



[Sargun Handa](#) started this petition to [Western Washington University](#)

## **RACISM. SEXISM. CLASSISM. MICROAGGRESSIONS. BY WWU ADMINISTRATION TO A WOMAN OF COLOR STUDENT LEADER:**

[See here for the correct document explaining this petition!](#)

### **WHAT'S THE ISSUE?**

My name is Sargun Handa and I am a woman of color (WOC) leader at WWU as the AS Senate Pro Tempore (Chair of the AS Student Senate). My time as a WOC leader at WWU has been traumatizing and I need your help. I am being excluded from certain meetings by higher ups in our institution who believe I don't deserve to be there. They have belittled, dismissed, and ignored me (see quotes down below for their racist, sexist, and classist actions & language). The amount of microaggressions I have gone through to simply fulfil my job and help my fellow students is astounding.

- **The Board of Trustees (BOT)** is the most powerful group on campus (even more so than President Sabah Randhawa). This group "is the University's governing body whose broad responsibilities are to supervise, coordinate, manage and regulate Western Washington University."
- **The AS President is a recurring invitee to these meetings to advocate for student interests.** However, the Associated Students is governed by 2 **equal branches**: the Executive Board and the Student Senate. The AS President (Chair of the Executive Board) **can't** fully represent all 16,000 students of WWU and **neither can** the AS Senate Pro Tempore (Chair of the Student Senate). They're supposed to work **together and both attend** the BOT meetings to advocate for students (it's in both of their job descriptions)! However, the BOT refuses to acknowledge the AS Senate Pro Tempore as equal to the AS President by inviting them both to advocate for students.
- As a woman of color, I just want my spot at the table. However, I'm so often excluded and dismissed from WWU's administrative meetings with performative as well as **subtly racist, sexist, and classist language and actions**. Paul Dunn, the Secretary of the BOT and a white man, has been at the forefront of my trauma as a WOC leader at WWU. He has ignored my concerns about how my identity plays a role in their decision to exclude me from the BOT meetings.
- The fact that Paul Dunn hasn't addressed any of my concerns about his prejudice against my racial and gender identity just further proves his implicit bias. If that wasn't the case or if he actually cared about how this microaggression would impact me as a WOC, he would have addressed it by now. **It's been almost 2 months.**
- **Also, John Meyer (Chair of the BOT and a white man) and Sabah Randhawa (WWU President) have been CC'd in these emails and also ignored them.**
- Adding the AS Senate Pro Tempore to the Board of Trustees would only benefit them. It wouldn't take anything away. It would add another student voice at the table. A queer, disabled, first generation college student, assault survivor, and WOC voice. **However, excluding the co-leader of the AS gives a clear**

**message to the WWU community that the BOT doesn't value a fair representation of student voices, much less a WOC student's voice.**

- **I just want to do my job and help/advocate for students.**

## HOW CAN THIS CHANGE?

- The BOT actually **can** invite the Chair of the Student Senate to their meetings (but they decided to “keep the history of... the AS President as [a] formal invitee” - A.K.A the status quo is easy and comfortable to them)!
- **All they need to do is have a 2/3 majority vote to add the AS Senate Pro Tempore as an invitee in their “Rules of Operation” (Bylaws).**
- Page 9, “Because of the unique and integral relationship that the faculty and students bear to the mission of the University, the President of the Associated Students and the President of the Faculty Senate are issued a standing invitation to participate in all of the Board’s public meetings.” **(Just add “and the Chair of the Associated Students Student Senate”)**
- Page 14, **“These rules may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds majority vote of those members present and constituting a quorum of the Board.”**
- These “Rules of Operation” (Bylaws) are from June 2018, **months before the creation of the new Student Senate**, so it’s **outdated** and needs to be **changed**.
- <https://trustees.wwu.edu/bylaws-documents>

## WHAT I’VE BEEN TOLD BY PAUL DUNN:

- “Board’s decision [is to] **not to extend** a separate, recurring invitation to its meetings to the AS Senate Pro Tempore in addition to the AS President” (Excluded)
- “Since you and I began corresponding on this issue in August or September, you have said that you are **entitled** to such an invitation“ (Entitled to equal treatment? No way!)
- “This is not a **status** that can simply be written into existence” (Classist)
- “The Associated Students... cannot **impose** a new obligation on another governing body (much less the Board of Trustees, the only governing body at Western whose authority is established in state law)” (Elitist and untrue because I **asked** for an invitation - see the sixth bullet under “What was not addressed”)
- “These appointments... can’t be created by internal agreement and **the stroke of a pen**” (Patronizing and contradictory to their Bylaws and down below)

## BUT THEN

- “The Board of Trustees **has chosen to invite** the Faculty Senate President and the Associated Students President“ (So, they can invite me, too, right?)

## WHAT WAS NEVER ADDRESSED:

- **The 3 emails where I expressed that my identity as a woman of color was a factor in this decision.**
- 2nd email, “However, **it is upsetting as a woman of color to beg to be present in a room that is in my job description.** It’s also upsetting to be ignored and put off as a WOC. Without any further communication.”
- 3rd email, “Again, this is an issue of getting my spot at the table as a woman of color after being dismissed and put off over and over again. **It may not be your intention in this situation, but that’s the impact it has on me as a microaggression/implicit prejudice.**”

- 3rd email, “I’m choosing to **speak up against the dismissed woman of color leader narrative...** I’m constantly told that Malik deserves to be in certain rooms or meet people more than I do (when we are supposed to work together)... **It’s exhausting to be a woman of color leader at WWU when they claim to have a strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion yet I’m so often excluded and not allowed into the room. If WWU truly is committed to those values, I ask for this to be solved with a recurring invitation to BOT meetings... Is that too much to ask?”**
- 4th email, “In every email I’ve sent, my identity and concerns around that have been **ignored or not addressed** in your responses.”
- 4th email, “**The AS and I are not trying to impose anything upon y’all. If equity and inclusion is seen as ‘imposing’ something upon y’all, then that’s a real issue. ‘When you’re accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression.’** Adding the AS Senate Pro Tempore to Board of Trustees meetings will not do ANYTHING to take away from it. All it can do is add another student voice to the table. In other words, all it can do is benefit the BOT. However, **excluding the AS Senate Pro Tempore sends out a clear message to the WWU community that the BOT does not value a fair representation of student voices.**”
- 4th email, “But, I have to wonder: **If I was a white man, would this process be less difficult?** (This is a rhetorical question and the answer is obviously yes). I had two paths as a WOC leader here: 1) take no for an answer and not be fulfilling my job duties 2) question that no and be seen as a **‘too angry too loud’ woman of color.** I’m completely fine with the latter and I will always push for equity, no matter what.”

## WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM US?

- **Student voices matter.** I request that you **please email Paul Dunn, John Meyer (Chair of the BOT), President Sabah Randhawa, and the rest of the Board of Trustees** to demand equal representation and equity by the BOT. Call them out on their racism, sexism, and classism. **Flood their inbox. Sign this petition** to ask for my (AS Senate Pro Tempore or Chair of the Student Senate) recurring invitation to BOT meetings. **Please share this!** Use your voice, please!
- If you are an AS leader or work in the AS, understand your responsibility in **uplifting BIPOC voices when WWU ignores them.**
- **Stop taking no for an answer** when admin or faculty exclude you from meetings where student voices need to be heard. Use my story as an example of NEVER allowing anyone to silence you.
- **Please stand by me in solidarity** :) It would mean a lot. I’m overworked, traumatized, ignored, belittled, and excluded every day in this job as a WOC leader at WWU.

## EMAIL ADDRESSES:

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## QUESTIONS FOR ME? EMAIL OR DM:

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