



AS Structural Review Committee

Friday, January 22nd, 2016

2:30pm

VU460

- Members:** *Present:* Hannah Brock (AS VP for Business and Operations, Chair); Mason Hawk (Student-At-Large); Kevin Recto (Residence Hall Association Representative); Daniel Edgel (Student-At-Large); Hannah van Amen (Student-At-Large)
Absent: Luciane DeAlmeida (AS Queer Resource Center Assistant Coordinator); BreAnn Sherrill (Student-At-Large); Samantha Goldblatt (Student-At-Large); Emma Palumbo (AS VP for Student Life); Patrick Eckroth (AS VP for Governmental Affairs); Jordan Walley (Athletics Representative)
- Advisors:** Lisa Rosenberg (Assistant Director for Student Activities); Greg McBride (Assistant Director of Viking Union Facilities); Casey Hayden (Coordinator of Student Activities)
- Secretary:** Octavia Schultz (AS Board Assistant for Internal Committees)
- Guests:** Marco Morales (Student-At-Large); Bill Martin (Student-At-Large); Belina Seare (AS President); Moise Payne (Student-At-Large)

Motions:

No motions were made.

Brock called the meeting to order at 2:33pm

I. Discussion Item

a. Committee Overview

Brock gave the committee a brief overview of the creation and function of the committee. She noted the Student Senate had been put on hiatus and the AS Structure Review Committee was tasked with reviewing the structure of the AS as an organization and the Student Senate. She noted the committee would focus on the governmental structure of the organization. Seare inquired what kind timeline the committee working was with. Brock stated the committee had been established with a three-year process in mind, but could have met longer if needed. Rosenberg noted that the Charge and Charter of the committee listed a suggested timeline with distinct phases of the review process, noting that there was a goal of submitting recommendations in the spring of 2016. Brock stated the committee welcomed new members, and that she would have been available to meet personally with new members to update them on what the committee had covered previously. Hayden noted that the committee was an advisory committee to the AS Board of Directors and did not have decision making authority, but that recommendations would have been sent to the AS Board of Directors for review.

II. Information Item

a. Student Senate Structure

Rosenberg noted that she and McBride had both previously been advisors to the Student Senate. She stated the purpose of the senate was to serve as an advisory council to the AS Board of Directors and that before the Student Senate had been established,

there had been previous attempts to create an advisory body to the Board of Directors. She gave the committee a brief overview of the groups prior to the Student Senate, and noted the Student Senate was established in the 2000-2001 academic year. She stated student senators were volunteer positions, and that they were required to serve one to two committees in addition to the Student Senate. She mentioned the initial task of the senate was to find and research issues or topics to bring to the attention of the AS Board of Directors and provide feedback or suggestions about things the Board of Directors was working on, though traditional practice did not follow that model. She mentioned it was uncommon that Board members called upon the senate or addressed things the senate had brought to them. McBride noted there had been times in which the senate would bring an issue or discussion to the Board of Directors, but the Board did not take action or move forward with the discussion. He stated the senate was a useful body for gathering extra feedback on issues that senators would then bring to their additional committees, allowing for more student representation on university committees. Rosenberg agreed that she did see the committee feedback system working well in the senate. She stated that though there was not much clarity in the actual role of the Student Senate, it provided an entry point for students that wanted to get involved in student government, and gave them an opportunity to learn about the AS and gain professional skills. McBride agreed, noting that many student senators went on to become Board members after their time on the senate. Rosenberg stated that four years' prior, the student senators had raised concerns that the senate was underutilized and discussed ideas about what role the body could have taken to be a check and balance system to the Board of Directors. She stated that in the spring of 2012, the Board of Directors made the decision to put the Student Senate on hiatus, and a student was hired to research and provide recommendations about how to restructure the senate. She stated due to personal reasons the student employee had not been able to finish their duties, and a referendum was added to the AS elections ballot to remove the Student Senate. She noted that the referendum did not pass, in part due to the fact that there had been no education for students at large about why the Student Senate would have been removed. She stated the senate had been suspended again, and the AS Structure Review committee had been created. Edgel entered at 2:55pm. Rosenberg stated that it had been easy to come up with ideas about what role the senate could have taken, but it was important to consider why the senate was needed. McBride stated the problems with the Student Senate had been cyclic, and reoccurred each year as membership changed. He stated typically in winter quarter senators began to question the value of their participation. Martin inquired if senators were required to attend Board meetings, and vice versa. Rosenberg stated there was a designated Board member that attended Senate meetings, and that the leader of the Senate attended Board meetings. McBride noted that the designated Board member was not always present at the Senate meetings. Rosenberg stated that varied over different years. Hayden noted that it was important to consider what true representation was, why it was needed, and what sort of relationship the Board of Directors should have had with a Student Senate. He mentioned there were various ways that relationship could have been structured, such as a check and balance system, an advisory board, or serving as the Board's connection to campus communities. Brock stated one of the priorities of the AS Board of Directors that year was accountability within the organization. She noted the Board members that year were very thoughtful and careful about how they represented students, but that may not

have been the case in future years, and it was important to implement a system that held Board members accountable for how they represented students at large. She noted the Personnel Office was supposed to have been a check and balance system to the Board of Directors though the structure of the organization didn't make it so, mentioning that the AS VP for Business and Operations oversaw the Personnel Office. She noted the Board of Directors primarily had themselves and students at large to hold them accountable, and that students at large were often not engaged in what the Board was doing. She stated that advisors were great sources of information and advice, but that ultimately the Board of Directors had final say over a lot of what the AS did. Edgel stated that a Student Senate needed to be just as legitimate and powerful as the Board of Directors. Hawk inquired how student senators had been chosen in previous years. Rosenberg stated there had been one senator for every thousand students at the university, and that they were appointed through the committee application process. She noted there had usually been just enough applicants to fill all of the seats on the Senate. She stated the type of representation varied throughout the years, and stated that at one point the Senate was composed of representatives from each of the colleges at the university. McBride stated that one of the concerns many senators had was that they didn't have a voice for students like the Board of Directors did. Seare stated the decision making process of the organization was faulty. Brock agreed. She noted that when Board members sat on university committees they were often asked what students thought of particular issues or decision, but it was impossible for Board members to know what all students wanted. She also noted there was no representation for satellite campuses of the university. Hayden posed the question of how well the Board of Directors really represented students at large. He noted that most student governments had Senates and elected senators, but that the AS had a more corporate model that was trying to be representative. McBride noted there was a trend of west coast universities taking on more corporate structures, whereas east coast universities tended to follow a more representative structure. Seare brought up the AS Charge and Charter, noting it had been created by the Board of Trustees, and inquired how making the AS an incorporated entity would have been different. McBride cited REI as an example of an organization that would have been a similar model. Hayden noted the organizational structure of the AS had not always been what it was at the time, noting that the relationship between the AS and the university had been very different when the organization was formed. He stated the AS was working toward shared governance with the administration and faculty, and noted that it gave the Board members a lot of responsibility. Edgel noted that Board members were somewhat detached from students at large because of the nature of their positions and the amount of work they were expected to do. He speculated that may have been a partial cause of low student participation in AS elections. He stated the goal of the Student Senate should have been to alleviate some of the burden of the Board of Directors and create a platform for student voices to have been heard. He also suggested having one senator represent student employees on campus.

b. Whatcom Community College Student Government Structure

Morales noted that at Whatcom Community College there were eight directors and twelve senators that all met together once per week to make decisions. He stated that structure was very successful, noting that each member received a small stipend each quarter they served, and that many members stayed for the entire academic year. He

stated senators were given a certain number of hours to complete work and were paid at the end of each quarter. He noted that senators needed signatures from students in order to serve, and that students could only endorse one person, so senators needed to engage with a portion of the student population to be elected. Brock inquired how vetoes worked. Morales stated that the President did not have voting power unless a vote was tied. He stated that the Senate and the Board of Directors still had separate meetings, but met together for larger or more important issues and topics. Brock inquired how many students were enrolled at the college. Morales stated there were about 6,000 students. McBride inquired how it was decided where each issue was brought. Morales stated it was at the discretion of the Board of Directors. He noted there were times that the Senate had the most power because there were twelve senators and only eight directors. Brock inquired if the Senate created policies or legislation. Morales stated there was a separate committee that presented recommendations to the Senate, and occasionally to the Board of Directors. There was discussion about reviewing the Charge and Charter of the AS further.

III. Adjourn

Brock adjourned the Meeting at 3:35pm.