

**Western Washington University Associated Students**  
**Legislative Affairs Council**  
**Thursday, February 20, 2014 VU 567**

**Present:** Kaylee Galloway (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Matthew Bobbink (Legislative Liaison), Heather Heffelmire (Western Votes!), Oscar Aguirre, Danny Edgel, Blake Bishop, Patrick Eckroth, Maia Hanson

**Absent:** Theo Bickel, Nic Doherty, Joseph Levy

**Advisor:** Kevin Majkut

**Secretary:** Amy Kleitsch

*Kaylee Galloway, Chair of Legislative Affairs Council, called the meeting to order at 5:10pm*

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Additions and Changes to the Agenda**

**III. Approval of the Minutes**

**IV. Public Forum**

**V. Discussion Items**

**A. Federal Agenda**

Galloway has received updated drafts on the Student Debt and Dream Act Proposal. Heffelmire wants to include the Higher Education Act reauthorization that is going to happen next year in her proposal. She thinks USSA is going to be focusing a lot on the Higher Education Act reauthorization and is waiting to hear back from USSA on what their priorities are for this. She said next meeting she will have her updated For-Profit Accountability proposal ready or a proposal revolving around the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act created. Bishop added a summary section to the Student Debt proposal about why it is important. He already has summarized the bills they think are important and encourages the committee to give him feedback on any legislation they deem important or legislation they missed. Eckroth said his three sections still need a lot of work and he hasn't been able to get in touch with his work study contact. He said his research on the Fairness for Struggling Students Act is for the most part finished. Bishop said his research on the Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act is for the most part finished as well. Bishop found an article from a university in Texas that showed a large variance in the pay graduate students receive for graduate assistantships. He said this university organized a sit-in in front of the president's office and ended up securing a million dollars in funding graduate students. Bishop brought this to the Graduate Council because they have a sub-committee working on graduate pay at the university level, but since Western Washington University doesn't have a large variance in Graduate student pay the sub-committee is looking more into how much they should pay grad students rather than if they get paid the same amount. He is going to get on update on where the sub-committee is regarding graduate student pay. Galloway wondered if the funding for graduate student assistantships

was federally funded so they could advocate on more funding for these programs. Bishop thinks the money goes to the department and then gets portioned out to the students. Galloway wants to look at ways to get more graduate student representation into this proposal. Majkut noted that in the summary the average debt per borrower was said to be \$29,400. He thinks they should get the numbers of Western Washington University's student debt rate because he believes it is lower than the average. He thinks this would be beneficial to have when you are talking to legislatures about student loan debt. Galloway wonders if the committee still wants to structure of the Federal Agenda to include values and specific bills they were interested in. Hanson thinks they should assess what would be more effective strategy to present our topics and then shape the format to that. Galloway thinks focusing solely on bills they would limit themselves to only advocate for those bills, but if they do value statements they run the risk of being too broad. Her rationale behind a hybrid structure would be that they are keeping it broad by explaining their values as well as identify specific and tangible things that are already on the table to discuss.

***Matthew Bobbink entered the meeting 530***

Eckroth doesn't want to forget about bills that are not on their agenda, but support their ideas. Aguirre suggested that in their values based description they could say they are in favor of additional bills that align with their value statements. Galloway envisions writing a two sentence value statement with at least three bullet point that describe the specifics of the value points. She said they will at least three or four value statement sections on one page. She explained that on the second page they will write the name of the bills they support, include bullet of what the bill is about, and explain how it pertains to students. Hanson suggests changing the Dream Act title because the other two topics are broad concepts while the Dream Act is more specific. Galloway thinks that changing title would be necessary if they are going to talk about measures other than the Dream Act, but if not it would be better to keep it specific. Eckroth noticed there are a lot similarities in 2013 Federal Agenda that they would be able to use in their agenda for this year. Bobbink said it is beneficial to have overarching statement because it allows for a lot more flexibility. He said the overarching statement doesn't have to apply to every bill on their list as long as the bills apply to students and bettering higher education. He thinks there is value in keeping this simple because using fancy heading over the topics they are discussing may muddy the agenda down. He said they shouldn't be tying themselves down with a piece of paper because what is most important is how they present this orally. Galloway predicts that most of the bills on their agenda have a slim chance of passing. Heffelmire agrees, but thinks it is important to take a stance on these issue anyway. Bobbink said the only way for these bills to gain mobility is if the conversation about them continues. He said the more time these bills get brought up, the more likely the legislation will pass in the future. Galloway would like to draft what the committee priorities are in this document. Heffelmire has been in touch with USSA Legislative director on what their priorities are.

***Majkut left the meeting at 6:00pm***

Heffelmire suggested adding something about how there is currently \$1.2 trillion dollars of student debt and how they believe that higher education should be accessible to all students. Hanson suggests getting an outline of their priorities and then worry about the semantics and formatting later. She wonders if they should touch on the rising price of education over the past 20 years and how the legislation taking care of student loans have not followed suit. Heffelmire suggests adding that student debt has quadrupled in the past decade. Hanson thinks they should get the point across in as few words as possible. Galloway agrees and thinks it would be fine if they keep the value statements 3 lines maximum. She will share this document with everyone so they can add more to it. She is thinking they will have about three or four bullet points for each topic they are focusing on. Hanson was looking for legislation having to do with campus safety, but couldn't find any obvious bills that were in support of it. She thinks

Obama might forming a committee to look at the different ways different universities handle sexual violence. She said there was no specific bill regarding this topic though. She will look more into this topic, but doesn't know if she will have all her research done by next meeting. Heffelmire will let Hanson know USSA is supporting any bills regarding student and campus safety. Aguirre and Edgel added more precise and appealing language and facts to their Dream Act Proposal. He said the will draft up language for the next meeting. Galloway encourages everyone to focus their time on language than working on the proposal itself. She would like the updates posted to the Google document by March 24<sup>th</sup> at 10am. She said they are going to overlap with the Board on passing this.

**B. Legislative Action Fund Referendum Overview**

Galloway wanted to discuss her most recent board document to approve the LAF referendum. She said this referendum is going to be seen on the ballot in the spring and it would change the structure of the budget that they oversee as a committee. She doesn't think they can advocate for it as a committee, but encourages everyone to share their experience on the committee to others. She explained this restructure of Legislative Action Fund would have students pay a dollar to the LAF, but they have the option to opt out of it. She said right now they opt in and choose to donate. She said this would almost double their revenue if most students would not opt out, while at the same time making their budget more predictable. Hanson wondered if they have to opt out each quarter. Galloway is unsure because they currently don't have an infrastructure for an opt out system, so they are working with the student business office to figure it out. Hanson suggests if they make it an opt out system they should make students opt out every quarter or annually. Galloway said when she talked to Central Washington University, their VP of Legislative affairs said that student rarely ever opt out of their current fee system. She said the referendum language is going to include that student representation is important and that passing this would increase the return on investment in their advocacy efforts.

**VI. Next Meeting Date**

- February 24, 2014

**VII. Adjourn**

*The Meeting was adjourned at 6:42*