, we advise that Coca-Cola products not be removed from campus. CCL voted (12-5) to not ban Coca-Cola products. Those members of our community who believe the allegations are true are free to boycott Coca-Cola products as they see fit. As we would with all vendors on campus, the College should continue to monitor Coca-Cola's progress in addressing issues of corporate responsibility.
3. In the spirit of providing our community with consumer choice, we advise that our purchasing office work with the food committee, dining services, the sustainability committee and our vendors to provide alternative beverages in addition to the Coca-Cola products currently offered on campus. In addition, provision of these alternative beverages may serve to advance Aramark's stated goal of increasing the use of local providers within food services at the College.

4. In an effort to promote a more efficient and objective campus dialogue regarding the College's role in promoting corporate responsibility, we advise that the College consider developing standards and review protocols for purchases that significantly impact student life. The Committee on College Life (CCL) (in collaboration with the VSA, the Purchasing Office and other committees/offices as appropriate) seems to us as the appropriate venue for the development of such standards and review protocols.

5. Finally, CCL believes that this kick coke debate has stimulated considerable and healthy reflection on Vassar's committee structure and the mechanisms by which student voices can be heard. We encourage the College to continue its ongoing analysis of our committee structure so that future issues of campus concern can be dealt with effectively and efficiently.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher Roellke  
Dean of the College  
Chair, Committee on College Life