

Grant for Expansion of Legal Services in the AS Legal Information Center

Proposed Motion: "The AS Board grants \$22,500 from reserve funds for a period of 2 years to fund the implementation of legal services being provided by an attorney(s) in the Legal Information Center."

Sponsor: VP for Diversity, AS ROP Director

Persons of Contact: Abby Ramos, Casey Hayden, Aleyda Cervantes

Guest Speaker: Abby Ramos and/or Casey Hayden

Date: 5/15/17

Attached Documents: none

Background & Context

This grant proposal is to allow the LIC to provide Legal Services to the student body by creating a pool of funds to pay the time of attorneys or a low-cost legal group to provide direct legal consultation to students. This model is in place at UW and OSU (Oregon). Abby initially did the work to put this forward as a referendum to go on the ballot as a stand-alone fee to all students of \$0.25 per student per quarter. But after further consultation with Aleyda, Sabrina, and others, decided it would be wise to pilot this for a couple of years to gather data on the demand and actual costs to be able to better assess what an operationalized cost would need to be, or to then propose it as a separate fee if not operationalized.

Below is the drafted referendum language as context (but to reiterate, this is no longer going forward as a referendum/fee).

Title: Student Legal Services Fee

Reason for: As the current Legal Information Center on campus is unable to provide legal services other than resources and referrals, this fee will be able to provide students with direct access to a legal professional that can answer questions.

Referendum language: Shall students of WWU be charged \$0.25 per quarter (fall-spring) for legal services that will be free to students? Services will primarily consist of short-term consultation(s) and not on-going or In-court representation. This fee will only cover costs associated with providing the in-office, on-campus consultations and will not extend to any personal legal fees or costs outside of the office.

Legal services provided by this fee cannot involve disputes or conflicts pertaining to WWU. Legal services will be made available on an appointment basis and housed in the AS Legal Information Center. The fee will go into effect beginning Winter 2018, allowing time in Fall of 2017 an Associated Students (AS) committee to select the attorney(s) and or/legal group to be utilized for these services.

Legal advice from a qualified attorney on topics may include, but are not limited to, landlord-tenant disputes, traffic infractions, credit/debtor issues, matters involving employment, disability, veteran benefits, name changes, and others.

For reference:

Oregon State Univ's Legal Services Office <http://asosu.oregonstate.edu/asosu/legalservices>

UW's Legal Services Office <http://depts.washington.edu/slsuw/>

Summary of Proposal

The proposal calls for a grant for 2 years of funding of this new service. An ad hoc committee will be formed to select the legal practitioner that is most appropriate and beneficial to Western students' legal needs. As stated above, the LIC staff cannot give actual legal advice, as they are not practicing attorneys. These funds would allow the LIC to offer students direct, temporary (not ongoing), and actual bona fide legal advice and legal assistance and consultation, beyond what the LIC has been able to offer up to this point.

Fiscal Impacts

The request would be to match the funding of that was laid out in the drafted referendum language.

\$0.25/student per quarter (estimating 15,000 students, for only 3 quarters of operation) = \$11,250

And to run this pilot grant for 2 years: $11,250 \times 2 =$ **\$22,500**

Rationale

(see statement above)

This type of direct service resulting from a pooling of a very small per-student resource (\$0.25 per student per quarter) will allow Western students to have access to what would otherwise be a very costly and out-of-reach service that they would have to navigate arranging on their own.

The LIC already receives the most foot traffic from visitors of any ROP office, even without offering actual legal advice. This would allow the LIC to move to the next level of direct service and to evolve the office into a more critical and useful resource than it already is. Our student body at Western would have the type of legal resource at their fingertips that students have at UW and at Oregon State University. It is a hope that our staff would visit or confer with the staffs at these other institutions to learn more about best practices when launching our new service here.