



Western Washington University Associated Students
Legislative Affairs Council

Thursday, October 6, 2016

6:00 PM

VU 567

Members: *Present: Bryce Hammer (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Nora Selander (AS Legislative Liaison), Galen Herz (AS Local Issues Coordinator), Leanna Sauerlender (Student at Large), and Lisa Rosenberg.*
Absent:

Advisor:

Secretary: Cora Cole

Guests:

Motions:

LAC-16-1 Nominated Selander as vice chair for LAC next meeting *Passed*

Bryce Hammer, ASVP for Governmental Affairs, called the meeting to order at 6:13 on October 6th, 2016.

I. INTRODUCTIONS:

II. REVISIONS TO THE AGENDA

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. LAC overview: Bryce introduced the roll of the Legislative Affairs Council, which is primarily connecting students with the governments that are meant to represent them particularly representatives like Nora. Nora and Galen are here to make the government accessible and show students how decisions get made as well as stay nonpartisan. We work with the Washington Students Association (WSA) to make statewide agendas. We also manage the Legislative Action Fund, (\$45,000 per year) largely going towards lobbying trips. Lisa clarified that the opt-out nature of the LAF got annulled by the Board of Trustees, so it's just mandatory now. Western Votes! no longer has a representative because of WV restructuring. There is still no ESC rep or Grad student on the committee, Bryce hopes to change that this year. She also introduced the Board who will change the proposals that we make, and the REP and Western Votes! members who advise and work on the LAC. The staff who support us are Lisa Rosenberg, Eric Alexander, and Sabrina Houck along with the admin Steve Swan, Becca Kenna-Schenk, and Joe Timmons. The WSA members who people should know are Elissa Goss, executive director, and Guillermo Rogel, organizing director. And the Washington BUS, primarily Alisha who works with EXPAND. Bryce let people know that WSA is very committed to nonpartisan behavior.

The year at a glance showed Fall Quarter to be the time period for startup and planning as well as setting up proposals for our legislative agendas. Bryce explained the general purpose and atmosphere of the first WSA general assembly at Central Washington University. Also during fall, the final draft of the Legislative Agenda goes to the Board for Approval. Winter Quarter is final prep for Western Lobby Day (formally known as Viking Lobby day). Winter also is the time period where the LAC develops the federal lobbying agenda, early spring is when we set local agenda.

The Lobby Days are during this time and Bryce fears to implode from stress. In spring we work on AS elections and set the budget for 17-18 and the second WSA general assembly happens in May, which is open to any student who is interested. After the AS elections, current committee members bring in the new members to ensure strong and smooth transition. At the end of this year Bryce would like to bring in someone for assessment so that we can improve how the council's operation. Bryce talked about the summer projects she worked on including some discussion of the McCleary decision which will get discussed later. The WSA meetings established meeting days and voted to stay neutral on Raise Up Washington and Opportunity for Olympia (an income tax in Olympia to fund higher education). The WSA voted to leave USSA and now the AS is a direct member of USSA, which grants us access to a lot of community organizing work. Bryce explained that a lot of schools are leaving USSA and that the council might vote to leave as well this year.

- B. **ASWWU Legislative Agendas:** Nora discussed how agendas get formed and her roll in lobbying. The forms that typically get used for the agenda setting process are getting revamped because they don't get used very often. Bryce noted that they are going to be more effective. Galen talked about the process he uses for the Local Agenda Process and some goals for this year, like repeated local lobby days. Bryce mentioned that the Western Votes! group might have new members for LAC soon because they are undergoing some restructure. Rosa covered the voter registration drive, the due date for which is Monday. She mentioned that the whole vote staff is going to off campus students housing to doorbell. Bryce pointed out that Western does more voter registration than all of the other schools combined, because of that Western has a lot of power in the WSA agenda too. Galen jumped off that point to talk about Break Down the Ballot, which is a project where Western Votes! members educate students on voting issues, because the people we register don't always end up voting. Rosa asked which agenda gets crafted in the spring and what meetings look like, Bryce answered that we spend spring creating the WSA agenda and doing meetings with legislators. Lisa suggested that could include a budget proposal and sending students to USSA. Bryce talked about a national conference that happens at the end of spring break in Seattle. Leanna asked about the makeup of USSA and Bryce answered that USSA is losing a lot of support because it is deeply underfunded. Galen asked what the USSA's accomplishments were, Bryce answered that they advocate for students of color and free college. They tend to be more protest based and have frequent instances of ableism and transphobia that can make their events unpleasant.

The 2014 issues were dedicated revenue, Dream Act, and funding for Carver. In 2015 the issues were dedicated revenue, funding for Carver, and student success. 2016 included those along with assault survivor support and civic education in public education k-12. These are all items that can be kept or altered based on the preference of the committee and the students they serve.

- C. **Proposal brainstorming:** Bryce asked for questions or comments and then Nora went over some of her ideas which included returning to all of the issues from the last agenda and also fully funding the State Need Grant. Bryce jumped in to explain that a couple years ago they got tuition reduction at the price of the State Need Grant, so they want to undo that harm and fully fund it. In this issue they will be in line with the Chair of the House Higher Education Committee, making this a priority issue in the House. Nora expanded that approximately 20,000 students qualify in Washington

and don't get served because of the cut. Dedicated revenue lobbying might need to be altered, in state undergrad cut by 15% technical colleges cut by 5% and out of state and post grad went up. State budget is writing in 2.1% increase this year, the angle being that we are the only state that has a decrease for this period of time and so going up again would be counterproductive for our interests. Indiana just passed a bill that higher education facilities have to send out comprehensible statements on how much grads owe; Nora would like to push for that here. There is also an interest in a statewide assault weapons ban on college campuses, western has a full ban for non-cops. And de-coupling the S and A fee from tuition so that it doesn't go down when tuition goes down, allowing for continued. Our revenue lobbying doesn't include the water bottle tax because its super regressive and the state is already ultra-regressive, even more so than any other state. Opportunity for Olympia might get taken to the state supreme court which provides an occasion to overturn their ban on income tax from the 30's. The Opportunity for Olympia measure would only effect the county but the State Supreme Court decision would potentially have impact on the entire state. Nora explained some other issues that we lobby for, including voter rights. Additionally, we lobby for motor voter, wherein 16-17 year olds register when they get their license, which almost passed last year. Also landlord registration and disability aid for signing ballot, so people with disabilities don't need witnesses to vote. Extending the voter registration deadline as it exists a month before the election and California has 15 more days then us. The accessibility of voter pamphlets is also an issue that we have advocated for in the past along with civic education particularly in K-12. The current format of pamphlets is almost completely illegible, even to the folks who wrote the legislation described in them. Moving on, the Legislative items about survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence, have been more about support and less about prevention in the past, including increased funding for counseling centers. Some schools will lobby for a Yes Means Yes affirmative consent law to be implemented in the state. Western doesn't lobby for this because we pretty much have it instated already, so our lobbying focuses more on support for survivors.

Lisa left at 7:15 PM.

The final agenda item is student success and Bryce brought up that a couple years ago when WSA lobbied for it all the other schools got resources and Western didn't because they had more need and higher graduation rates. Nora shared an experience from a visit where she talked about student of color disproportionate graduation rates and the senator blew it off. The student success item also includes student homelessness, which is a new issue that Bryce would like to keep on the agenda. Rosa asked where someone could get more information for when they lobby, or how to better equip student lobbyists. Everyone agreed and Nora let her know that the sheets that they passed out in the past, have been helpful but they could be made more widely available further in advance. Galen mentioned they could also be more specific for addressing individual representatives and issues. Bryce talked briefly about comments they get about motor voter registration. Bryce then introduced an update from Josie about the McCleary decision. The University is still in an unfortunate position. A couple years ago a couple with the last name McCleary sued the state because the state was criminally underfunding K-12 education, state is fined approximately \$100,000 for every day that they refuse to fully fund. State finance is in a state of crisis and they can't afford anything unless they amend the financing. Representatives are concerned they could be locked on the floor until they come up

with a solution. Galen expressed a desire to add k-12 funding to our advocacy. Nora told members that WSA stood against the k-12 smaller classroom issue but agreed with Galen that Western could advocate for K-12 funding, since it is closely tied to access to college for many students. Furthermore, she proposed that we could tie that advocacy to the Woodring College for Education.

IV. REPORTS

A. Bryce will not be here next week and as such there is a need to have a vice-chair to lead the next meeting. Nora will be vice chair for the next meeting, temporary not official as that process takes 2 weeks. Galen suggested that Nora coach the next vice chair. Everyone agreed.

Sauerlender motions to nominate Selander as vice chair for LAC next meeting Herz seconds 5-0-0.

B. Nora added that five counties in Maryland have laws allowing undocumented immigrants to vote in local elections. There was a court case there that showed that there is no federal law barring states and/or counties from creating such legislation. The group discussed making this issue part of our voter accessibility agenda item this year, or at least bringing it up at WSA.

Bryce adjourned the meeting at 7:48 PM