

Western Washington University

Legislative Affairs Council

Wednesday, January 9th

VU 460

Present: Natasha Hessami (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Henry Pollet via phone (Legislative Liaison), James Pai (ESC Advocacy Director), Katie Winkelman (ESP Director), Christina Ngo (SAIRC Marketing and Assessment Coordinator), Patrick Kissinger (Local Issues Coordinator), Nicole Ballard (Organizing and Outreach Coordinator), Anna Schorr (GSAC Representative), Brandon Lane, Bennett Massey, Maddie Rackers, Gabbi Nazari

Absent: Grace LaMonte

Advisor: Leti Romo

Secretary: Grace Drechsel

MOTIONS

LAC-18-W-1 Approve minutes from the last meeting.

LAC-18-W-2 Pass the ASWWU 2019 Legislative Agenda with minor grammatical changes.

Natasha Hessami called the meeting to order at 5:31pm.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ADDITIONS AND CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION LAC-18-W-1 by *Pai*

Approve minutes from the last meeting, 11/28.

Second: Winkelman Vote: 9-0-0 Action: *Passed*

IV. INFO ITEMS

a. ESP, ESC, SAIRC, and DOC Lobby Day Funding.

Winkelman explained that she will be presenting the funding for WYLD Lobby Day, where the ESP, ESC, SAIRC, and DOC will be sending about 94 students to lobby in Olympia. It is a little more expensive than last year for a few reasons. First, Bel Air is doing a green energy initiative

which is cool but also pricier. They will no longer be staying at the Governor's Hotel, because they only have about 8 rooms available, so they are staying at the Hilton, which is slightly more expensive (however they have a better breakfast and more dietary wiggle-room in the food choices). The requested total is \$11,475, which is a \$2,000 increase from last year, because they are being more ambitious and anticipate sending more students. That is with a significant increase in the charter buses as well. Winkelman explained that this is a really cool opportunity for students to advocate for the special interests that they are focused on. The ESP is planning to do a lot of stuff on tribal water rights and carbon-free utilities, and the ESC, SAIRC, and the DOC all have their own specific agendas so students can go say their piece on topics they are passionate about. As of today, they have about 30 people registered for Lobby Day with only 24 hours of the link being up and no personal advertising. The numbers will continue to rise.

Hessami pointed out that because of the timing of this Lobby Day, she understands that there is a lot of interest in the intersectional lobby day. However, there are financial restrictions and it is a less impactful day since it is later in legislative session. Originally, Winkelman had had 120 students, and Hessami suggested that the number to 94 students. This is because we need to stick to budgets, and we have a federal lobby day coming up. Western Lobby Day is intended to be the larger ones, and we do touch on a lot of these issues. Due to budget capacity and legislative timing, the second lobby day should be the smaller one.

Winkelman said that she has an issue with using a justification of the lobby day being later in session, because we need to take into account the value that students get out of it. We have a lot of data from 2016 until now that shows that students are very interested in this lobby day. Winkelman says that she sees the value in letting students go and say their piece and not because it's effective, but because it is an opportunity for students. Winkelman said that the role of the committee is to see if this is an expenditure that the committee wants to approve, and decide if the expenses are justified by whether this is a valuable opportunity for students. If we had other budget proposals on the table, and we had to prioritize one over the other, she would be able to understand that better, but we haven't seen a budget for federal lobby day, and we haven't talked about it in committee. She said that federal lobby day is significantly more of an expense because we have to pay for flights, and hotels, and per diem for Washington, DC. The cost per student is much lower for students for this lobby day. Winkelman said that she is still pushing for the \$13,500 budget. She said that there are a lot of other funding sources that we can draw on for federal lobby day, but we need to get a budget approved for this one so that the event can even happen. Pai added that the reason that a separate lobby day was established was because there has been input from students of color that they don't feel welcome at a Western Lobby Day. Also, the topics discussed at Western Lobby Day aren't nearly as impactful or relevant to their communities. Having a lobby day that is fully funded and breaks down barriers for students of marginalized communities more than justifies the cost. Ngo, SAIRC's Marketing and Assessment Coordinator, added that their offices have been very political in a lot of ways, but the SAIRC has also been traditionally pretty underfunded. This is the first thing in a long time that they can offer students to do to facilitate change through the SAIRC. Kissinger clarified that they are anticipating a \$2,000 shortfall for budgeting if the \$11,xxx budget is approved instead of the \$13,xxx.

Kissinger wondered if any of the offices have any money to put into this from their budgets. Winkelman said no, and traditionally they don't. At a maximum, the ESP could maybe put \$500 towards it, but that's only about three hotel rooms. Harren asked if there was a way to disperse the funds through the SEJ committee. Winkelman said that the issue is that they need to get a budget passed now. She expressed that she felt she had a lot of perceived support when she expressed that this lobby day would be very, very expensive. Then, they got asked to cut down their budget, but now they are in more of a time crunch. If they would to apply to that fund, they might not have enough time to get it passed. Pai said that at the end of the day, they will pursue alternate funding

sources if need be. However, if the funding is reduced and they have to turn away students, that sets a very dangerous precedent for marginalized students. Winkelman said that on one hand, they would like to have things fully funded so they don't have to turn students away. On the other hand, if they are asked to pursue alternate funding and they are on more of a time crunch, then why not pursue those alternative funding supports to help supplement federal lobby day?

Hessami said that she did not see the budget request until Monday, and she was asked to push it to an Info/Action item today. From her perspective as a VP, a budget authority, she has the responsibility to spend the money correctly. The ask was shockingly high to her compared to the \$9,000 request from last year, and the reason why she would like to cut it back is because there is a \$4,000 increase without any precedent. When you see a \$4,000 increase from one year to the next, it requires a little bit of questioning. Winkelman said that she has statistics from 2014-2015-2016 showing that it increased \$3,000-\$4,000 each year to reflect the growing interest and traction. Hessami said that she is aware of that.

What Hessami expressed to Winkelman and Pai yesterday is the issue with the buses. Each bus costs \$2,000 and holds 50 people. That is expensive, especially if there may be 60 people going and so it ends up that there are only 10 people on the second bus. Hessami suggested that we reserve one bus, and if there are additional people, they can take vans or AS vehicles. Also, Hessami is okay with, if there are upwards of 80-90 people registering, then reserving another bus and filling both of the buses. Winkelman said that would work in theory, but Bel Air charter buses are booked out 3 months in advanced. Additionally, if there were to be one charter bus, and then have students drive, it would likely be the AS employees having to drive the AS vehicles. That means an additional 6 hours that they need to spend working, since they will be driving for that amount of time. It leads to overworking of AS employees and it's also a risk management issue. Putting that many people in that many AS vehicles is risky, and contracting Bel Air charters takes out that risk.

Lane asks what the expected marginal increase is of the number of students coming. Winkelman said that last year, they had 12-14 lobbyists for only the DOC agenda, and now they will be bringing the SAIRC. Winkelman said that the numbers for the SAIRC would be comparable to the number of students that the ESC and the ESP bring, and the ESP always has a waiting list of upwards of 50 students to come lobby. There is no shortage of people who want to go. They are expecting a 30% increase of the budget that they proposed last year.

Pai said that they can always end up spending less than their proposed budget. Worst case scenario, they have more interest than they can pay for, and then they have to turn people away, and the point of this lobby day is to remove barriers of entry. Hessami reminded the committee that although she is budget authority, it does have to pass through the committee. This will be voted on electronically next week. It is this committee's charge to delegate this money. She asked the committee to please exercise their critical thinking to figure out where they stand.

Romo said that the committee needs to work on keeping each other in the loop. She said that WLD is a very involved process, and she does not want WILD to turn into the "other", and need to have a separate lobby day in order for marginalized students to feel engaged. If there was more communication in the beginning, we could have gotten the buses, the hotels, and other preparations right of the bat, so it doesn't fall on just Winkelman and Pai. The current lobby day has a lot of support, and WILD could have that support if communication lines were left open.

Pai brought up the issue of civilian oversight for police officers, which didn't make it to the final agenda. However, that issue is important to students of color. In terms of legislative bite, by restricting that lobbying effort for students of color to lobby on behalf on issues that are specific to them, is inequitable. Just that legislative priority demonstrates a need for a separate issue.

Pollet asked Hessami what is in the budget currently. She answered less than \$26,000. Federal lobby day will be around \$10,000. Then, we have local lobby day. Massey asked if there is an easy way to access the budget anywhere. The committee responded that there is not. Kissinger asked if there is any rollover from last year. Hessami answered that there is, and she is confused on the access of that because sometimes those go into a reserve fund which is accessible but more difficult. Winkelman said that if they need more funding, SEJ would be a helpful committee to go to. Winkelman requested that when we vote electronically next week, we vote on fully funding WILD, and then if it doesn't pass then they will re-evaluate.

Romo asked Pai and Winkelman what their estimation for food was based off of, and if it was based on per diem. Winkelman answered that it is a combination of data from last year, accounting for thirty more students coming, and cutting back on snacks.

Kissinger asked if Winkelman and Pai could put forth two funding requests, one that is for the full amount and one that is for the lowered price. Hessami said that she will think about that, but she's not sure how that works with Robert's Rules. She will be working with Winkelman and Pai to make sure that what gets voted on is something that everyone is comfortable with.

V. ACTION ITEMS

a. ASWWU Legislative Agenda

The committee went through the ASWWU Legislative Agenda 2018 to finalize the finishing touches. The committee worked on revising the language of the document, and Schorr and Hessami agreed to finalize grammar, spelling and syntax together later in the week.

Hessami reported that the students working with CSE have decided to recommend lobbying in favor of the STEM expansion. The ASWWU language for the STEM expansion ask is the same language as Western's ask.

MOTION LAC-18-W-2 by *Winkelman*

Pass the 2019 ASWWU Legislative Agenda with minor grammatical changes.

Second: Nazari Vote: 11-0-0 Action: *Passed*

VI. ADJOURN

Hessami adjourned the meeting at 7:00pm.