



**Western Washington University Associated Students
Ethnic Student Center Steering Committee**

Meeting Minutes for: Tuesday, February 9th, 2016

Non-Voting Members: Abby Ramos (AS VP for Diversity), Nate Panelo (ESC Coordinator), Ryan Roberts (AS Club Business Director), Alejandro Ibanez (ESC Marketing and Outreach Coordinator)

Voting Members: Tina Cha (KSA Steering Representative), Karen Liang (CSA Steering Representative), Vilay Lee (WWSA Steering Representative), Quyen Tran (VSA Steering Representative), Jona Akelipa (SASA Steering Representative), Jennifer Khuu (KhSA Steering Representative), Mitchell Thompson (NASU Steering Representative), Jordan Butler (BSU Steering Representative), Aleyda Cervantes (MEChA Steering Representative), Michelle Martinez (LSU Steering Representative), Gary Huang (FASA Steering Representative), Lena Guevara (HOH Steering Representative), Meron Knutzen (ACC Steering Representative), Edward Moreno (MISO Steering Representative), Cindy Marquina-Negrete (Blue Group)

Absent: None

Guests: Realia Harris (SASA), Bahara Naimzadeh (SASA), Anu Heera (SASA)

Secretary: Jessi Navarre (Board Assistant for Club Committees)

Motions

SC-16-W-5 - Approval of the amount of \$1200 in the form of an underwrite to SASA for their Heritage Dinner. - **PASSED**

SC-16-W-6 - Approval of the minutes of 1-26-16 and 2-2-16 with the stipulation that all appropriate changes be made. - **PASSED**

Abby Ramos, A. S. Vice President for Diversity, called the meeting to order at 5:07p.m. on Tuesday, February 9th, 2016

I. BUDGET UPDATE

Panelo brought up the budget for the previous year and this year to compare. He said that he would send it out to the group.

II. Action Item

- a. WWSA (\$63)

Nate Panelo said that WHSA would not be requesting from Steering, but their event would be sponsored by the ESC. He said that the event was to support the ESC as a whole and KhSA was also bringing in a speaker so they could make an allied sponsorship for funds. He said that the ESC also helped fund posters for Blue Group and helped groups with after hour fees with reserving rooms. He said that it would be done on a case by case basis and that it will be beneficial in travel cases.

b. SASA (\$2000)

Harris said that they were actually requesting \$1200. She said they could not go through Students for Sustainable Food for catering so they planned on using Aramark and the Lenard Jones Fund. She said that they would be able to get most of food costs covered. Lee asked if this was for a Heritage Dinner. Harris said yes. Bahara Naimzadeh from SASA said that they had been deciding on whether or not they were having a Heritage Dinner. She had been said that they were following their menu with some modifications. She said that the \$1200 was for remaining costs. She said that ticket sales would be closer to breaking even than previous years. Ramos asked if they were comping any tickets. Naimzadeh said it would depend on how many performers they had. Ramos said that LSU last year only comped people that did not charge them. Butler asked when the event was. Naimzadeh said March 5th. She said they were also fundraising this week for this event and another in the spring. Ramos asked if they had publicity. Anu Heera said that they received a publicity package.

Motion SC-16-W-5 by Men of KhSA

Moved to approve the amount of \$1200 in the form of an underwrite to SASA for their Heritage Dinner.

Seconded: Lee from WHSA Vote: 13-0-1 **PASSED**

III. Other Business

a. News Update

Ramos said that the Board of Directors was considering GUR reform, taking out some requirements. She said that they were also talking about GPA requirements and the average of class retakes. Harris asked about the average. Ramos said that if you take a class again now you get an average of the two grades, so receiving an F and retaking for an A equals out to a C on the transcript. Merano said that it always took the average. Ramos said that now the F will not show on the transcript.

Ramos said that they were moving \$400,000 into a discretionary fund for AS people, not students. She said that the AS had a lot in reserves, which was not serving the students who paid for the fees. She said that Belina

Seare, AS President, was working on making a conference fund with part of the money. Moreno asked how long this money was available for. Ramos said it would be available for this year.

Ramos said the election code for the Board of Directors was changing. She said that in the past a candidate needed 150 signatures and they might eliminate this rule. She was for eliminating the signature requirement all together. She said that only 8% of the student population votes and last year 5 people ran unopposed. She said that they are suggesting 75 signatures or an alternative request like an essay or a video. Harris asked how they were going to get more people to vote. Roberts suggested using the discretionary fund to make voting more accessible. He said the reserves was made of student money that they might never see. He said they needed to keep some for emergencies, but students were not benefitting from the fund right now.

b. ESC Renovation

Ramos said that the Western Front did a front page article on the ESC renovation and that people had been seen picketing Bruce Shepard across campus, handing out the letter she had written to the University. Harris said that they were not people from the ESC but instead “well-meaning white people” from Fairhaven. She said that they had been putting workshops together to teach people about white privilege and supremacy. Ibanez said that he informed a Western Front reporter that the picketing group was not affiliated with the ESC, though they were handing out their letter. He said that he made it clear to the people running the workshops that they should represent themselves as students and not as a representative of the ESC. Butler said that he thought they were white folks that didn’t like Bruce Shepard. Ramos said the forum for the ESC Renovation would be on the 23rd of February in Frasier 102 at 6pm. Harris asked if they could come late. Ramos said yes. She emphasized how important this meeting was. Panelo read the article from the Western Front aloud.

“Standing elbow to elbow, roughly 100 students crowded into the hot room in an effort to showcase their need for a larger space. Tired of the room they have been utilizing for 25 years, users of the Ethnic Student Center decided to strive for change.

ESC users and supporters sent a letter to Western administrators on Monday, Feb. 1, demanding that the university fund a multicultural center, along with additional academic resources. Attached was a picture of the overcrowded space and about 200 signatures.

The proposed building would include a relocated Ethnic Student Center, which is currently located on the fourth floor of the Viking Union.

Abby Ramos, the AS vice president for diversity, worked with other students of color to create the letter and gather the signatures

“The university continues to pride itself on diversity and students of color, but the ESC has a max capacity of 52 students, so how does it make sense that the university wants more students of color on this campus, but the only center that is here for students of color can only have 52 students?” Ramos said. “That doesn’t really equal out to me.”

The letter calling for the new building also highlighted other issues with the university’s support for the ESC.

“Not only have we reached max capacity of square footage, we do not have the needed resources to keep us on the campus of a predominantly white institution,” the letter stated. “We currently have two full-time staff members, five desktop computers, no library, a shared part-time academic advisor, five student employees and a shared social space that is expected to also serve as a study area.”

Eileen Coughlin, the vice president for enrollment and student services, has been working with Ramos and AS President Belina Seare in meetings to find the best solution to the space issue.

“We are absolutely committed to figuring out a solution, but we have to figure out first what are all of the options and we have to figure out how do we give and take what’s most important,” Coughlin said.

While Western continues to grow in size, Coughlin, who has been meeting with ESC coordinators and other students about the issue, wants to ensure that Western will continually strive for diversity on campus.

“We have grown in not only our number of students, but our commitment to diversity as an institution, but not far enough. We’re not where we need to be and we recognize that,” Coughlin said. “It takes continual work and that’s what this should be about for all of us.”

President Bruce Shepard responded to the demand for a new building through an email sent to all students and staff on campus on Feb. 5. In his email, Shepard noted that the building request wasn’t sent through the proper channels.

“Proposals for buildings go through our transparent, on the web, 1 O-year capital projects planning process,” Shepard wrote in the email. “That allows the many capital project needs to be comparatively assessed by all of us with final decisions on priorities made by our Board of Trustees.”

Senior Stephanie Sisson, a student faculty design major found Shepard's letter to be divisive and misleading.

"This is a letter meant to pit the student body against the ESC. Bruce Shepard didn't adequately bring up the demands of the students in the ESC. Instead, he covered them up with other things," Sisson said. "This is a very divisive tactic that's used to silence the students that are organizing on campus."

Sisson pointed to fall quarter's racially charged threats directed at AS president Belina Seare, as well as larger issues with the campus climate for students of color at Western.

"[Bruce Shepard's letter] is immature, but it's what people have to face when they start to ask for changes to protect themselves, especially on a campus where people have recently received threats; death threats and rape threats. That's because the general environment on this campus is unsafe for students of color, " Sisson said.

In the letter sent out by ESC users demanding a new building, students of color advocated for other funding methods outside of increased student fees.

"If the university decides not to fully fund the building, we are demanding you find other assets before imposing a student fee," the letter states.

Shepard's email indicated the difficulties associated with finding funding for the new building, chiefly that the money cannot come from the state.

"No matter how hard we lobbied down in Olympia, we would not be able to get a state funded ESC building," Shepard wrote in the email. "The state only funds buildings for programs that are also funded by the state; basically, these are our academic programs. "

The AS and its programs are currently funded by student fees, and a potential solution to the lack of state funding for the building would be an additional fee for Western students. Shepard found posing an additional student fee to be unfair due to high tuition and fees.

"What would the 100 percent student fee option mean? A very modest \$20 million new building would, by my quick, back of the envelope estimation, cost every full-time Western student another \$150 per year every year, for the next 15 years, " Shepard wrote. "And, funding for maintenance and operation costs would have to be added on top. "

Sophomore Ricky Rath, business and marketing major and Khmer Student Association vice president, has been involved in the ESC relocation effort and thinks it's unlikely that a new fee would be passed.

“We talked about this in our relocation meeting and we felt like the majority of the rest of campus would not favor paying that fee. We feel like, as colored students if [the fee] is going towards a new building, we would probably have no problem,” Rath said. “We feel really outnumbered when it comes to that case.”

Efforts to relocate the ESC started this summer with a plan to potentially move the ESC to the fifth floor of the Viking Union through a \$1.5 million renovation.

The renovation idea expanded to the ESC filling the space that currently houses the AS bookstore. After the idea failed when the university found the bookstore needed the entire space it was using, students decided to advocate for a new building.

With President Shepard suggesting a student fee may be the only way to fund a new building and students of color hesitant to advocate for a fee increase, the question of how to fund a new project remains unanswered.

“I really wish that the rest of the campus would see the light and come see the ESC room that we have, the little basement and sympathize with us, ” Rath said.

Ramos wanted to remind the community that a new building isn’t all that students of color are seeking.

“This doesn’t mean that if we get this building that we’re satisfied. There are demands that we have,” Ramos said. “A new building isn’t the solution to every problem that we have on this campus, so we’re really wanting to hold the university and the admin accountable for the experiences that we’ve had that they have not clearly worked towards fixing. ”

On Feb. 23, there will be a meeting for students and administration to discuss the potential of a new building and other options. The time and location are to be determined. ”

Panelo said that the meeting on the 23rd was meant for ESC students but the article made it seem like an open meeting to all. Cervantes asked about Ricky Rath and how he spoke about the renovation. She said that she was a part of the renovation process, going to meetings every other Monday, and he was not a part of the meetings. She encouraged that if people had not been working closely with the renovation plans or keeping up that they should refrain from speaking on behalf of the ESC. Ramos said that she had gone to the KhSA meeting and informed everyone and that it was easy to keep up on the renovation online. She said that she didn’t want anyone to feel as if their 1st Amendment right was being infringed upon by asked people not to talk to the press. Men said that Rath had originally been contacted by the reporter about a completely different issue, but that the reporter had asked unplanned questions. Ramos said that the Western Front had written another article asking students how they felt about a

\$150 fee for the renovation costs and most people seemed fine with the added cost, one student saying that they probably wouldn't notice the added fee.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Motion SC-16-W-6 by Marquina-Negrete of Blue Group

Moved to approve the minutes of 1-26-16 and 2-2-16 with the stipulation that all appropriate changes be made.

Seconded: Butler of BSU Vote: 13-0-0 **PASSED**

V. CLUB UPDATES

CSA- Joint Valentine's Day Meeting with VSA and KSA Thursday at 5pm in Miller Hall.

KhSA- Our Hidden Story: Memoirs from the Cambodian Genocide event in Fraser 102 at 5:30 on February 20th.

SASA- Heritage Dinner March 5th and dance practices every other week and Henna/Friendship Bracelet Fundraiser on 2 /10 and 2/12 from 11am-1pm on Venders Row.

FASA- Singing Been Meeting

HOH- Dance practice at 7pm in AW 1st floor. Ordering Sweatshirts and Shirts.

BSU- "Bae Grams" Wednesday-Friday 10am-3pm on Venders Row.

ACC- "One Love" meeting in VU 464 Wednesday at 5pm.

WHSa- Valentine Potluck 2/9 from 6-7pm in AW 205. Valentine Bake Sale 2/10 on Vender Row from 10am-3pm, gluten free and vegan options. Guest Speaker on Shamanism February 16th in AW 205 from 6-7pm.

MEChA- Tamale Sale Fundraiser Pre Order and Regional Conference in April.

Abby Ramos adjourned the meeting at 6:02pm