



**Western Washington University Associated Students**  
**Legislative Action Council**

Tuesday, November 7th, 2017 6:00 PM VU 567

**Members:** *Present: Ana Ramirez (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Rosa Rice-Pelepko (AS Legislative Liaison), Emma Scalzo (AS REP Organizing and Outreach Coordinator), Anna Kemper (AS Local Issues Coordinator), Giovanna Oricchio (Student at Large), Nicholas Hovarth (Graduate Student), Victoria Matey (ESC Rep), Zoe Evans-Agnew (Student at Large), Casey Hayden (Coordinator of Student Activities) and Natasha Hessami (Student at Large).*

*Absent:*

**Advisor: Casey Hayden**

**Secretary: Chloe Callahan**

**Motions:**

**LAC-17-F-1**                    **Approval of the Washington Student Association General Assembly travel funding request for \$450. *Passed***

*Ana Ramirez called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.*

**I. Introductions**

Rice-Pelepko asked the committee to go around and introduce themselves, their pronouns, what their position is and their favorite part of the election.

**II. Discussion Items**

**A. WSA General Assembly**

Ramirez stated that the committee still had room in the van if anyone else wanted to go. She also informed people they will be leaving around 4:00 AM on that Sunday because the pass might be closed so they need to plan for extra time on their drive to Ellensburg. Kemper clarified that the backup location if road conditions are bad was University of Washington.

**B. Student Advocacy Priorities Survey Overview**

Rice-Pelepko shared that the student advocacy priorities survey got over 500 responses. Their intended goal was 1,000 students so they planned to do more outreach to students to get more feedback. Ramirez asked what the white section of the pie chart was and Kemper said that it meant the person either responded with other or they typed in a response that might have been spelled differently. Most of the students that filled out the survey were freshman. Hayden asked how Rice-Pelepko and Kemper reached out to students. Rice-Pelepko said they sent an email out to all students with the survey. Kemper said they were waiting to hearing back from the AS Bookstore on the amount the gift cards would be. In the email they included that the respondents would entered to win a gift card for the Bookstore. Activities Council had heard about this idea and was planning on voting on it soon after. This will help with promoting

the survey in the future. Rice-Pelepko said they found 60% of students that filled out the survey said they were aware that the AS lobbies for students. The survey asked everyone to select their top three priorities for statewide and local lobby days. The top three for statewide agenda items were: tuition (84.2%), support for undocumented students (49.8%) and support for survivors of sexual assault (49.2%). For local issues the top issue was housing availability and affordability came in at over 80%, way ahead of all the others. Kemper said that for the question "Please elaborate on any specific topic from above if you would like to include any details or personal experiences. This will help us determine what to focus on when lobbying on specific issues." Many students shared personal experiences and they found that a lot of students had issues with rent and finding affordable housing. Kemper said this was something that she was working on so it was nice to have affirmation that her efforts are something students want. She felt this showed that students knew the issues and cared they didn't have time to advocate or didn't know how. Another question was "Are there any other issues that interest you as a student not listed" and responses were Medicare for students which Rice-Pelepko and Kemper planned to look into, more responses about mental health services which ties into the student success item, some responses about getting Aramark off campus and getting more local food. Rice-Pelepko showed the committee the detailed excel sheet of the responses, she stated this would not be posted because there was confidential information included. Rice-Pelepko stated another interesting response was that some students brought up racism issues in Bellingham and on campus. They also asked if students wanted to be involved at the REP and they planned to reach out to the students that said they had interest. Rice-Pelepko said overall they felt it went really well and they were still looking at getting responses. Ramirez asked when the survey would close. Rice-Pelepko said it would never fully close, but they want responses soon so they can get input on priorities for lobbying. Kemper stated they would give out the gift card around Thanksgiving.

### **C. WSA Agenda Item Proposals**

Rice-Pelepko wanted to look over the WSA General Assembly proposals and see if the committee had any questions they wanted to follow up with the author of the proposal or the university about. The hope was to make everyone feel more prepared for WSA General Assembly. Rice-Pelepko said they would not be going over the proposals that were submitted by Western and the committee because they had been covered the week before. She encouraged the committee to review them on their own time. The first proposal discussed was Student Trustee Empowerment Voting Rights. Hayden stated he had found a referendum passed in 1982 at Western about having a student trustee with voting rights. Rice-Pelepko said that would be interesting to look into to see how the referendum was worded. Rice-Pelepko introduced a new proposals from the University of Washington, Commission a New Study on a Graduate Version of the Higher Education Loan Program. Hovarth stated that graduate student interest rates was 6% compared to 4.5% for undergraduate. The loans for graduate students are also only offered as unsubsidized loans because they do not qualify for subsidized loans. For subsidized loans the interest is paid for by the government and for unsubsidized loans the interest accumulates for however long the loan is held. Kemper asked if the proposal was asking for a reduction in the interest rate percentage. Hovarth clarified the proposal was stating it would either decrease the rate or keep rate

consistent because it tends to fluctuate. Rice-Pelepko said this would be a good opportunity for a potential graduate student lobby day or bringing graduate students to Western Lobby Days. She clarified that even though the committee had not proposed this item, they could still adopt it onto their own lobby day agenda. Hessami stated that a lot of STEM graduates get stipends and wondered how a change for the interest rate might affect their stipend rates, where was the money coming from or is it just a reallocation of funds in order to support a change in the loan rates. Hovarth said the proposal was trying to make it so loans go through the state instead of federally, which might avoid the issue of allocating money. Hayden said that the proposal was talking about interest rates as well as caps for loans, it would be good to know what the caps were for loans; were there less loans available to approve for graduate students. Rice-Pelepko introduced the next proposal, The Cost of Course Materials and the Implementation of Open Educational Resources. This was something that WSA has been working on for several years, they had a work committee set up for this item. This item also plays into student costs as a whole and participation in classes. Kemper asked for more clarification on House Bill 1561 and how this proposal would support this bill. Rice-Pelepko said they were unsure on exactly what the bill was but stated the bill didn't make it all the way through the legislature. Rice-Pelepko introduce the College Affordability proposal written by Central Washington University. Hovarth asked if this was the same proposal that included the state paying for more of the tuition. Rice-Pelepko said she believed that was included in the proposal. However since it was not specifically stated she would try and find more detail. Rice-Pelepko said that the group going will try and provide the committee with an overview of the General Assembly and the results of what proposals were passed and what was not. Proposal 9 was Student Veteran Tuition Waiver Increase and Accessibility. Hessami stated the proposal was not very specific on what it meant by changing the eligibility for credits and what difference in eligibility there would be. Rice-Pelepko asked what the difference between Honorable and General Discharge was. Orecchio provided a definition of the two from a google search, Honorable Discharge was received when the individual complete their tour of duty and their service meets or exceed the required standards of performance and conduct. However, sometimes a soldier cannot complete their full service and would then qualify for General Discharge, as long as the incomplete service was not for dishonorable reasons. General Discharged and Honorable Discharge are not eligible for the same benefits. Hessami stated that General Discharge under honorable conditions were not eligible for all GI Bill education benefits and there was also another level of discharge, Other than Honorable Discharge, and they wondered if that would be included in this proposal. Hayden said they wanted to send the veteran proposals over to Ann Beck to gage whether or not students at Western are dealing with the same thing. Rice-Pelepko stated she thought that would be helpful to know because this was something that had been on the WSA agenda for a while that Western had not yet engaged with. Hayden stated something that Western did the previous year was addressing when student veterans need to stay longer for their degree and their benefits run out. Western reached out to support the student veterans by providing those same benefits to the completion of their degree. Hayden suggested that Western has done a good job and this could provide a goal for other campuses to reach

for. Hessami said she thought the proposal needed to be more specific. Kemper said she agreed that the proposal needed more information. Rice-Pelepko wanted to talk to the author of the proposal about why there were two different proposals for similar topics on veteran tuition. Hayden clarified that one is about the tuition amount and another is about the credit limit for benefits. Rice-Pelepko introduced the Mental Health for Student Veterans proposal stating that Central Washington University was working hard on this and she was trying to get WSA to put more effort on it. Proposal 12 was Endorsing the creation of Student Loan Bill of Rights. Kemper asked for Rice-Pelepko to explain the proposal a bit more and provide some context. Rice-Pelepko stated the main issue was the way student loan company's contract with students and explain what it will look like for them to pay back their loans has not been transparent. This has led to many students not understanding the loans they have taken out or what they owe. Since there was not a lot of education on student loans in high school. Attorney Generals have received these complaints and the bill of rights would make the situations less likely to occur and provide students with more access to solving the situations. She offered to do more research on the topic if people were interested. Hovarth suggested that maybe the university could require students to go through a counseling before they could take out a loan so the students were educated before taking out the loan. He mentioned that a pre-loan counseling was something that Western has implemented. A program like that might make students realize what they are getting into. Rice-Pelepko said she would be interested to see how many students on campus face these problems with their loans. She asked Hayden where on campus students could go for loan help, specifically legal help. Hayden stated that the financial aid office had loan and financial counseling. He was not sure how many students knew about it and if what they provided was similar to what this proposal was stating. Hayden also thought students had to go through a mandated exit interview to make sure the student was aware of their responsibility for paying their loans, but was not sure if that was still in place. Rice-Pelepko introduced the Decoupling Service and Activities Fees (S&A fees) from Tuition proposal. This has consistently been on Westerns agenda. Evans-Agnew asked if S&A fees were the fees that got added onto the student tuition. Rice-Pelepko clarified that was what S&A fee was and it was about \$300 per quarter. Hayden clarified that it was around \$280 per quarter. Rice-Pelepko stated that was where the AS funds come from, as well as the Recreation Center/Athletics. Hayden added DRAC, department related activities and a small bit went to housing. All together it was about \$5,000,000 a year. \$2.5 million of that went to the AS. Athletics was the next biggest receiver of the funds. Hessami asked if the S&A fee was separate from tuition what would be in place to be a cap, what would be the checks and balances. Hayden said there was an S&A fee committee, a student led committee, and each area brings together their needs for the budget. The S&A fee committee debates whether or not they think they will get an increase and based on that decision, they propose an amount to the board of trustees. If tuition didn't move then S&A fee didn't move. If tuition did move the S&A fee can only move at the same rate. The checks and balances were the constituents at the table for S&A and the board of trustees. He stated the minimum wage increase was causing a problem because the school can't raise the S&A fee if the tuition doesn't raise and the fee pays a lot of salaries. Rice-Pelepko stated that the ultimate goal was to decrease tuition so if the fee

and tuition stay together the S&A fees would be a lot smaller and multiple parts of campus would not be able to function. Rice-Pelepko introduced the next proposal written by Ramirez, Support for Undocumented Students. Matey clarified that the proposal was asking for support for House Bill 1488 and the loan program. She asked why they didn't shoot for paying undocumented students that did not have DACA, and thought that the committee could have done something bigger. Rice-Pelepko stated students can pass these proposals at General Assembly with an amendment, so any changes to the proposals are not off the table. Matey asked if how the proposed loan program was that the state gives the money to the undocumented student and then the student would pay the money back to the university. Ramirez clarified that the state would give the money to the university and the university would give it to the undocumented student, who would then pay it back to the university. Matey asked if some of the loan money paid back could be put toward a resource fund for undocumented students. Rice-Pelepko said she would ask Guillermo about the specifics of how the logistics of a program like that would work. She clarified what they wanted to see changed, would the money paid back be for campus or statewide. Matey said she thought it would be more impactful on campus. Hayden said it has a lot of potential because Washington doesn't like to be beaten out by California, who is working a lot on this. Rice-Pelepko stated the last proposal was Subsidized Childcare on College Campuses and thought this was something the committee should support. She asked if anyone had experience with the program on campus. Hayden said both of his kids went through the program. Rice-Pelepko asked if anyone knew how the childcare program was doing resources wise. Hayden stated some of the S&A fee goes toward the program, it got an appropriation from the state budget, so the childcare development center did not have to hike up the rates. A strong case was made by a parent that showed how the university and the S&A fee subsidy were providing on the low end when compared to other universities. It required more out of pocket for the parents that sent their children there, but students get a bigger break than faculty. Hayden stated the CDC website on the AS had the rates listed.

#### **D. Western Agenda Item Proposals**

Rice-Pelepko stated that some of the proposals the committee had created for WSA General Assembly would be used for the Western Agenda, but if the committee wanted to create a brand new proposal the item would need to be brought to the committee by the following week. To provide context the agenda needed to be passed through the board of directors, and she planned to be there at the meetings to answer questions. She hoped to have the agenda passed by the board on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. So a final version of the proposals needed to be done by the 28<sup>th</sup> of November for the Legislative Affairs Council to vote on. Rice-Pelepko asked what everyone wanted to see on the Western Agenda. Rice-Pelepko asked if there was anything on the WSA agenda that they would like to see on the Western Agenda. Hovarth stated he would like to see Commission a New Study on a Graduate Version of the Higher Education Loan Program. Kemper asked where the committee could find a copy of the Western Lobby Day Agenda from the previous year. Rice-Pelepko stated it was in the board of director's minutes. Hayden said they could also find the agenda's through the Legislative Affairs Council committee page. Rice-Pelepko thought that someone was going to propose an agenda item on revenue that Western had on their agenda the

previous year. She was going to reach out to someone in WSA to see where that revenue agenda item was. If she had known no one was going to propose it she would have proposed the Western version. Rice-Pelepko stated that they planned to reintroduce all of the same items at the upcoming Lobby Days, but would alter some of them based on updates from the past year. A new agenda item would be support for undocumented students, as well as a more encompassing education on sex. Matey asked if there were any proposals on sustainability. Rice-Pelepko said no. Kemper said there was already going to be an environmental lobby days specifically for that. She thought something around Cherry Point because it did effect the entire state. Rice-Pelepko said that would get a little tricky because it was county voted. Orecchio said the governor was very about the carbon tax, and the committee had an opportunity under the revenue item to advocate for a carbon tax dedicated to education. There is a carbon tax in British Columbia that brings in about two billion a year. Kemper stated the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energies will be proposing a bill that the committee could support. Orecchio said WCV, Washington Conservation Voters, were going to be working to put together optimal carbon tax legislation for the next budget year. If Western could put the idea in the legislators brains this year and do more the following year. She also brought up the Atlantic salmon farm issue. In the Salish Sea there were many closed net salmon farms, if the Atlantic salmon escape they had different bacteria and other problems that could affect the native salmon in the area. This summer over 300,000 salmon escaped out of the nets. She stated there are a lot of environmental groups that were calling for change in licensing for closed net fish farms. Kemper also thought the closed net fish farms could be considered a native right issue.

### **III. Action Items**

#### **A. WSA General Assembly Funding Request**

Ramirez went through the funding requests for WSA General Assembly stating that the AS vans cost \$450, the snacks for the attendees cost \$50. Rice-Pelepko asked about increasing the food funds to \$100. Hayden said they could void the current Expenditure Request if the committee wanted to increase the amount. He also mentioned that anything \$100 and under did not need to come to the committee to be passed.

#### ***MOTION: LAC-17-F-1 by Rice-Pelepko***

Approval of the Washington Student Association General Assembly travel funding request for \$450.

Second: Hovarth Vote: 8-0-0 Action: Passed

### **IV. Reports**

#### **A. AS Legislative Liaison**

Rice-Pelepko would be in a call with the Presidents Council and Title IX Coordinators to discuss what they will be doing the upcoming session. She offered that the members of the committee could join the call, but she would also provide a report on how the call went.

***Ana Ramirez adjourned the meeting at 7:48 PM.***