

Statement Concerning the Public Endorsements and Denouncements for the AS Elections for President, Vice President of Governmental Affairs, Vice President for Sustainability, and Vice President for Diversity by Several Members of the Current AS Executive Board

Written by AS Election Board Chair, Bennett Massey-Helber and Edited by the 2019 AS Election Board

This document represents the consolidated opinion of the 2019 AS Election Board and, due to the jurisdiction restraints of the AS Election Board, it is to be the official opinion on the actions and implications of the endorsement made by sitting Vice President of Student Life Anne Lee on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 in the four contested AS elections and the denouncing of AS Elected Board presidential candidate Abdul-Malik Ford created by AS Student Senator Dayjha McMillan that was shared by several members of the AS Elected Board including President Millka Solomon, Vice President for Academic Affairs Levi Eckman, Vice President for Student Life Anne Lee, and Vice President for Diversity Camilla Mejia. The AS Election Board has jurisdiction only over AS candidates and does not have jurisdiction over, nor the ability to sanction, current officers, student employees, or other students not affiliated with a candidate or their campaign. As such, the AS Election Board would suggest that, in the above-mentioned concerns about members of the AS Board, the AS Board engage in their own form of due process for determining any form of restorative justice for the apparent infractions or grievances against sitting members of the AS Executive Board.

During the May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Grievance Hearing of the AS Election Board, it was determined that AS President-Elect Lani Defiesta, Vice President of Governmental Affairs-Elect Grace Dreschel, and Vice President for Sustainability-Elect Trever Mullins had violated the AS Election Code. Their violation was based on sharing an endorsement by Vice President of Student Life Anne Lee, whose actions were determined to be a direct violation of Section 3.IV.c of the AS Election Code, which states “current AS employees, may not as employees or individuals, endorse candidates.” VP of Student Life Anne Lee’s endorsement was shared by the above-mentioned candidates and served as the basis for the three grievances heard on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 against Lani Defiesta, Grace Drechsel, and Trever Mullins. Because of this violation, those three candidates were required by the Election Board to publish public statements acknowledging their breach of the Elections Code in the Western Front and the AS Review and were encouraged to do the same on their own personal social media pages.

Because this Election Board holds true that the sharing of endorsements created by AS employees is a violation of the Election Code in and of itself, we suggest that AS President Millka Solomon, AS Vice President for Academic Affairs Levi Eckman, AS Vice President for Student Life Anne Lee, and AS Vice President for Diversity Camilla Mejia may have violated Section 3.IV.c of the AS Election Code by sharing Senator McMillan’s denouncement of a candidate in an AS election.

Furthermore, this Election Board also wants to illuminate the possibility that these AS Executive Board members may be subject to the Candidate Conduct Agreement because, by denouncing a candidate, they



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could be considered to be “involved in a campaign” and, therefore, must “adhere to the Candidate conduct agreement provided in the candidate filing packet” (Section 3.II.a.).

Therefore, the Election Board suggests that AS President Millka Solomon, AS Vice President for Academic Affairs Levi Eckman, AS Vice President for Student Life Anne Lee, and AS Vice President for Diversity Camilla Mejia may have also violated the Candidate Conduct Agreement which states “candidates, measure sponsors, official opposition campaigns, or any person otherwise involved in a campaign” “will conduct [themselves] in a positive, honorable manner throughout the election [and] will refrain from any malicious or unprofessional behavior towards any of the other candidates, the Elections Coordinator, the Election Board, WWU staff, or any other campaign participants or students.”

This board would like to make known that endorsements by public officeholders within the AS is not new and is a part of a pattern that has seen AS Executive Board members knowingly violate AS policy with endorsements in contested races. In the 2018 elections, former VP for Diversity Erick Yanzon made similar public endorsements of candidates that the AS Board at the time found to be in violation of the Election Code. Yanzon’s endorsements likely had little effect on the election, as many of the candidates they endorsed lost their respective races. In the case of the 2019 elections, however, all four candidates endorsed by Vice President of Student Life Anne Lee won their particular races. Furthermore, the candidate denounced by Senator McMillan, Abdul-Malik Ford, lost the election for AS president, and this denouncement was shared by four AS Executive Board members. Therefore, the Election Board concludes that this behavior of sitting Executive Board members knowingly and openly breaking AS rules and codes is a concerning development, and it is the belief of this board that it must be addressed so that faith in the AS as a fair and neutral arbiter of student voices can be restored.

Since the Election Board does not have jurisdiction over the AS Executive Board, we submit this statement to make known the continuous act of AS employees endorsing or denouncing candidates and hope that the AS Executive Board will take action so that all may fairly participate in the electoral process within the Associated Students. Therefore, we ask the AS Executive Board to consider this document, the Elections Code, and the grievances against members of the AS Executive Board to determine the best course of action in response to individual members of the AS Executive Board’s violations and alleged violations of the AS Election Code. The Election Board wants to make clear that we have not had any official discussion or ruling on Senator McMillan’s actions or on the sharing of Senator McMillan’s post denouncing Abdul-Malik Ford and wish to wholly place the onus on the AS Executive Board to resolve these issues.

Finally, this is a public document based on information from a public hearing that determined a breach of public trust.

Sincerely,

Bennett Massey-Helber, Election Board Chair





## Associated Students Election Board

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