



# AS Management Council

Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

4:00pm

YU 567

**Members:** *Present:* Mary Moeller (AS VP for Business and Operations, Chair); Scott McDowell (AS Publicity Center Account Executive); Tori Engström (AS Personnel Director); Jacqueline Chavez (AS Ethnic Student Center Internal Coordinator); Jordan Van Hoozer (AS KUGS Program Director); Peter Biethan (KVIK Coordinator); Mohammad Ebrahimi (AS Communications Director); Emma J. Opsal (AS Assessment Coordinator); Makenna Schumacher (AS Productions Director); Anna Kemper (AS Environmental & Sustainability Programs Director); Alex Baker (AS Review Assistant Editor).

*Absent:* Abby Ramos (AS Resource & Outreach Programs Director); Spencer Pickell (AS Outdoor Center Equipment Shop Coordinator); Henry Pollet (AS Representation & Engagement Programs Director); Marya Rybalka (AS Business Director); Danielle Freyer (AS Club Event Planning Facilitator).

**Advisor:** Lisa Rosenberg (Assistant Director for Student Activities)

**Secretary:** Chrissa Browder-Long (Board Assistant for Internal Committees)

**Guests:** Sue Guenter-Schlesinger (ADA Coordinator); Mallory Sullivan (Equal Opportunity Office); Mohammed Cato (Equal Opportunity Office); Serina Edward-Pius (SIRC Assistant Coordinator).

*Mary Moeller called the meeting to order at 4:06pm.*

## I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

## II. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### A. ADA Training

Sue Guenter-Schlesinger emphasized the importance of understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how to help accommodate for people with disabilities. The Equal Opportunity Office implements all civil rights laws that have to do with "legally protected characteristics of individuals" which includes issues with race, gender, identity, age, sex, disability, national origin and many more. Guenter-Schlesinger explained that they implement state and federal laws which include the ADA across Western's campus. She added that the ADA is extensive and covers organizations and institutions outside of higher education. She emphasized that the EOO is available as a resource to provide information. She stated that in 1973 the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was passed that ensured that employees and students with disabilities were not discriminated against. The ADA laws try to ensure that all students and employees are accommodated for in the classroom and all educational activities. She stated that these laws are reiterated in Western's policy and can be found on Western's Equal Opportunity Office website as well as the student handbook and faculty handbook. The Disability Resource Services office provides accommodations for students but the EOO works with that office as well as with the Human Resources office. She emphasized the importance of understanding what qualifies as a disability. She explained that a disability is a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more life activities. She stated that WA has a robust civil rights system and the laws in WA are

even more broad than the federal policies. For example, in WA even temporary disabilities can be considered qualified within the ADA. Guenter-Schlesinger added that under law, any student or faculty member with a disability much be provided a reasonable accommodation as long as it does not create undue hardship. She explained that once the disability is considered qualified under the ADA definitions, a DRS counselor works to determine what accommodations would help them succeed in that class. An example of "undue hardship" could be having three of the largest lecture halls on campus being inaccessible to people with physical disabilities. The EOO would change the classroom because changing the classroom would cost a lot less than installing something like an elevator. The EOO will meet with professors to explain why accommodations need to be made and will deal with any conflicts between students and professors. Guenter-Schlesinger explained that if there is a conflict, the student could come to the EOO to file a formal complaint or discuss the issue and the EOO would help resolve the issue. She stated that discrimination and harassment can be focused toward people with disabilities. Guenter-Schlesinger explained that more training, education and awareness is needed to mitigate these issues. She stated that when someone feels that they are being discriminated against or harassed, they should document and report the incident as well as tell the harasser to stop and explain how the behavior is offensive to them. She explained that the EOO usually try to resolve the issues informally by discussing the conflict with the professor or employer to help them understand the issue. Guenter-Schlesinger stated that periodic studies have shown that all institutions started to investigate physical access (architectural access) of higher education campuses in 1993 (3 years after ADA was passed). When Guenter-Schlesinger arrived in 2005, there hadn't been an architectural access study of Western's campus since 1993. But in 2007, a consulting firm came to train 15 staff members and faculty on how to analyze the campus to determine areas of inaccessibility. But there is no money reserved to make the campus more accessible so little by little, the changes are being made. She added that she is the chair for Disability Advisory Council where they discuss what the next priority is to make campus more accommodating and accessible. Guenter-Schlesinger expressed the importance of the language chosen when discussing issues regarding disability and how the language differs based on the group of people you are with. She stated that the word "handicapped" is considered a derogatory term and the ADA differed from the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 by putting people in front of disability. The ADA has caused higher education and other institutions to realize what changes need to be made. She asked for everyone to be more aware and wonder what accommodations could be made within the AS offices for people with disabilities. She noted that there are invisible disabilities as well but everyone is still credible and able to be accommodated for. She added that the ADA demands confidentiality, respect and privacy. The ADA is trying to empower people with disabilities to choose whether they want an accommodation or not and take action. Guenter-Schlesinger emphasized the importance of never asking someone if they have a disability. Makenna Schumacher asked how they could make the AS Productions concerts more accessible to people with service animals or invisible disabilities. Guenter-Schlesinger stated that in the past the staff hadn't been appropriately trained and weren't aware that service animals were allowed at the concerts. There was an incident where an usher started to ask detailed questions about a patron's service dog and the patron was very offended. She stated that you'll never be

able to guess all the disabilities of people who may want to attend the concerts but they can try their best to accommodate for as many as possible. She added that there are some concert halls that have special earphones for anyone with hearing impairments. She thought that in any advertisement for an event, the EOO could provide the language for clarification on the accommodations that could be provided at specific events. Mallory Sullivan suggested that in any event publicity, a statement could be added that states that everyone is welcome and the information on how to request an accommodation at the event. Mohammad Ebrahimi stated that he didn't realize how inaccessible WWU was for people with physical disabilities until he sprained his ankle and had to experience Western on crutches for a few weeks. Guenter-Schlesinger explained that the elevation changes on campus are very steep and they are working making the campus signs more clear about the elevation changes. They are very aware of the issues and she has met with the Dean of Wilson Library. He was upset with how inaccessible the library is but expressed his frustration with not having the budget to fix these problems. There are certain areas of campus that are almost impossible to make accommodations for due to the topography of WWU. Emma J. Opsal stated that in the AS they have many relationships within the organization and she wondered how she can support people with disabilities without "outing" them. Guenter-Schlesinger thought that going back to the person and explaining that making accommodations is important to the AS, and ask if they would mind if they could discuss their situation with the organization to figure out ways to accommodate for that specific disability. If they aren't comfortable with discussing their disability, they can ask if they could discuss it without using their name or any specifics. She added that making an accommodation would help them and other people too.

### **III. INFORMATION ITEMS**

### **IV. ACTION ITEMS**

### **V. ADJOURN**

*Moeller adjourned the meeting at 4:57pm.*