

**Western Washington University Associated Students
Student Senate Meeting
Wednesday, January 4, 2012 VU 567**

Student Senators: *Present:* Kendall Bull (Chair), Jered McCardle, Ean Olsen, Ethan Glemaker, Christopher Brown, Amy Stavig, Katie Vainikka, Evan Fowler, Victor Celis, Felipe Espinoza
Absent: Jamie Hamilton, Mason Luvera, Jacquelyn Gratias

Advisor: Lisa Rosenberg

Secretary: Marissa Jaksich

ASVP for Academic Affairs: Fabiola Arvizu (*absent*)

Guest(s): *Election Code Review:* Remy Levin, Patrick Stickney

Western Front: Preston VanSorden

Kendal Bull, Student Senate Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30pm

S-12-W-01 Approval of the minutes of Wednesday, November 9th, 2011. **Passed**

S-12-W-02 Table Approval of the minutes of Wednesday, November 16th, 2011. **Passed**

S-12-W-03 Recommendation to AS Board of Directors to pass Election Code revisions. **Passed**

I. Approval of Minutes

MOTION S-12-W-01 by Celis

Approval of minutes November 9th, 2011

Second: Fowler Vote: 6- 0 - 2 Action: **Passed**

MOTION S-12-W-02 by Celis

Table approval of minutes November 16, 2011

Second: Olsen Vote: 8- 0 - 0 Action: **Passed**

II. Revisions to the Agenda

Fowler moved to make Instant Runoff Voting an action item after it was presented as an info item, so that it could go to the AS Board meeting occurring Friday. 8-0-0

III. Public Forum

IV. Information Items

A. Instant Runoff Voting

Doc. 1, 2

Remy, Election Coordinator and chair of the Election Code Review (ECR), reported that the committee has been making significant progress. The committee passed a recommendation to the AS board of Directors to change Western Washington University's voting system to instant runoff voting (IRV), and came to the night's senate meeting in order to gain the support of the senators in this recommendation. He explained IRV is an alternative voting system where voters rank candidates for a position rather than just choosing one candidate. He laid out the reasons why switching to an IRV system is a good choice. Other methods like plurality voting methods have two main problems: you can get elected without receiving a majority, and second voters may not vote for the candidates they want but instead vote for the

candidate they think can win. Another voting method, Traditional Runoff Elections, the one currently used at WWU, solves the problem of not winning by majority vote, but it is an expensive and time consuming process for candidates and election officials requiring an additional two week period for runoffs. Last year resulted in three run-off elections. Another problem with the current voting system is that the Runoff ultimately tends to have a lower turnout rate and therefore reduces the likelihood that the preferred candidate is elected. IRV solves both problems. Winning candidates receive a majority of the vote and costly and time consuming runoffs are avoided by only having one round of voting. He stressed that IRV is not complicated and explained how it would work. Voters would rank candidate by order of preference for as many or as few as they want. Once votes are cast, they are tabulated. If no candidate has a clear majority of votes, a series of runoffs are simulated. The candidate who receives the fewest first place votes is eliminated. The votes are then re-tabulated taking the second choice candidate for voters whose first choice was eliminated. This process is then continued until a candidate wins by majority. Levin stated that many groups use the IRV system, including many countries, cities, organizations, and other universities. He then added that many people and organizations endorse the use of IRV, including several newspapers, because it aims at making democracy work.

Levin then went on to state the costs associated with switching over to IRV. He explained IRV would cost an additional \$250, however, the university would receive a \$300 discount if they committed to a 3 year contract, which ends up saving the WWU money. The other cost involved would be in putting on events to educate Western students of the new system through educational campaigns. However Levin believes that his existing elections budget was sufficient to cover the costs that would be involved in these efforts.

Senator Brown arrives at 6:47

He concluded by saying that if IRV was passed it would mean no more runoff elections, results would be available within a couple of business days instead of a couple weeks, and candidates elected would be elected with majority. Overall, he believes IRV will save the university time, effort and money.

He then addressed all the specific language changes that would be made to the election code, which included adding a new section, section 5, to outline the IRV process. He also added that they are doing away with the "none of the above" option as it was redundant. He closed by opening the floor to senators if they had any questions or concerns.

Victor advocated for this new voting system, and thought that it would make elections much easier on the candidates, staff, and university as a whole.

MOTION S-12-W-03 by Celis

Recommendation to AS Board of Directors to pass Election Code revisions

Second: Fowler Vote: 7- 1 - 1 Action: **Passed**

B. Parliamentarian Nominations

Senate Chair explained that the current parliamentarian was unable to participate in Senate this quarter, so he reopened nominations for parliamentarian. McCardle nominated Fowler.

VI. Discussion Items

A. Issue of the Quarter

Chair opened the floor to senators for any suggestions on Issue of the Quarter. McCardle brought up that they should revisit the Occupy movement as issue of the quarter that we had discussed in the previous quarter. Vainikka mentioned that the University's Transportation agreement is being renegotiated and new changes will be made. She said that ASTAC wanted more student feedback and thought it would make an interesting Issue of the Quarter. She also presented the dining service changeover from Sodexo to Aramark as a possible issue. Victor talked about how ACC has been working on revising the academic grievance processes. He explained that they have received a lot of faculty input, but not as much student input. They would like to see more student input and believes this would be a good topic to explore as Issue of the Quarter. Ethan suggested the coal train issue. Lisa brought up our public forum requirement for the Senate. The Chair proposed that they turn Winter Quarter's issue into a public forum. He then proposed that senators submit their ideas for issue for the quarter to him by Monday January 9th.

B. Student Senate Reform

The Chair brought up making a Student Senate reform committee, where they would be tasked with improving the legitimacy of senate activities in a separate sub-committee. The Chair asked if anyone would be interested in this committee. Celis, Fowler, McCardle, and Olsen expressed interest in taking part in this sub-committee.

VII. Board Reports/Concerns

VIII. Senator Reports/Concerns

Olsen reported that LAC had special meeting finals week for legislative agenda. If it gets approved next week they will officially have a legislative agenda.

Celis reiterated that ACC was doing work on Academic Grievance procedures. Also, he reported that HigherOne task force had made a recommendation to the AS and University Presidents. They also met with HigherOne to discuss improvements that can be made.

McCardle reported that SPAC is evaluating their first three offices under assessment beginning the following week, including The Edge, Recycling Center, and KUGS. Then the following week they would be reviewing the remaining four.

Espinoza reported that a replacement for Michael Vendiola, the director of the Ethnic Student Center, had been found.

Stavig stated that in addition the Instant Runoff Voting system, ECR has also been discussing campaign finance and the refunds associated with that. They are working on more clearly specifying the process to give candidates a little more freedom.

Folwer added that ECR also voted on allowing clubs the ability to endorse candidates in AS elections.

IV. Other Business:

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED BY ACCLAMATION AT 7:14 P.M.