

**Western Washington University Associated Students  
Legislative Affairs Council  
Thursday, November 5, 2015 VU 567**

**Present: Patrick Eckroth (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Josie Ellison (Legislative Liaison), McKenzie Dent (Local Liaison), Nora Selander (Western Votes), Bridget Doyle Williams, Sarah Davies, Sarah Berglin.**

**Absent: Seth Ceely**

**Advisor: Lisa Rosenberg**

**Secretary: Bryce Hammer**

**Guest: Abby Ramos (VP of Diversity), Becca Kenna-Schenk (Director of Government Relations), and Joe Timmons (Assistant Director of Government Relations)**

**MOTIONS**

- LAC-15-F-14** Motion passed, approve the minutes from 10-22-2015 and 10-29-2015.  
**LAC-15-F-15** Motion passed, funding request moved to action items.  
**LAC-15-F-16** Motion passed, \$575 approved for Abby Ramos.  
**LAC-15-F-17** Motion approved by acclimation, Nora approved as Vice Chair.

**Patrick Eckroth, Chair of Legislative Affairs Council, called the meeting to order at 4:03pm**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**A. Introduction of the New Council Members and Guests—Patrick**

With the addition of the new council members Patrick asked the council to introduce their name, their pronouns and their major. He also said there is a committee member who hasn't been able to come to any of the meetings and might soon be removed from the council.

**II. REVISIONS TO THE AGENDA**

**A. Vice Chair nominations and elections added under other business—Patrick**

Nominations for vice chair will be opened at the end of the meeting, nominees will speak for a short time and then elections will be held. Councilmembers are allowed to nominate themselves. So far there is only one nominee, Nora Selander.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. MOTION LAC- 15-F-14 by Ellison**

Approved the minutes from 10-22-2015, 10-29-2015

Second: Selander Vote: 7-0-0 Action: Motion passed, minutes approved

#### IV. PRESENTATION

##### A. Becca Kenna-Schenk (Director of Government Relations) and Joe Timmons (Assistant Director of Government Relations)

Becca introduced herself as the Director of Government Relations. She said Joe Timmons and she act as the liaisons to the governor's office and the legislature, so they spend most of their time in Olympia. They met with Patrick and Josie last week about their two agendas and they look forward to the continuing relationship with LAC. Joe Timmons introduced himself. He said he's based in Western when session is out but during session he's in Olympia with Becca full time. Patrick said that a good place to start would be the faculty's legislative priorities for the university as a whole. Becca started with background information about the upcoming session. The legislature in the state of WA operates under a two year cycle, in odd numbered years the legislature meets for 105 days, in even number years they meet for 60 days. This was introduced about 30 years ago when the role of government was changing. We're approaching 2016, a short session, which is usually technical in nature. They are primarily to change budgets that already exists. They're hoping that anything that comes out of this session will be additive and won't take away from anything that was passes in 2015. On the policy side, short sessions go really quickly and the volume of bills is less then what you would typically see in the long session but it's still substantial. A lot of legislatures are saying that not a whole lot is going to happen when it comes to new revenue, the political dynamics are such that there's not much room for compromise and they need to be finished with session before they can start fundraising for campaigns. With the McCleary obligations they will most likely pass a supplemental operating budget, though there are some rumors that they won't. It is possible that they won't pass a capital budget. In Higher Ed, the issue that will be upfront is campus safety, due to the recent school shootings. McCleary also relates to Higher Ed because there is a shortage of trained teachers and we need more in this state. There is a chance that Western will be involved because of Woodring the current state of teacher preparation. There is a discussion about recruiting students to teach and how to retain teachers. Beyond that the focus will be on protecting the investments that the legislature made last session, which will be implemented in the year to come. Western is going to take a 15% reduction in tuition. The state did a pretty good job of finding funding for the backfill, which Becca and Joe are going to keep an eye on to make sure it gets to Western. They are keeping a focus on that as well as the investments that they made in faculty and staff. Joe said that back fill is going to be the gap that is left from the reduction in tuition. Becca said that as far as agendas go, Western's top priority will be student success. They are putting forward the exact same proposal as last year (requesting 2.4 Million in ongoing funding added to the baseline budget) which would effectively allow the university to hire more advisors and mental health councilors as well as a few

more positions. Western has been committed to serving the needs of the state and looking at WA, and the student body coming out of K-12, there is an increasingly diverse and historically underserved student population. There is a lot of research that points to advisors being needed to help those students. Since the 70s Western has underfunded this area in an effort to preserve its core academic function. Student support services falls under the idea of administration which is where Western will cut in times of trouble. The university is currently running into that problem. When students want to access counseling services they are put on a waitlist. Councilors are leaving because their caseloads are so large they feel like they can't serve the students in the way they need to. Also, it would provide more staff opportunities for peer tutoring. Nora asked if funding is going to training people that have experience with sexual assault and special education. Becca said she doesn't know if the funds would go to sexual assault prevention and training. Funding was not provided for the federal mandate that faculty have training for that purpose. Becca said the other operation priority is 4.4 million for the network and wireless renewal initiative. Western's IT infrastructure is aging and it's hard to stay ahead of the new technological on a campus that is the size of Western and it's a problem because of safety and learning. Upgrades are currently paid for in the student technology fee. There's not enough money to do that thoroughly, and access to wireless should be covered by the state as a student right. Joe told Nora that there was a task force created for the senate bill which will make recommendations about sexual violence. There is a rep from Western on the task force. Patrick said the last proposal is something that TAC will be talking about. Becca said they also have requests for safety on campus. Swipe cards are only on 1/3 of the campus. Campus safety community has identified that as an area that should be improved upon to increase campus safety. Joe said if questions come up later the council should feel free to reach out any time. Becca said that last year they tried to coordinate a lobby day training which didn't end up happening but they'd be willing to try again, though there is already a lot of experience on the council in terms of lobbying (they left at 4:42). Patrick called for a five minute recess.

## **V. INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **A. Rules of Operation—Patrick**

Patrick went to ESC and President's Council to talk about the ESC position in the Rules of Operation. Other than that the only changes are small, mostly fixing the language of the document. Patrick asked if anyone has other changes they'd like to make, none were offered.

### **B. Oregon Students of Color Conference Funding Request—Abby Ramos (VP of Diversity)**

Josie asked that when this document get put online the phone numbers and emails be blacked out. Patrick agreed. This document was brought by Abby Ramos, VP of Diversity because seven students are travelling to the Oregon Students of Color Conference. Two have been funded by AS Personnel Office's Staff development fund, three by the ESC Steering Committee, and they're

hoping the last two will be covered by the LAC. They are requesting \$546.56. Josie asked if they'd like to have wiggle room in the amount of money that we give them. Patrick said yes, maybe we should say they should not exceed \$600. Josie said that may or may not be necessary but if it is then we should fund them. Lisa agreed. Patrick said that Abby will be coming soon to discuss it. Until then, he went over the funding policy. The funding policy says that requests go through a two week cycle in the council, one week as an information item and one as an action item.

Josie made a motion to move the request from information items to action items so that they can get the money as soon as possible.

*MOTION LAC- 15-F-15 by Ellison*

To move the Oregon Students of Color Conference from Information Items to Action Items.

Second: Selander Vote: 7-0-0  
action.

Motion Passes, item moved to

C. Proposals for the AS Agenda—Patrick

i. Dedicated Revenue

Patrick introduced the proposals for today. There was some feedback from students and while some of it didn't really apply to the legislative agenda there was some good information in there. Patrick will be getting in touch with the people that sent them soon. There is an event on Monday that will involve person to person contact. For the proposals the council will be starting with dedicated revenue. Josie said that dedicated revenue for higher education will specify where the money can come from to give to higher education because consistent funding is important. Showing that we've thought about how to pay for it will help when talking to legislatures. Starting with taxing cannabis. A portion of those taxes goes into the general fund, some goes into treatment, research, healthcare, and WA state control board. We would be requesting that part of it that goes into the general fund goes into higher education. Patrick said that in terms of the state operating budget there is the general fund and then the transportation fund so everything that's not transportation comes out of the gen fund. Josie said that we often end up fighting against other organizations, like labor. Next is taxing lottery winnings, taxing the money that comes out of the state lottery, some of it goes into winnings and then some goes into the Washington state need grant and work study. We would be looking at the other locations that the money is allocated to. We're trying to get more allocated to Higher Ed and we're looking at taxing the actual winning. Then there is the fuel exemption that was created for wood burning refineries but it was before

WA had non-wood burning refineries. The other refineries in the state are not wood burning so we should tax the fuel because it would increase tax revenue to around 30 million per year and would only effect five refineries. B&O tax on R&D firms is in limbo, it should have expired but it might have been re added under different language. Leaving it on incase it didn't get closed. On increasing the estate tax, there is a difference between estate tax and inheritance tax. The estate tax is not charged to people who are receiving funding. Washington's is currently 10-20% and we're looking doubling it. It would generate about 200 million biennium. Bank tax loophole for first time homeowners. It was created for Washington Mutual, which has since closed down and there is no longer a need to keep that benefit. Repealing the sales tax exemption on bottled water, which we should have bigger discussion about which will affect low income communities because it's a regressive tax and it will only generate 44 mil biennium. Real estate tax, foreclosed properties that are being sold by banks are not taxed and we're trying to change that, it will produce 81.9 million. The capital gains tax, which is new, would tax high end financial assets. For families it would only tax gains over 50K and for individuals it would be 25K. It would only be on incomes of over 490K per household. Sarah B asked if we're trying to get all of these dedicated to higher education. Josie said no, the best bet would be to lobby for all of them and then create a package that higher education would receive. However the capital gains tax could generate 800 mil per year which would fully fund higher education in Washington. It's not politically feasible but it's typically on the admin's agenda. Sarah B. asked how they picked the 490K cap. Josie said it would be a tax rate of 7% on that money, 41 states have capital gains tax and 14 are at or above what we're asking for. Up to 40% of the tax could be recouped through lower federal tax payments and federal reductions. After no questions were asked Patrick asked for people's opinions about the sales tax on bottled water. It represents student body in the environmental arena well but it is a regressive tax. Sarah D asked how much it generates. Josie said 44 mil per biennium. Nora said Western supporting a regressive tax would be historically contradictory. Josie said that the reason it's on Western's list is because the state Democrats put out a list of four things that had potential revenue and we already had three, this was the fourth. McKenzie said it's regressive in more than one way because of some people's limited access to clean water. Sarah B. said that water is something everyone should have access too. Josie said that we can just take it off the agenda for this year and the council agreed.

**ii. VOTE—Nora and Josie**

Nora said Western does a huge push to register voters every year but right now the process of being a voter in WA is really inaccessible and Western is trying to break down those barriers. Motor Voter, which is talked about a lot in Oregon and California, is when you get your license at 16 you're

automatically registered to vote and then a ballot would be sent to you when you turn 18. Landlord registration would require landlords to hand out voter registration forms when new tenants move in to their properties. This is important for Western because it hits the college students. The Voting Rights Act, which is being amended, is designed to help historically underrepresented identities get involved in the voting process. Extending the deadline for voter registration, right now there is only a week and a half for registering voters before the deadline hits at the beginning of the school year. This would extend the voting deadline so people get a bigger window of registration. Josie said that they are trying to get people with disabilities access to voting. The biggest problem is signatures that don't match up and this would allow people that have a different signature due to disabilities to vote without going through the hassle that they have to go through now. Prepaid postage for voting envelopes is the next item. Poll taxes were implemented in the past so only wealthy people could vote. Having to put a stamp on the envelope is a poll tax. The idea is that the state could reimburse counties for prepaid envelopes. Important because people often don't know where to get stamps or have the inclination to do so on voting days. Nora said that these seem attainable and have gone through the legislature before. Josie said the VRA became more politically feasible over the past year. Patrick said that the Motor Voter registration made it pretty far last year.

**iii.** Support for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Survivors—Bridget, Nora, and Josie

Bridget said that they're trying to find more support for survivors of sexual violence. They took the proposal from last year and updated it to fit this year's information with respect to the development of the Title IX investigations. Bridget had the idea of sending in letters of people's experience but that might be triggering for some people. Nora said that this dates back to why she asked Becca and Joe about sexual assault cases. She wants it made a priority, and she'd like the students to push this issue because college students are the demographic that is most at risk. It is being presented from a support survivor's angle because that is where our campus is really failing though we could also come at it from a prevention angle. Patrick prompted Josie to talk about the two campaigns that are happening in this area right now. Josie said Carry That Weight was a project at Columbia that became pretty well known. It's On Us is the White House's campaign. There's a couple more including one in California that is similar to the one happening in Washington. Trainings on how to support services, increasing amount of access that survivors have on campus. Patrick said he wants to know if it's possible for the faculty to lobby for it. Nora said that it is. Patrick asked about the domestic violence pieces. Bridget said she'd like to see them added. Josie said they go hand in hand and we can look for funding for that. It's not normally explicitly stated but we could direct it. Patrick said he wants to

know who in the university would create that. Josie said that at the University level there's the faculty senate and then the planning committee and it would probably go towards them. Sarah B. said that the disability center helps with students with disabilities and she'd like to know if they could also help survivors. Josie said CASAS usually works with faculty to create that cushion but we can work out something more specific. Sarah B. asked if we're looking for councilors that have similar experiences or if we're trying to increase training for councilors that already exist. Josie said that it used to be under student success but we'd like to have specific positions in the counseling services that are identity based positions who have experience with sexual violence. Patrick said next week these will be action and more proposals as info items.

## **VI. ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Oregon Students of Color Conference Funding Request—Abby Ramos**

Abby introduced herself to the council. She explained that for the past few years the VP for Diversity has sent a representative down to the Oregon Student of Color Conference because the WSA doesn't have one. This year they are sending seven students. Two are being funded by the Staff Development fund, three are by ESC Steering Committee, and two by LAC. The students were chosen before Abby came to the meeting. They were picked based on if they've been to conferences before, most of the students going this year haven't. The reason for choosing students that haven't been before is they will be building a relationship with the AS and learning more about their identities. Abby said she has been doing a lot of outreach to the students, through the ROP and other means, and ended up with a big pool of applicants to pick from. Also, for those that do go to the conference they will be expected to go to the Board of Director's meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November to discuss what they learned. This will also aid in setting up a budget for the VP of Diversity. This will be proof that conferences that are centered on identity and representation are needed. She is also planning on sending students to the queer students of color conference in March.

*MOTION LAC- 15-F-16 by Ellison*

Motion to suspend the conference policy and allocate funds not to exceed \$575 to Abby Ramos.

Second: Selander Vote: 7-0-0

Motion passes, funds allocated.

## **VII. REPORTS**

- A. VP for Governmental Affairs:** Viking Lobby day planning is under way. Publicity should be going out next week, there will be handbills and posters etc. Organizing and Outreach coordinator will be a new role that will be filled soon. Other than that he's working on getting the student body involved.

- B. Legislative Liaison: Josie asked if people are available this weekend to write proposals, the council decided that Monday night would work the best. Other than that they've been working on general stuff, a lot of proposal work. Working with the WSA. All of the liaisons for the WSA have officially been hired. Starting to talk about who gets to work on what issues. Looking at what session in the WSA is going to look like. Meeting with faculty lobbyists to see what their agenda is going to look like. The United Faculty of Washington State is what our local chapter is. The national union's local chapters on campus is sending someone out. They're looking at ways we can collaborate the student agenda with other agendas that are around. Lastly, they are meeting on Monday to be talking about the legislative agenda and explain it to the students and getting feedback from them. They will also be doing overviews of proposals.
- C. Local Liaison: Went to the tenant waste task force, which is basically about the students leaving furniture on the streets and trying to find ways to fix that. They talked about funding options for that. It went surprisingly well. Proposed a lot of different ideas, trying to balance education for students, and a canvas module will potentially be added. Balancing enforcement for the landlords being responsible for the things left on their property. Local voter guides went well. She'd like to put it in her legacy document so the next local liaison can get a jumpstart on it. The results of the election were put online, some of the propositions contradict each other. Patrick said parts of nine supersedes parts of 1. McKenzie said she doesn't know how three and ten are going to work.
- D. Western Votes!: Tuesday was election day, interesting things happening in Whatcom County. There will be an event on Monday for Western Votes where they will talk about the WA state assembly and watch the West Wing.

## **VIII. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **A. Vice Chair Elections**

Patrick opened up nominations for the vice chair position. There were none. Nora said that she's excited to be nominated. Josie made a motion to approve by acclamation, Nora was approved as the vice chair.

*MOTION LAC-15-F-17 by Ellison*

Motion to approve Nora Selander as the LAC Vice Chair by acclamation. Motion approved.

***The Meeting was adjourned at 5:44pm.***