

2014 Associated Students

# Legal Information Center

AS Structure and Program Advisory Committee

### *Areas for Improvements/ Recommendations:*

The following are the Structure and Program Advisory committee's recommendations for strategic goals over the next four years:

1. *Maintain, strengthen, and create partnerships with other WWU entities*

Although the Legal Information Center is an essential service at Western Washington University, many students at WWU are not aware of it. Because of this, it is vital to increase the LIC's presence on campus in the coming years, and an important way of doing that is through our partnerships with other offices and entities at WWU. For instance, the LIC should be working more with ResLife in order to bring educational programming to the residence halls and empower students facing legal issues with knowledge that can help them make pragmatic decisions. Learning about the LIC should be part of training for RA's and RD's, also, so that they can refer students to our services when needed. Additionally, as there is a lot of crossover between the Prevention and Wellness Services and the LIC, there is definitely an opportunity to pool resources in order to more effectively create educational materials that inform students.

Furthermore, the relationship between the LIC and Campus Community Coalition should be rigorously maintained in order to tackle issues like rental safety and uninformed partying. The partnership with the Law, Diversity, and Justice Program should also be strengthened, perhaps to include internships in the LIC for its students.

The growth of more law-oriented educational clubs on campus, like Youth and Government and Mock Trial should be encouraged and supported.

Lastly, it is important to investigate other venues through which the LIC can partner with WWU entities in order to address more widespread issues like partying and renter's rights.

2. Continue to think about how we can better disseminate legal information through educational programs

While the Legal Information Center's programming is of very high quality, the actual attendance of its events varies. Generally, events that address criminal law issues (i.e. MIPs, marijuana laws) tend to be much better attended than events with civil law topics (i.e. student debt, renter's rights) even when those topics are still very applicable to student life and present in our office traffic.

Because of this predicament, it is important to find better ways to reach out to people who are actively thinking about the legal issue that should be covered. For instance, renting programs should be done in the residence halls during late winter quarter, when first-time renters are starting to look for houses. Another idea is to target those who are about to graduate Western with educational information regarding student debt.

It is also vital to set aside more time to develop curriculums and educational materials about the legal issues that face students, so that we can build on those projects each year in order to better empower students with legal knowledge.

3. Recognize that, in order to adequately carry out our office's mission, there is a need for more staff in the LIC **\*This has already been passed by the board**

While the Legal Information Center serves many students every week, we only see the tip of the iceberg; the fact is that a majority of students do not know about our services. Unfortunately, as the Legal Information Center is generally run by one salaried employee and possibly a work-study, there is not a lot of opportunity for the active outreach (such as tabling, social media) which tends to be very effective but also time-intensive.

Additionally, although work-study employees are vital to the LIC's success, they often do not come with the experience employees hired from the larger pool of Western students often have, and their hiring pool is getting smaller as other departments at WWU hire work-studies earlier in the summer. Our

ability to fulfill our mission statement by educating students about their legal issues suffers from the lack of staff and expertise.

Because of this, it is important to explore the option of creating an hourly position in the LIC for a two-year trial period. This position would benefit the LIC by providing support for outreach, peer advising, and program planning while also adding the expertise of a second well-qualified employee. It would also provide flexible pay/hours so that it would be clear to those overseeing the position how many additional hours of work the LIC needs in order to serve students satisfactorily (or whether the position is needed at all.)

4. *Recognize that the job of LIC coordinator requires a lot of specific knowledge, and the 15-hour internship should reflect that need*

Very specific knowledge of legal systems and resources is needed to do the job of the LIC coordinator. In order to provide for smoother transitions between coordinators, a standard curriculum should be developed by Lisa, the current ROP Director, and the current LIC coordinator to educate future LIC coordinators during their 15-hour internships.

5. *Reaffirm the 2009-2010 recommendation that the Legal Information Center move away from law school advising*

While the Legal Information Center sees many students every week, a vast minority of them are seeking advising about law school and legal careers. This is because WWU has excellent law school advising that is housed not only in the political science and LDJ majors, but also in WWU Career Services.

As per the last recommendation, the LIC should continue to phase out of its place as a law school resource by changing its mission statement and advertisements to reflect the shift. The LIC should also, however, keep its law-school-related library materials that are still used by the student body.