Building a Community Bike Shop: Lessons Learned

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Outline

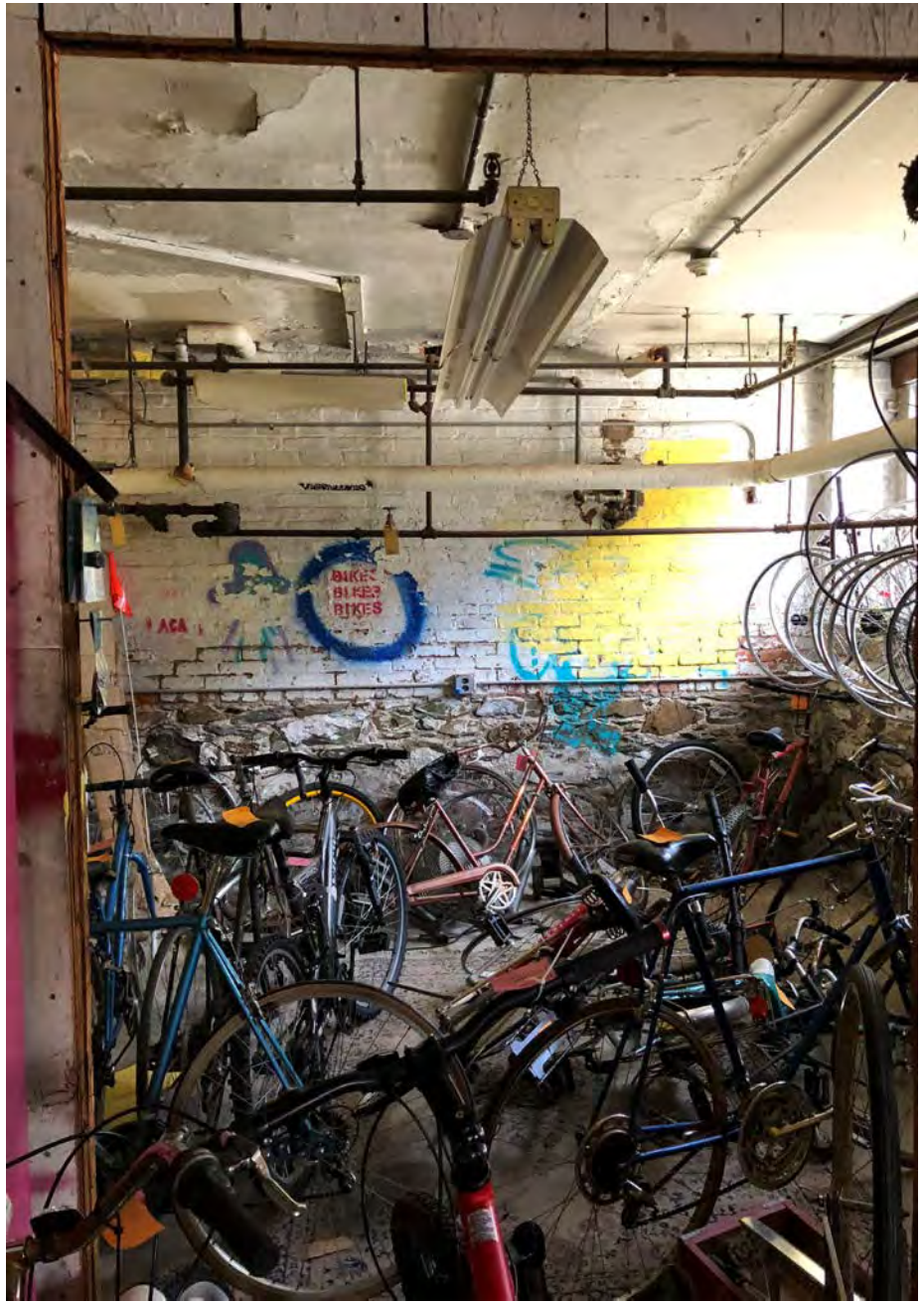
- An Introduction to the Shop
- Building a Community Bike Shop
- How to Run the Shop
- Challenges to the Shop
- The Future of the Shop
- Questions, Sources, and Further Reading

The Vassar Bike and DIY Repair Shop

- Opened Spring 2017, Located in Strong Basement
- Run by Three Federal Work Study Students
- Managed by the Office of Sustainability, funded by the Student Association
- Free Bike Repair and Education
- Free Bike, U-lock, Helmet Distribution
- Bike Storage
- Space for bike workshops and campus events
- Hub for Bike and Sustainable Culture on Campus

DANGER
SCHWINN
Park Tool

MAVIC
SOLIDARITY FOREVER
Welcome
VASSAR BIKE & DIY
REPAIR SHOP


BIKES
BIKES
BIKES

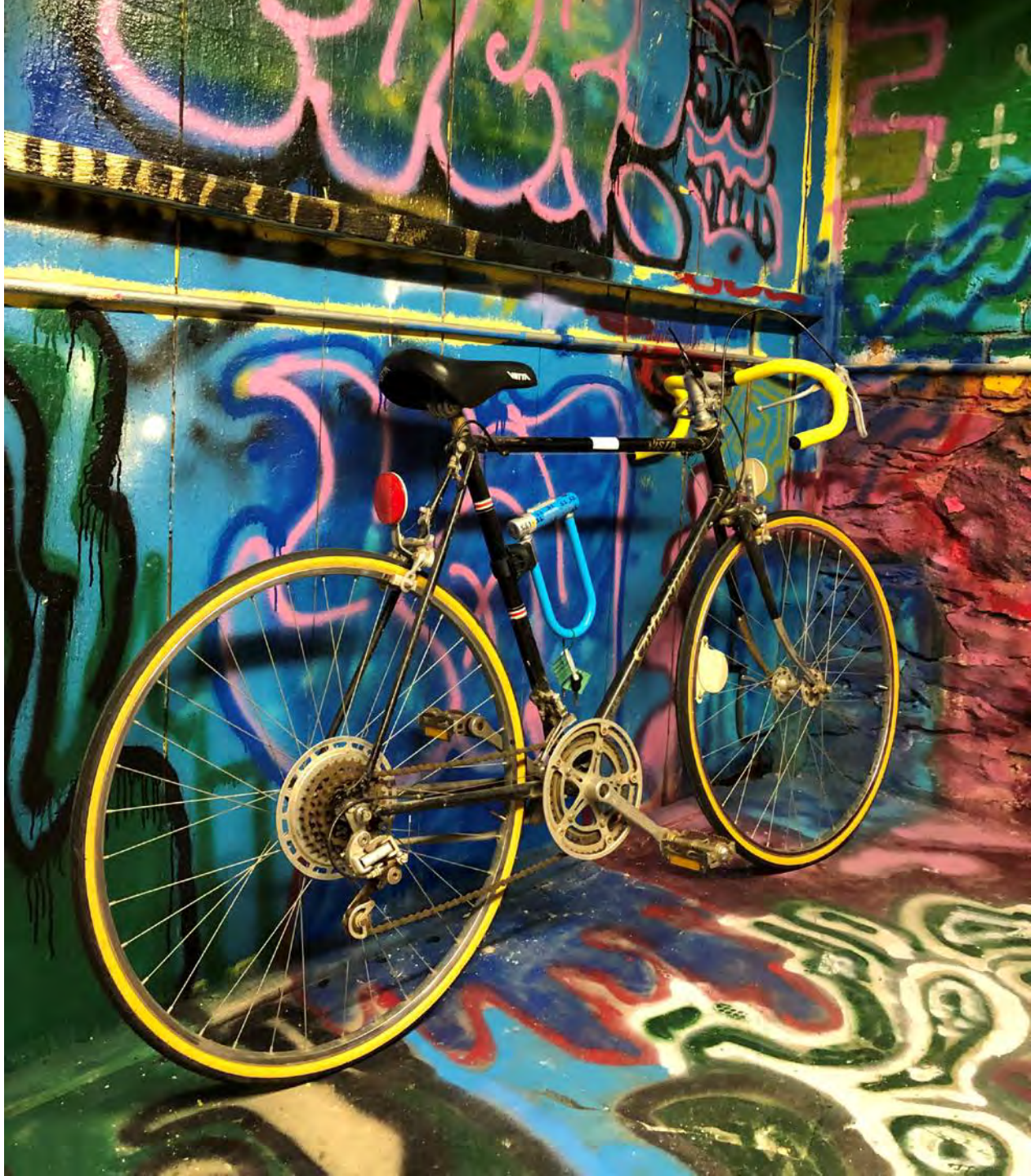
HED.
HED.
BIKE SHOP TOOLS
MAVIC

315
MAIN
Budweiser
Tropicana
1052

GOYA
MUSSELMANS
PLANTERS
PEANUTS
Albacore
Cup-a-Soup
QUAKER

How to Build a Community Bike Shop

- Understand the community's needs
- Create a Mission Statement
- Secure funding and space
- Acquire tools and recruit staff
- Make community contacts and solicit partnerships
- Brand and advertise



Understand the Community's Needs

- Vassar is a small campus with ~2200 students on campus
  - >95% live on campus
- ~600 bikes on campus
- ~1600 spaces to lock a bike
- No easy access to a bike shop
- No easy way to store bikes over breaks
- Mostly old, beat up bikes
- Bike culture on campus is sick
  - Theft, abandoned bikes, disrepair

Build a Mission Statement to Fit Those Needs

The Vassar Bike Shop is a VSA funded space that employs three students through work study. Under the Office of Sustainability, we offer free mechanical help to the Greater Vassar Community including students, Vassar employees, and the surrounding Poughkeepsie community. The bike shop is committed to making an eco-friendly, bike-friendly campus through free bike, and helmet distribution to increase accessibility, and free U-lock distribution and bike lock education to decrease theft, ease security policing, and heal ties with the Poughkeepsie community. We strive to make the bike shop an open and inclusive space to all on the Vassar Campus by hosting workshops for folks traditionally underrepresented and excluded in the bike community.

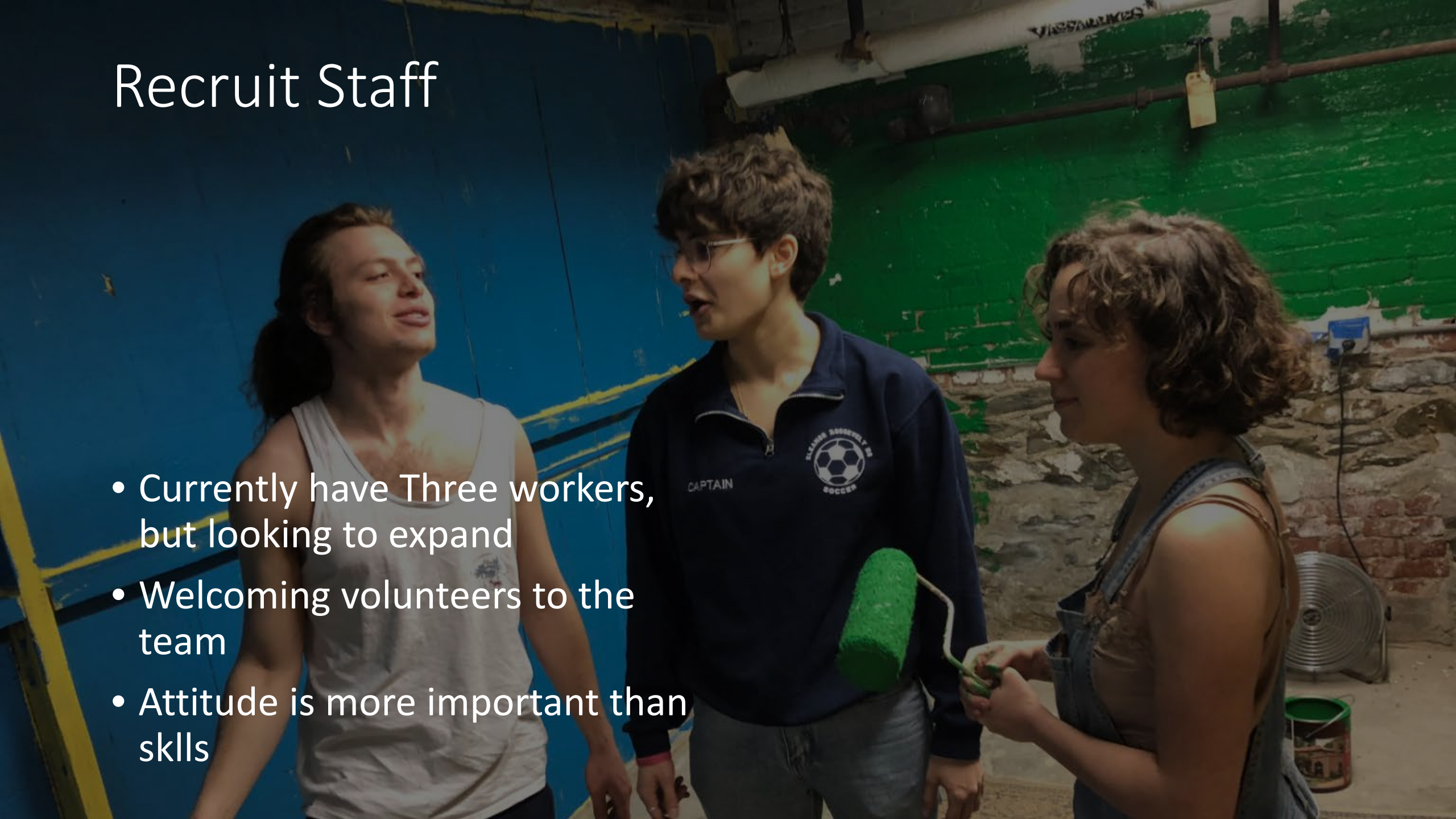
Secure Funding and Space

- Mechanic Pay: Federal Student Work Study
- Budget: $1000 for parts, but will scale with increased popularity
- Free repair, but will accept tips
  - Put back into the shop
- Basement Dorm: Storage in the hallways
  - Not the best space
  - But offers its own pros
- When building a shop, you want to have a free or low-rent space

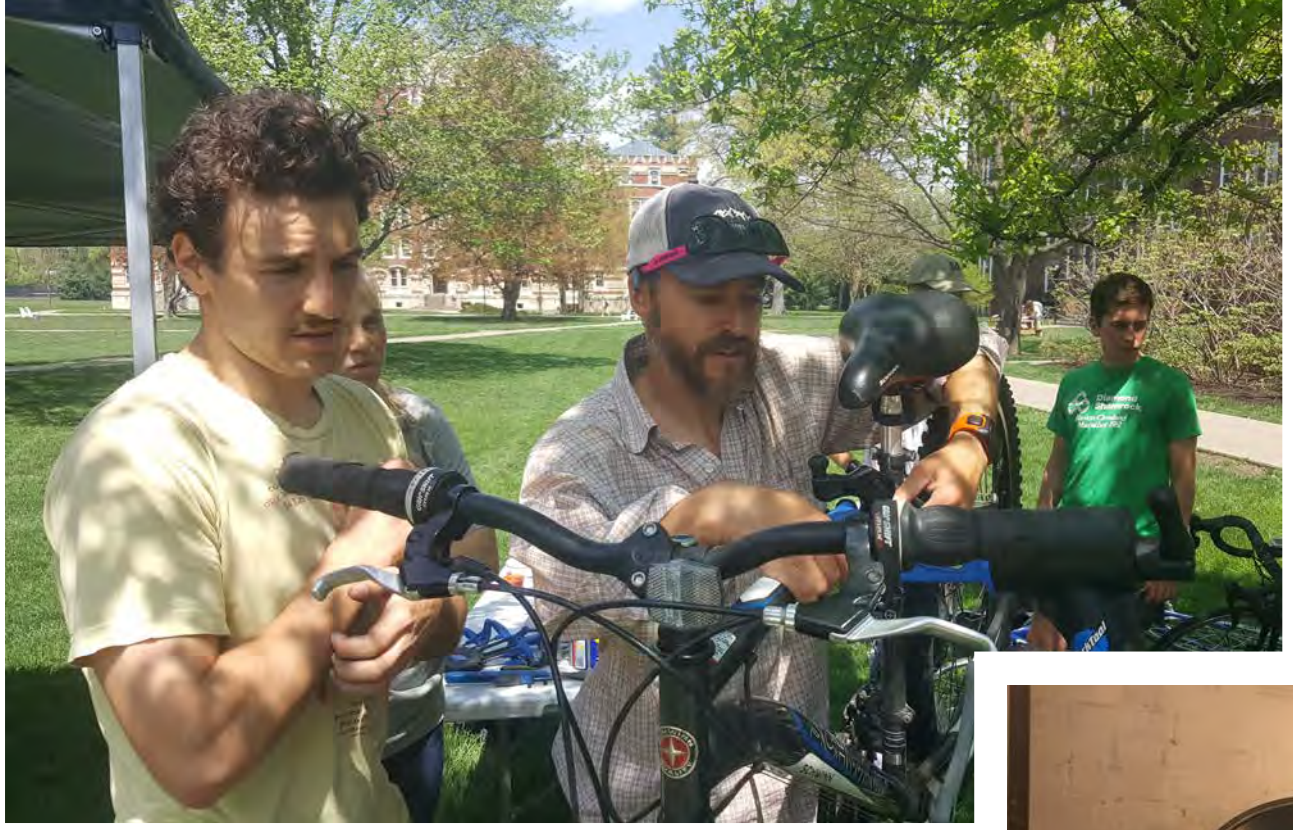
Acquire Tools

- http://bikecollectives.org/wiki/index.php=tools#necessary_shop_tools
- Inventory
  - Old rags
  - Tubes
  - White grease
  - Chain lube
  - Degreaser
  - Cables and cable housing
  - Brake Pads

Recruit Staff



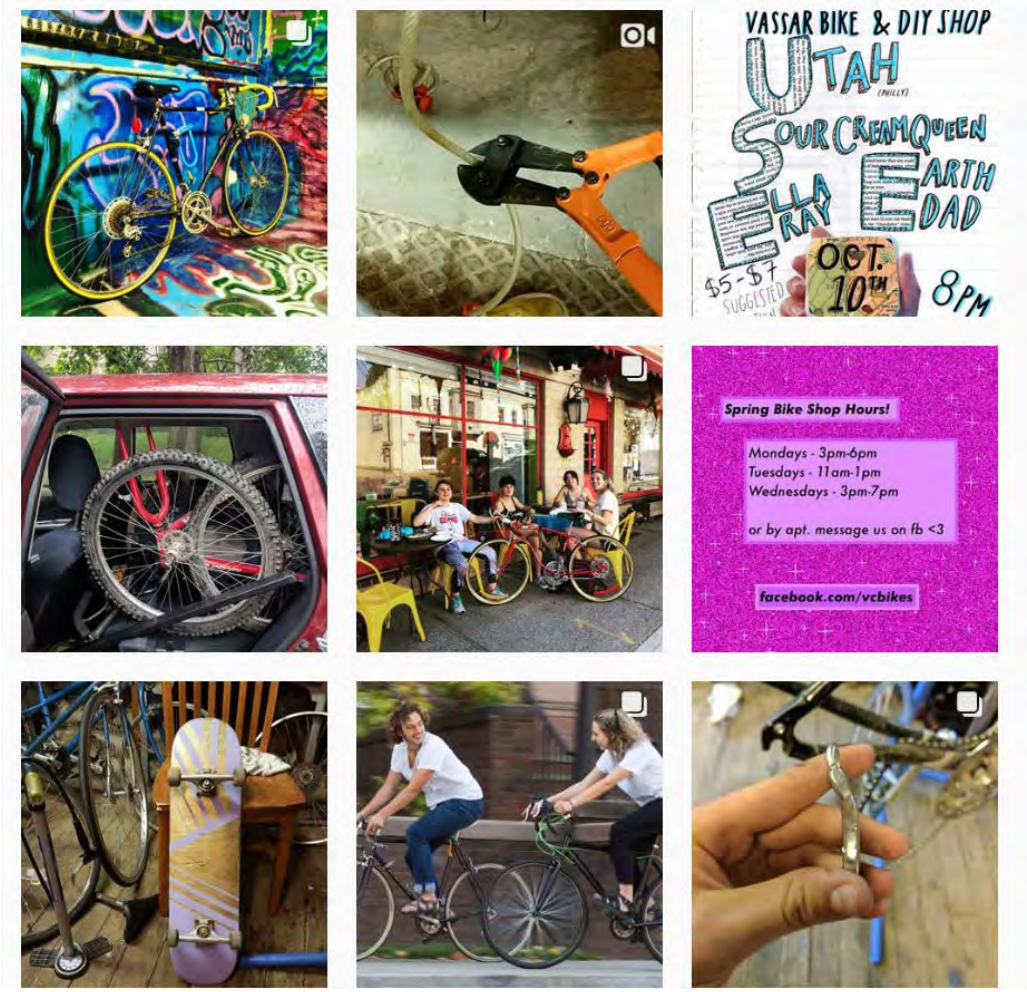
- Currently have Three workers, but looking to expand
- Welcoming volunteers to the team
- Attitude is more important than sklls

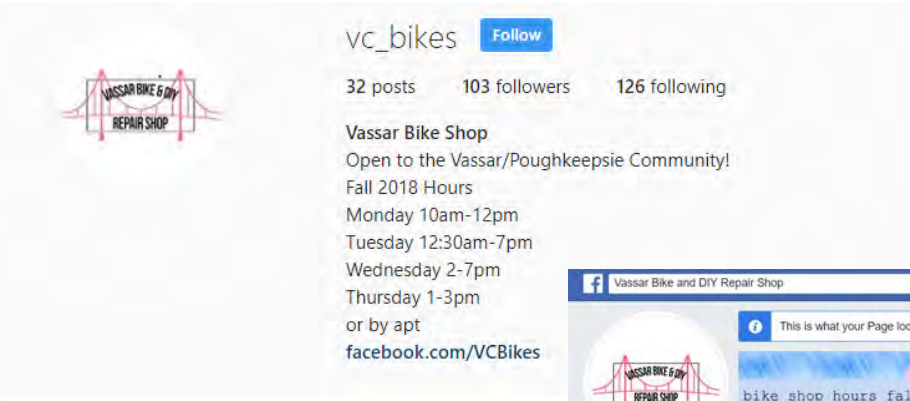


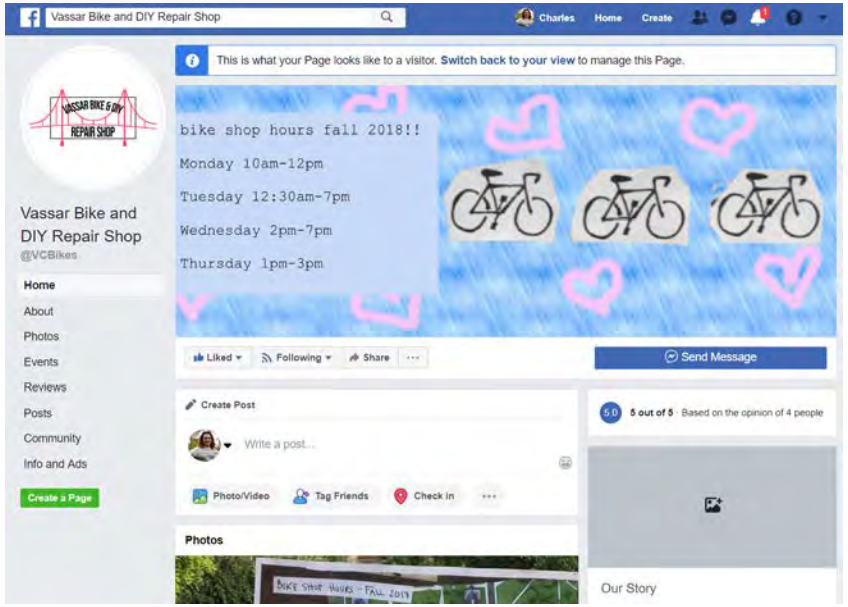
Make Community Contacts and Build Partnerships

- Discounted Tools and Bike Parts
- Community Organization Contacts
  - SPOKE
  - Oasis Discount Beverage
  - City of Poughkeepsie
- Sponsorships
  - Yerba Mate
- Source Bikes
  - Vassar Security
  - Poughkeepsie Police

Brand and Advertise







How to Run the Shop

- Keep the Shop Clean!
- Log all interactions!
- Have Weekly Meetings

Update the Mission Statement as Needed

- As of the Fall semester of 2018 the Bike shop has dipped our toes in the venue business; collaborating with the student body to host events that promote art and music collaboration on this campus.

beyond a

TREK

Current Problems for VC Bikes

- Bike Storage
- The Shop Space
- Dealing with Vassar Security
- Addressing Theft and Abandoned Bicycles

Vassar Security, the Administration, and Bike Theft

- Vassar has poor relationship with Poughkeepsie
  - ~50 larceniess a year. VC Security recognizes ~20
- Security says it’s the Poughkeepsie Community
  - Bait Bike and Cameras
- Student Sentiment is Security doesn’t help keep their bikes safe
- The Bike shop: we can solve this by locking bikes properly
- Not a priority for Security or the School
- They have their own bike shop and loan program and will not collaborate
- $40 Dollars for the school to break a U-lock
- Bikes are left abandoned

The Future of the Shop

- Address these Problems
- Increase Visibility On and Off Campus
  - Gather resources to eventually officially welcome the Poughkeepsie Community
  - Host Pop-up bike shops
    - First Friday
    - Arlington Farmers Market
    - Suggestions?

Questions?

Sources and Further Reading

- http://bikefarm.org
- https://www.communitycyclingcenter.org
- http://bikecollectives.org/wiki/index.php?title=Volunteer_handbooks
- http://bikecollectives.org/wiki/index.php=tools#necessary_shop_tools
- http://nrvbikekitchen.com/need-a-bike/
- https://ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity

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