



Structure and Program Advisory Committee

Thursday, November 12th, 2015

5:00p.m.

VU462A

- Members:** *Present:* Emma J. Opsal (AS Assessment Coordinator, Chair); Anujin Ganbat (Student-at-Large); Luciane DeAlmeida (AS Queer Resource Center Assistant Coordinator); A Blyth (AS Sexual Awareness Center Assistant Coordinator);
Absent: Hannah Brock (AS VP for Business and Operations)
- Advisors:** Lisa Rosenberg (Assistant Director for Student Activities)
- Secretary:** Octavia Schultz (AS Board Assistant for Internal Committees)
- Guests:** Alzata Davis (AS Outdoor Center Challenge Coordinator)

Motion: *To approve minutes from November 5th, 2015.*

Opsal called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.

I. Approval of the Minutes

*MO TION SPA C-15- by Opsal
F-1 To approve minutes from November 5th, 2015.*

Second: DeAlmeida Vote: 3-0-1

Action: Passed

II. Discussion

- a. Opsal noted that at the following meeting, the AS Club Activities Office and AS KUGS would present their documents to the committee. Blyth inquired if the committee would receive the documents before the meeting. Opsal stated that she would send documents prior to meetings. Davis entered at 5:16pm.

III. Information Item

- a. AS Outdoor Center Challenge Course

Davis noted that the Challenge Course operated at two locations regularly; the course at the Lakewood Watersports Facility, and at special events on campus. She also noted that the Challenge Course would host events in other areas by request, mentioning that the program had previously facilitated an event at Mount Baker Middle School during the summer prior. She read the program's Mission Statement aloud and explained to the committee that the specific needs of each group were considered when created courses and programs. She noted that the Challenge Course served a variety of campus and community groups, using tracking forms to gather information about what the visiting group needed or hoped to gain from their experience at the Challenge Course, in order to plan a program with those specific needs in mind. She noted that after a group's session they also held a debrief to assess how they were able to meet that group's goals. She then went on to give the committee an explanation of how the pricing system worked for the Challenge Center, noting that prices were cheaper for groups or individuals affiliated with the university. She expressed her concern that the Challenge Course did not price competitively with other comparable programs in the region, and had kept prices the same for a number of years. She stated that the Challenge Course needed to have prices that were more in line with other programs in

the market. She expressed her thought that an increase in prices could have been useful to fund the creation of a new element on the course, or provide general improvements like a covered area for activities in case of rain, which was common in the area. She also suggested adding an office space at the Lakewood Watersports Facility to eliminate the need to transfer computers and paperwork from campus to the facility. DeAlmeida inquired what the word element referred to in relation to the program. Davis cited examples like the Spider's Web, noting there were both high and low elements on the course. Opsal asked if there was a difference in pricing between high and low elements. Davis noted there was not a difference in pricing to participate in either type of activity. Opsal clarified that she had asked if there was a difference in the price of installing a high or low element. Davis stated that high elements were more expensive to install, but that with both types of installments a builder was needed to assess the area prior to construction. She noted that a more easily accomplished improvement would have been to add woodchips to the trails and walking paths at the facility to make the area safer and more accessible. She noted that the mission statement for the AS Outdoor Center was also used for the Challenge Course, but state her belief that the program deserved its own mission statement, as it was somewhat of a separate entity from the Outdoor Center. She stated the Challenge Course provided opportunities for students to work with diverse groups of people, gain technical skills, provided a safe environment to gain experience and learn, and provided networking opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers in challenge course facilitation. Opsal noted that previous recommendations had been passed for the Challenge Course in the 2011-2012 academic year. Davis confirmed that most of the previous recommendations had been implemented, though the program's mission statement had not been updated. She presented a list of programs that the Challenge Course had hosted in previous years, noting that some groups returned every year. She stated that she felt the program did not advertise enough, and that she personally wanted to further diversify participants. Rosenberg entered at 5:32pm. Schultz inquired if the program had considered ways to better serve individuals with physical disabilities. Davis stated that an employee of the Challenge Center was in contact with the WWU disAbility Resources for Students Office to assess how the program could have been more accessible. Davis stated that she wanted to establish a procedure in the Challenge Course of sending surveys to participants to gather anonymous feedback about their experiences. Rosenberg noted that in the presentation, the language stated that feedback would have been collected at the end of each year. She suggested sending the surveys shortly after each group's visit. DeAlmeida suggested a compromise of collecting feedback shortly after each group's visit but reviewing it at the end of each year. Blyth noted that the proposed system would not have allowed the employees to immediately respond to problems in the program, but good for educating staff in the following years. They suggested putting two systems in place, one to address short term concerns, and one to establish long term goals. Davis thanked the members for their suggestions. She stated that the program did not record the demographic information of the individual participants of the Challenge Course. She noted that she wanted the program to serve more a diverse variety of participants. Ganbat inquired how the Challenge Course marketed itself. Davis stated that the AS Outdoor Center had a marketing coordinator that advertised for the program via Facebook and the AS website, and that brochures were used to advertise. She stated she welcomed suggestions on improving the marketing strategies of the program. Opsal stated that

recommendations were made during winter quarter. Davis noted that the motto of the Challenge Course was “Challenge by Choice”, and that individuals were encouraged to participate to their own level of comfort. She noted that if an individual could not or did not want to participate in a particular way, facilitators would find alternate ways that the individual could have been involved. She that in a previous AS Board of Directors meeting, it had been mentioned that the employees of the Challenge Course needed to be more mindful of pronouns. She stated that facilitators should have been leading introductions with groups that included sharing pronouns if the individuals were comfortable doing so. She noted that inclusivity was a core value of the AS and of the university, and that the Challenge Course could have been doing more to represent that. She noted that the program needed to better accommodate for those with disabilities, outreach to more diverse identities, and advertise in a more welcoming and inclusive way. She noted that the Challenge Course was open to everyone. Rosenberg suggested adding a point in trainings that instructed facilitators to avoid using gendered language. DeAlmeida inquired how the “Challenge by Choice” motto was upheld. Davis stated that if an individuals were not following the rules of the program or were acting in an unsafe manner, the facilitators had the authority to not allow them to participate in activities. Opsal stated she had been to the Challenge Course two times previously, and that how well the “Challenge by Choice” motto was upheld depended on the facilitator. She noted that one of the times she participated she had not known anyone else in the group, and said that it “felt like a gym class.” Davis confirmed that she had received complaints about sessions feeling like that, and agreed that the environment could have easily turned competitive if the facilitator was not committed to upholding “Challenge by Choice”. Ganbat inquired how prices would have changed if a new element had been installed. Davis noted that there would not have been a change in pricing for groups affiliated with the university, only to unaffiliated groups. She also stated that the prices would not have risen until the new element had been installed. Blyth expressed their concern that individuals could have been made to feel guilty if they chose not to participate in particular activities of the Challenge Course. They asked how facilitators worked with participants to promote emotional safety. Davis stated that the facilitators needed more trainings. Blyth suggested implementing a structural change to create a standard of commitment to emotional safety. Davis insisted that the information needed to be presented through trainings, but that it was difficult to organize trainings for the Challenge Course staff due to budgetary restrictions, and a lack of reliability among the student staff. Ganbat suggested instead of holding training sessions, Davis present employees with a document of tangible outlines of what was expected of them. Davis expressed her concern that “pieces of paper don’t do much” and that employees may not have read the document. Opsal inquired if the job descriptions of the AS Challenge Course positions were formatted similarly to other AS job descriptions. Davis stated the job descriptions were somewhat accurate, but needed to be updated. She expressed her belief that the job descriptions needed to have been longer and include a section about the requirement of accountability. She stated the Challenge Course was meant to be a therapeutic experience for participants, and that facilitators needed to interact with participants with that in mind. Opsal stated that if the members had any further questions, the questions could have been written down and given to her, and that she would have gone over them in one-on-one meeting with Davis. She stated there had been some great conversation during the committee’s meeting, and that she could

already imagine recommendations forming. Davis thanked the members for their questions and ideas, then exited.

IV. Debrief

- a. Opsal stated that representatives from the AS Club Activities Office and KUGS were going to present at the following meeting. She noted that the AS Club Activities Office had been scheduled for the current meeting but had been moved to the following week due to logistical issues. She noted that during winter quarter, the office would present on the same day as the Challenge Course. Rosenberg apologized for being late and stated that the members had asked good questions during the meeting. She noted that the questions asked by the committee provided a good base for offices to begin forming their recommendations.

V. Adjourn

Opsal adjourned the Meeting at 5:58pm.