

**Western Washington University Associated Students
Legislative Affairs Council
Monday, November 5th, 2012** **VU 567**

Members: *Present:* Patrick Stickney (AS VP Governmental Affairs, Chair), Ben Crowther (Legislative Liaison), Neil Christenson, Evan Fowler, Graham Marmion, Joseph Levy, and Tom Durham *Absent:* Nathan Haugen, Amy Stavig and Andrew Taylor
Advisor: Kevin Majkut
Secretary: Kaylee Galloway

MOTIONS

- LAC-12-F-01** Approval of the minutes of Monday, October 29, 2012 *Passed*
- LAC-12-F-02** Include revenue in the legislative agenda *Passed*
- LAC-12-F-03** Include financial aid for undocumented students in the legislative agenda *Failed*
- LAC-12-F-04** Include accountability to Western Governors University in the legislative agenda *Passed*
- LAC-12-F-05** Include the childcare grant in the legislative agenda *Passed*
- LAC-12-F-06** Include the environment in the student values legislative agenda *Passed*
- LAC-12-F-07** Approve \$6,175.05 for the WSA dues. *Passed*
- LAC-12-F-08** Approve \$500 for the Washington State Budget and Policy Center Conference. *Passed*

Patrick Stickney, Chair of Legislative Affairs Council, called the meeting to order at 2:03pm

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. ADDITIONS AND CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MOTION LAC-12-F-01 by Stickney

Approval of the minutes of Monday, October 29, 2012

Second: Fowler Vote: 5-0-0 Action: Passed

- IV. PUBLIC FORUM**
- V. REPORTS**

A. VP for Governmental Affairs

Stickney said that there is not much to report. He has been preparing for this meeting.

B. Legislative Liaison

Stickney and Crowther had a meeting with people in the university coordinating the legislative agenda and strategies for session. He is working to create a messaging plan that the rest of the university can utilize in Olympia making the case that higher education is a moral imperative.

C. Western Votes

Taylor is not here. Stickney reports that there is a phone bank tonight from 6-8pm in VU 460. Bring a laptop and a cell phone.

D. Student Senator

Fowler said there is nothing to report.

VI. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Washington Student Association General Assembly

Stickney said that there is a Board of Director's (BOD) meeting every month and a General Assembly (GA) meeting twice a year. WSA has their BOD and GA on Saturday, November 17th. The WSA will be voting on issues that students bring to the table for the legislative agenda. Stickney said that the issues Western will bring to the table include revenue, childcare, financial aid for students who are undocumented, and accessibility to Western Governor's

University. He said Western has also looked at marriage equality, financial aid, and shared governance (such as how student activity fees are appropriated). He said that Western also looked at including the coal terminal as an issue.

B. WSA Legislative Budget Process document

Stickney said currently the net loss in the WA Budget is about \$1.4 billion and that there has been about \$10 million cut from higher education. He said that Chris Gregoire will release a budget recommendation for the next governor. Both candidates, Jay Inslee and Rob McKenna, talked about not needing revenue, but Gregoire has said that the state needs revenue. Durham said that the document was very informative especially with the historical graph. Stickney referenced the last graph on “Chance for College by Age 19”, which measures how many people actually go to college. Stickney noted that WA is ranked 50th on per student funding, but is the top in degree completion, which leads many to think that WA has the most efficient system. Crowther mentioned the flip-side to high efficiency, which is that people don’t get to go to college because it is unaffordable. He said that WA degree completion levels are artificially high because the people who can afford higher education are also the people who are more likely to finish. Marmion wondered if the correlation between degree attainment and jobs is factored into the efficiency argument. Stickney said they don’t have data on that. Stickney said that even with financial aid, students are less likely to attend college just because of the high price tag. Levy asked about FTEs and headcount. Stickney said that FTEs represent how much the state is paying per number full time equivalent, but that headcount measures the number of people who actually go to college, no matter what their credit load. Marmion noted the argument that low tuition is the best form of financial aid, but asked if high tuition acts as a deterrent to low income families. Stickney said yes. Also when tuition is increased, the amount of financial aid the budget covers fewer students from low income families. He said there is a problem with debt zone where families have too high an income to qualify for financial aid, but do not earn enough to pay for education. This means that students will borrow more and experience a higher debt load. He said that high tuition affects everyone except for the very wealthiest.

C. Talk about legislative issues and assign topics

Stickney provided suggestions, but told the committee they do not necessarily have to be included in the legislative agenda. He asked the committee to take the next two weeks to research, write, and find testimony for each of the issues assigned to them. The issues include: revenue, financial aid for undocumented students, accountability to Western Governors University, childcare grant, and other value items from the legislative agenda last year.

1. Revenue

Stickney said that one of the reasons education has become so expensive is because it is not a protected item on the budget, and therefore, it often competes with social services. Crowther said that it is good to take a balanced approach to the budget including both cuts and revenue increases. He said that historically, legislature has only instituted cuts with no revenue increases. He further noted that revenue must be considered or else more cuts will be made and that WA residents do not want more cuts. Levy mentioned that the legalization of marijuana could raise revenue. Stickney said that the money will go towards the general fund. Fowler said that people are not willing to talk about revenue and will vote against measures that aim to raise revenue. He said that without an increase in revenue, the legislature will have to cut from places that are not ideal. *Neil Christenson enters 2:24pm*. Marmion said that the committee needs to put forth specific ways to raise revenue, because vaguely stating raise revenue would lead to measures like the candy and soda tax, which are regressive and disproportionately place the tax burden on middle and low income people and people have less money to spend during the recession so not as much revenue is being generated. Levy said he is against state sales

tax because it is not the best way to raise revenue and that property or income taxes would be better alternatives. Christenson dittoed. Crowther said that it is important to look for other income sources and be conscious of how these income sources effect people. He said WA needs to look at its tax structure. Stickney said that revenue was a legislative item last year, and that the WSA stated specific examples such as research and development tax credit and property tax, which aimed at a more progressive tax structure. He said that LAC will vote if they want revenue included, so someone will need to propose a motion to include it. Marmion said that he doesn't want to focus too much time on revenue. Stickney said that there are many options such as capital gains tax, not just income tax. Fowler does not want to create enemies in this particular area rather look for opportunities and benefits. Crowther said that previous legislative agendas asked for less cuts, but now students must demand no cuts and make the argument that higher education is worth funding. Christenson noted the necessity of having long term and short term goals in line. He said that the current tax system is not optimal and that different models need to be considered. Short term is playing defensive and making sure that no more cuts are made to higher education. Durham agreed with Crowther and Christenson. He said that students must not be afraid of making enemies.

MOTION LAC-12-F-02 by Christenson

Include revenue in the legislative agenda.

Second: Levy

Vote: 6-0-0

Action: Passed

2. Financial Aid for Undocumented Students

Stickney said that about six years ago, the legislature passed a bill that allowed in-state tuition for students who are undocumented. Crowther said that getting in-state tuition alone does not make higher education affordable, rather financial aid should also be accessible. Majkut said that undocumented is defined as people without proper immigration documentation even if their family is in the state legally. Marmion said that people who are living here are paying taxes deserve the benefits of their taxes. Stickney said that Senator Ed Murray plans to introduce a bill at the beginning of legislative session that would give undocumented students access to state aid such as the state need grant, state work study, and state scholarships. He said that undocumented students still will not have access to federal financial aid. Christenson said that this bill sounds good and that the committee should set it as a short term goal. Levy said that research shows undocumented immigrants pay federal taxes but not state taxes. He is not against it, but needs more information. Marmion said that most the WA funding comes from state sales tax, so even non-residents pay. He said that by providing undocumented students with in-state tuition, there will be incentive for more people to come to WA for higher education and that WA cannot sustain more people. Crowther said that more students ought to be eligible, but also recognized that the State is not meeting the standard in providing financial aid for people who are already eligible. Fowler said that WA has a greater duty to people who are residents and citizens, but this does not mean that undocumented students should be forgotten. Durham asked about what would happen to students who are deported and wondered how the state would account for this and get that money back. Stickney said that Obama recommended the DREAM Act, which would prevent students from being deported. Stickney further noted that many of these students do not have the choice and are here because of their families. Christenson recognized that there would be an increase need for higher education, but that it would not be any different than trying to get more high school graduates to apply. He said that some aid is better than none for undocumented students. Durham noted that financial aid cannot sustain any more cuts because of the high demand for it. Levy said that he is still torn on the issue. Crowther made a motion to exhaust the speakers list. Crowther asked if he could make a motion because he is not a voting member. Committee members

decided to allow Crowther to make motions.

MOTION LAC-12-F-03 by Fowler

To include financial aid for undocumented students in the legislative agenda

Second: Levy Vote: 2-3-1 Action: Failed

3. Accountability to Western Governors University

Stickney said that Western Governors University (WGU) is recognized as a not for profit university that uses an online, competency based model. He discussed several issues including the separation of teaching faculty from graders, academic freedom, and whether students are being taught the skills needed. Stickney also mentioned that WGU is exempt from the Degree Seeking Institutions Act, which covers everything that other universities are required to look at including students with disabilities. Stickney said this issue would focus on accountability and making sure that students report to the state, that information is public, that students get jobs post-graduation, that there are higher graduation rates, and accreditation accountability. Crowther said that the council last year took the position against allowing students going to this university to receive state financial aid. Stickney said that WGU receives recognition as a public university. Crowther said that if it is recognized as a public university, then it must be held accountable like all other public schools in the state. Durham agreed. Marmion wondered how much WGU tuition would be affected if standards were imposed. Stickney was not sure, but that the goal would be to make sure students are protected and getting quality education. Fowler noted that oversight would be beneficial. Levy agreed that they should be held accountable.

MOTION LAC-12-F-04 by Christenson

Include accountability to Western Governor's University in the legislative agenda.

Second: Levy Vote: 6-0-0 Action: Passed

4. Childcare Grant

Stickney said that the childcare matching grant is available to student parents who do not have access to the funding they need. He said that the amount the state gives depends on how much funding the AS gives to the childcare center. Stickney said this topic can be as broad as the effectiveness and changing the system. He said that WSA has been looking at this issue and that there are many students who are not receiving the childcare they need. Majkut said that the funding does not cover the need for childcare. Marmion supports this issue because of women's rights and that it decreases the burden of having children too early. Durham agreed. Stickney said that both students and faculty use childcare services. Majkut said the goal is to have 70% students and 30% non-students utilizing the services. Crowther said that the aim is to make higher education more affordable and that this childcare grant should be included.

MOTION LAC-12-F-05 by Christenson

Include the childcare grant in the legislative agenda

Second: Levy Vote: 6-0-0 Action: Passed

5. Value Items from last year

Crowther said that the council and BOD voted in favor of marriage equality but noted that it was not explicitly in our legislative agenda. General consensus was to wait to decide until the elections are over.

1. Access and Attainment: Stickney thought that childcare funding should be included. No opposition. Christenson thought support for undocumented students should be included. Crowther said that if the committee takes that stance, then it needs to go all the way and put it in the legislative agenda. He said that it is important to support

undocumented students for both funding that accessibility. Once the values are written, LAC will vote on them. Access and Attainment will be kept in the values legislative agenda.

2. Accountability and Student Representation: Stickney said WGU can be put into accountability section. No dissent.
3. Quality Student Experience: Stickney said that this deals with more local work, which the council is empowered to consider. Fowler said that diversity and environment are both relevant in the student experience, and therefore, should be combined instead of isolating them. Stickney suggested Diversity and Quality Student Experience. Marmion said that diversity is not necessary because the value of diversity is the equality. Crowther confirmed that this would get rid of the Diversity section and combine it with Quality Student Experience. Christenson opposed to that idea and said that Diversity deserves its own section. Crowther agreed. Fowler agreed that diversity is an important issue, but thought that diversity and environment more so directly affect quality of the student experience than the other values. Christenson reiterated that the entire point of the agenda is to ensure quality student experience. He said it is much easier for legislators to look at the values if they are kept separate. Marmion said that the quality of student experience is too broad of a name and agreed that diversity and environment be kept separate. Levy said that it should be more about quality and accessibility, and include access to school and proper tuition, and government institutions. Stickney asked if a health and safety section should be added to the value agenda. Fowler wanted to know how much the legislator has control over health and safety because he felt it is more in the jurisdiction of the university administration rather than congress. Stickney said that the legislator has been a powerful voice especially with issues such as bullying and harassment. Marmion said that this issue is relevant to city legislature and includes police, which pertains to student safety. Committee agreed to include health and safety as a value.
4. Diversity: Crowther said he is uncomfortable with removing diversity given the lack of diversity on this council. Christenson dittoed. Christenson said that diversity should be expanded and that it should be included in other values as well. Fowler said that diversity is a key element in ensuring accessibility and that diversity of opinion should also be embraced. Council agreed to include diversity in the values legislative agenda.
5. Environment: Marmion noted that students care about the environment, but thought that it is not directly related to higher education. Fowler said that he is a huge proponent of the environment, but recognized that there are many other topics to mention in the agenda. He would rather have less items and more detail. He understood that it is an important and huge topic but not necessarily fitting on the agenda. Marmion wants the value agenda to represent the interests of the students, and therefore thought that the environment should be included. Stickney said that the values agenda was created as a supplemental document. He said it is broader, more comprehensive, and shows student interests.

MOTION LAC-12-F-06 by Marmion

Include the environment in the student values legislative agenda

Second: Fowler Vote: 5-0-1 Action: Passed

6. Faculty: Fowler said that it is very important to include faculty as a value on the agenda and thought it should be expanded. Levy agreed. Stickney said that teachers value tenure. Majkut said that faculty members on the tenure track have 7 years to finish, or they have to leave the university. He said that it is essentially a quality control issue in that it measures quality of service, but that it is also a matter of safety. He said that nationally, universities are moving towards an adjunct system. Majkut encourages

tenure because the teachers are more involved and engaged. He further noted that research is variable about how students rate adjunct faculty and their engagement. Christenson said that tenure is better for students, teachers, and academia as a whole. Marmion emphasized that if teachers are happy then students are happy. Fowler agreed that students and teachers are linked and what is good for one is almost always good for the other. He thought that it is important not to choose one or the other. Christenson said in order for students to learn, they need quality teachers. Fowler suggested that there be discussion with the administration and the governing body of the university. Christenson suggested changing it to faculty and administration. Stickney said it is difficult because administration is the most powerful body on campus and has more resources. He said that the administration already has their ways set. Council agrees to keep faculty on the values legislative agenda.

7. Student Debt: Levy suggested adding student debt to access and attainment. Fowler said it should be valued very highly. Council generally agreed to combine the two.

Marmion would like to add recreational drug use because it affects financial aid eligibility. Fowler noted that it should wait until after the election and results on I-502.

Fowler wondered if students in post-degree job search should be included in the legislative agenda. He said that long term is discusses what students want their education to look like. Stickney said to send ideas to Galloway.

Topic Assignments

Stickney asked the committee to write the language using last year's agenda as a template.

He also asked them to seek out student testimony. Topic areas were assigned:

Revenue: Stickney, Fowler, and Durham

Financial aid: Stickney, Marmion

Access and Attainment (include childcare and student debt): Christenson and Durham

Accountability: Crowther and Christenson

Health and Safety: Levy and Marmion

Diversity: Levy and Christenson

Environment: Fowler

Faculty: Levy, Fowler, and Durham

VII. ACTION ITEMS

A. WSA Dues

MOTION LAC-12-F-07 by Christenson

Approve \$6,175.05 for the WSA dues.

Second: Levy Vote: 6-0-0 Action: Passed

B. Funding for the Washington State Budget and Policy Center Conference

MOTION LAC-12-F-08 by Christenson

Approve \$500 for the Washington State Budget and Policy Center Conference.

Second: Marmion Vote: 6-0-0 Action: Passed

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

IX. NEXT MEETING DATE- November 19th, 2012.

The Meeting was adjourned at 3:59 pm by acclamation