

Western Washington University

Legislative Affairs Council

Wednesday, October 17th

Miller Hall 105

Present: Natasha Hessami (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Henry Pollet (Legislative Liaison), Patrick Kissinger (Local Issues Coordinator), James Pai (ESC Advocacy Director), Katie Winkelman (ESP Director), Kayl Gillihan (SAIRC Coordinator), Colton Redtfeldt, Maddie Rackers, Grace LaMonte, Gabbi Nazari, Brandon Lane, Bennett Massey

Absent: Colton Redtfeldt

Advisor: Leti Romo

Secretary: Grace Drechsel

Guests: Nora Harren (REP Director), Casey Hayden

MOTIONS

LAC-18-F-6 Add a discussion item to today's agenda regarding the Candidate forum next week.

LAC-18-F-7 Change the presenter for the WSA Reimbursement from Hessami to Pollet

LAC-18-F-8 Approve the minutes from 10-10-2018

LAC-18-F-9 Add the State Need Grant Full Funding and Entitlement Status to the Legislative Agenda.

Natasha Hessami called the meeting to order at 4:34pm.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ADDITIONS AND CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

MOTION LAC-18-F-6 by Pollet

Add a discussion item to today's agenda regarding the candidate forum.

Second: Winkelman

Vote: 12-0-1

Action: *Passed*

MOTION LAC-18-F-7 by *Pollet*

Change the presenter for the WSA Reimbursement from Hessami to Pollet

Second: Winkelman Vote: 12-0-1 Action: *Passed*

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION LAC-18-F-8 by *Winkelman*

Add a discussion item to today's agenda regarding the candidate forum.

Second: Nazari Vote: 12-0-1 Action: *Passed*

IV. INFORMATION ITEMS

a. WSA Reimbursement

Every student who is part time or full time pays \$1 per quarter into the Legislative Action Fund, and that money comes to LAC. We pay \$15,000 per year to the Washington Student Association for membership dues, and then LAC money can be used for things like the candidate forums which are coming up, (food, event services), and also WSA travel. Hessami said that herself, Henry, and Millka travel to places like Pullman and Olympia to do the WSA meetings, and they happen once a month. That costs money. Until now, Hessami has been the budget authority on FXXLACF and has just been passing everything. Now that LAC is meeting regularly, every time that somebody wants money from this budget, they have to bring it to LAC and we can vote on it and approve it. Pollet is asking for money today, and it will come as an Info item one week, and the person asking for money will present it and justify it. The next week, it will come as an Action item and we will vote. Generally, it will pass, but if you have any concerns, bring it up during the Info item presentation. Students in the community can also ask for money. Winkleman asks if Hessami has a line item in the LAC budget tracker that accommodates mileage reimbursement and per diem. Hessami said that they have a general WSA one, but not just for mileage reimbursement. Winkleman said it might be worth looking at because continuously approving mile reimbursement can be tedious, and it might be easier if we bring an action item and have it be an open order. Pollet said that if he had known what was going on, he would have done this ahead of time and it would have been a shorter turnaround time to get his money back. He didn't this time because he wasn't sure if he was going alone or not, so he waited until 2 days before he left to actually fill out the ER. But still, an open order might be useful. Hessami said she will ask Annie Byers about doing that.

Pollet said he drove from Bellingham, WA to WSU Tri Cities in Richland, WA. He said it was a great drive. The mileage chart reads that one way was 309 miles, so round-trip it was 618. For some reason it auto-rounds up to .55 mileage rate. The number is actually correct, but the state rate for mileage for a privately-owned vehicle is .545. Since Pollet was traveling for more than 11 hours, he hit the full per diem qualifications, so he is requesting that so he could eat food at some point during the 15 hours of travel. Hessami said she has a different form that will generally be used, but this one was thrown together last minute on Monday because she realized that Henry will need to be reimbursed. Winkleman said that from a documentation and accounting standpoint, she would like to see just one more sentence of why he traveled and what the justification was, just because student dollars are being used and it's important to be transparent. Pollet said that he has attached the travel and vehicle authorization forms, and the justification is explained in there, but he can copy and

paste it onto the request. Romo suggested making it clear that it was round-trip from Bellingham to the Tri-Cities, not just one way.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Pre-Healthcare Decision Package.

Hessami started by explaining that the university has legislative priorities, and there's usually 3 or 4. The number 1 university priority for this biennial budget is expanding access to pre-healthcare classes. There is a bottlenecking problem. Hessami is a Biochemistry major, and is also pre-health. There is some personal background in this, but the package was written by the chair of the chemistry department and the chair of the biology department. Sabah and Hessami have spoken about this, and because it is a priority for the university she would like to bring it to LAC and make it a priority for our student legislative agenda. This is a long document, and the reason that the long document is up and not the normal legislative agenda proposal is that she wants the document to be on the LAC website so that we can access it. This discussion item is not Hessami bringing forth a proposal, it is just giving some background.

There is a lot of bottlenecking problems in the biology, chemistry and kinesiology departments. This is because there is a large group of students who want to be pre-health, and you also have students who are Biochemistry majors, who are all trying to get into these classes. Hessami is a fifth year student because she could not get into Organic Chemistry her sophomore year. A lot of pre-med students are fifth years. What this proposal is asking for is money which totals \$60 million to build a new science building behind the new chemistry building and also hire new faculty, add a new major (BA in Biochemistry for pre-health folks), and allow pre-health students who have different interests besides just science to pursue those majors but still have access to these classes. Classes like Biochemistry, which is required for pre-health, have massive waiting lists if you are not a Biochem major. This has been identified as a priority because there is a big push to get educated workforce out, and with the new medical school through WSU in Spokane, we now have 2 strong medical schools in Washington and Western wants to have as many prepared pre-health students coming out of WWU as possible. Hessami encouraged LAC to read through the whole document. She doesn't think that this will be something that the students-at-large identify with as a legislative priority. It is not as widely known as support for survivors of sexual assault, and reduced tuition, or support for DACA students. Hessami believes that it is still important for our legislative agenda because this is what the president of the university is lobbying on this year and it is important to support our university lobbying agenda. Hessami said that if there's anyone in LAC who is interested in this, she would really appreciate help coming up with a proposal that digs into and identifies the student need.

Lane asks, is this something that the university has been pursuing for a couple years, or is this the first year that they are lobbying on this? Hessami responded that she isn't sure, but she doesn't think that this is the first year. The university has blueprints and bids. From a university standpoint, this has been going on for quite a few years, but this may be the first time that we are asking for money. Pollet said that there was a capital budget request so we could do things like get blueprints, which is not nothing. Generally, it means that the legislature is at least somewhat interested in moving forward with that.

b. Candidate Forum

There is a state candidate forum next Thursday. All of the candidates have been confirmed from the 40th and 42nd districts except Jeff Morris who is unopposed. November 1st there is going to be a local issues forum, which Patrick will talk about later. The posters have been made by the publicity center

and they look great. Hessami said that she had a meeting with Nora, Henry and Patrick yesterday, and they thought it would be good to open it up to the larger group to get some questions. They are thinking they are going to have some structured, in-depth questions that the candidates go down the line and answer, and also have a “lightning round” where Hessami emails the candidates the questions probably on Monday, and she asks the candidates the questions at the forum and they have to hold up a “Yes” or a “No”. She presented the questions that they came up with.

- Do you support expanding eligibility of the State Need Grant to 125% of the state median income?
- Do you support prepaid postage on ballots?
- Do you support students receiving DACA qualifying for state financial aid?
- Do you support mandated sex-ed for K-12 and higher ed?

Hessami asked for ideas for yes/no questions; questions that candidates can’t wiggle their way around. Ideas include...

- Do you believe in climate change?
- Do you support homeless sweeps?
- Do you support I-940? (Police accountability) – Civilian oversight boards
- Do you support sanctuary cities/counties?
- Do you support a woman’s right to choose?
- Do you support abolishment of the death penalty?
- Do you support a repeal on the ban of rent control?
- Do you support the renewal of the Violence Against Women Act?
- Cherry Point?
- Do you support I-1631?
- Do you support I-1639? (Gun control)
- Opioid crisis in Bellingham?
- Affirmative action, I-200?

Hessami reminded LAC that we need to be mindful of how we word the questions, and not have an agenda because this is a non-partisan event.

Winkleman asked if they are going to have materials at the event that explain some of the acronyms and initiatives. Hessami said that when she is asking the questions about the initiatives, she will have on the PowerPoint an explanation about it, but materials are a good idea. Winkleman said that we should make sure we are educating people who might not know about certain initiatives.

Winkleman said that the PowerPoint idea would be a good idea, especially during the speed round. Having a pamphlet is also nice in case folks can’t read super quickly.

Massey said that in the Antecortes Chamber of Commerce, they did a forum really similar to this with all the 40th district rep candidates, and there were a lot of questions where they just listed several items and they went on for way too long. There are a lot of candidates that chose not to answer the questions that went on for way too long. You may want to avoid those sorts of questions. Hessami said that she agrees, and wants to keep all questions under 10 minutes.

Kissinger said to be mindful about when asking lightning round questions, of what the candidates’ jurisdiction is. Though they represent parts of Bellingham, they can’t do anything regarding sanctuary cities. They can make a stand on it, but maybe we should make a better question about how they lean in terms of immigrant rights. Same with the opioid crisis as specific to Bellingham, and state-wide legislation that they can have a direct stance on. Some of the policies where Jay Inslee has taken a stance for the state that is different from the rest of the nation, such as net

neutrality, staying in the Paris Climate Agreement, etc. We could ask candidates if they stand with the governor on these issues.

Winkleman said that she knows Hessami has been putting a lot of effort into this, and if she needs any help with anything, LAC can definitely help and use our body of knowledge to create a collaborative document or something like that.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

a. State Need Grant: Full Funding and Entitlement Status

To recap, the SNG is the largest need-based financial aid administered by Washington State. It covers people whose families are less than 70% of the median family income. There's a sliding scale that says how much maximum award you can get, and Western's maximum award for 2018-19 is \$6,771. This amount of money can definitely be a determining factor of whether or not someone can go to college. The SNG has been one of the first things to be cut in recent years to fund K-12 through the McCleary decision, and pretty much any time that there is an interest to fund something but they can't find money, the State Need Grant is the first place they look. That is why it is important that we have it fully funded and we have it as an entitlement so it is locked in place and harder to be raided for loose change. In 2016-17, there were 3,860 qualified students at Western, and of those, 1,389 did not receive their grants through lack of funds. That is a huge number of people and a huge percentage of our student body who earned and deserved this financial aid, but due to lack of funds, did not receive it. Pollet said that this a very important ask for us, and something that we have been working on for the last few years. The WSA has been working on this, the Council of Presidents, the Washington Student Engagement Networks, and we have a good number of high-ranking legislators who are committed to this and it's important that we hold them accountable and keep pushing on this.

Hessami added that this has been on our Western agenda for quite a few legislative years, and also the WSA's agenda for a few years. The SNG can be thought of as the cornerstone of what students ask for.

MOTION LAC-18-F-9 by *Winkleman*

Add the State Need Grant Full Funding and Entitlement Status to the Legislative Agenda.

Second: LaMonte Vote: 12-0-1 Action: *Passed*

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Student Legislative Priorities

Hessami said that she tried to use her power to send out an email to every student on campus, and it didn't work. In that email was the survey that Winkleman put together. She will try again to send that out. We do need student feedback, but we also need to keep moving.

b. AS Board Assistant for Lobby Days

Hessami reminded everyone that this position closes on Friday.

VIII. REPORTS

a. Local Issues Coordinator

Kissinger said that he doesn't have a lot to report this week, because County and City Council and most of their affiliating committees meet every other week, and this is one of the weeks where they don't meet. However, tonight, Kissinger said that he has an exciting opportunity to go to the

Mayor's Neighborhood Advisor Coalition (MNAC), where there is 1 representative from each neighborhood in the city of Bellingham and they all meet together to talk about local issues with the mayor. Historically, this has not been something that the mayor attends themselves, they will send a representative, but Mayor Kelly has faithfully gone to all of these meetings. They usually start the meeting by talking about some sort of issue, so tonight is an update on the Bellingham Public Library, and then Mayor Kelly is giving a biennial budget proposal for 2019 and 2020. We will review that, they will give a presentation about both of those, and then there will be a round-table for all the neighborhoods and each neighborhood gets a chance to share on different issues going on or points that they would like to bring up. Kissinger is going to that tonight, and would like to open the floor for things that he should bring up at this meeting. He said that currently, he planned to talk about both of the forums, and invite the neighborhood reps that are there to go tell their neighborhood associations, because the events are open to the public. He also wanted to bring up that a couple of student groups had gone to the Whatcom County Auditor's Office and inquired about temporary ballot boxes and have been denied. Students on campus are trying to be very involved in voting but have hit a couple of roadblocks, but nevertheless we will endure. Each neighborhood has 1 rep, but Western has 2, and Kissinger splits the position with Chris Roselli, our Community Relations Coordinator. He is kind of like a PR guy.

Pai said that he knows that lighting around campus, especially North Campus, is a topic of concern, and the street lighting is all owned by PSE. Once you get off campus, it goes dark. Hessami said that this issue is something that our VP for Student Life has previously worked on, and it is on their mind. There have been difficulties with it. Kissinger said he will talk to Anne Lee and we can talk about this at a future meeting. Pollet said that this has been on our local agenda in the past.

Kissinger said he will also give updates on the voter registration drive and GOTV efforts at MNAC so the neighborhoods know that students are trying to be civically engaged on campus.

Pollet said that the Auditor's office has very legitimate concerns over the security of the ballot boxes, and their current view is that their temporary ballot boxes are mainly for programming that the auditor's office themselves are doing around their own community GOTV operation. In the past, they have done community events where they have had those, and they have generously allowed other groups to have the temporary ballot boxes and it looks like this year they are being more careful around how those are being used.

b. Legislative Liaison

Pollet said that WSA in the Tri-Cities was a great time. They looked at WSA's whole organizational model, and compared it to the UCSA and the OSA, which are comparable in the number of members but blow us out of the water in funding and staffing and everything else. Essentially, right now, Western and other schools pay \$1 per full time student on campus, per year not per quarter, to WSA. Oregon has \$1.30 per term, which is a pretty wild difference compared to what we have been using. They can have more staff, they can send their staff better places, be more competitive in recruiting and maintaining staff. We have 1 staff, Guillermo, and our reserves are only 3 months operating. When Guillermo took over, it was 2 weeks operating. There is a conversation around increasing dues. WSA also talked about legislative priorities going into GA on the 10th of November at Western. There are still a lot of proposals that haven't been written, so if any of LAC is interested in writing them, speak to Pollet. Western has a reputation for bringing the most agenda pieces, and Pollet would love to keep that up. The prepaid postage one is going to be very simple, and Pollet would rather it is someone's first proposal. It is a great way to get used to how things work, instead of Pollet doing another proposal and everyone at WSA being really bored with Pollet talking. Hessami said that everyone should write one. Pollet and Hessami will look over it, and then the LAC member can bring it as an Info and Action item. Pollet and Hessami are here for any guidance.

The reason why Pollet doesn't have another Info Item this week is because WSA in the Tri-Cities took more out of him than he thought it would, and he didn't have time to write the SNG Expansion this week. Also, not all of the statistics needed from the Financial Aid office have been sent over. Next week, he will bring it. Right now, he is looking at including 3 options for funding in that proposal: capital gains tax, carbon tax, and closing tax loopholes to make up a good chunk of funding. He's hoping that our target is around \$950 million per biennia. He asked if anyone has any other ideas for where funding could come from. Pai suggested an income tax, but acknowledged that that would require a constitutional amendment. Hessami pointed out that this revenue funding issue isn't going to be an issue that a lot of students are going to be attracted to, but it is something that we have always lobbied on. Pollet said it really does strengthen our state legislative agenda if we give some options on how to fund what we are looking at. The SNG Expansion piece that Pollet was looking at was about \$250 million per biennia. Giving a suggestion on how to fund that would be helpful. Some of the proposals that are interesting and would be free college are looking at a total cost of \$500 million per biennia. If we could get \$900 million per biennia, we would be very close to free higher education.

c. REP Director

Harren reported that ballots were sent out today. The Organizing and Outreach Job is still open until the 19th, this Friday. The REP has their first phone bank this Friday if anyone in LAC wants to participate. It is good experience working with VAN (Voter Activation Network), which is a super cool tool that we will have access too.

Hessami adjourned the meeting at 5:33pm.