**Western Washington University**

**Legislative Affairs Council**

**November 4th, 2019 VU 462**

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| **Board Members:** | *Present:* Grace Drechsel (VP for Governmental Affairs), Phoebe DeMeerler (Local Issues Coordinator), Nicole Ballard (Organizing and Outreach Coordinator), Bennett Massey-Helber (Director of Legislative Affairs), Kayl Gillihan (Outreach and Representation), Jasmine Balasa (GSAC), Nora Harren (REP Director), Jose Ortuzar (ECC Representative), Joselyn Chavez (ESP Director), Grace LaMonte (Student At-Large), Collin Thrower (Student At-Large), Erin Kelly (Student At-Large), Kaitlyn Davidson (Student At-Large), and Jennie LeVeque (Student At-Large). |
| **Secretary:** | Sierra Templeton |
| **Guest(s):** | None |

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| **Motions:** |
| **LAC-19-F-11** | To approve the meeting minutes for October 14th, October 21st, and October 28th. ***Passed.*** |
| **LAC-19-F-12** | To approve LAC Proposal of the Plastic Bag Ban***. Passed.*** |
| **LAC-19-F-13** | To approve the LAC Proposal of the State Need Grant Funding. ***Passed.*** |
| **LAC-19-F-14** | To move the LAC Proposal for Funding for Ethnic Studies to an action item. ***Passed.*** |
| **LAC-19-F-15** | To pass the LAC proposal for Ethnic Studies at WWU within the LAC. ***Passed.*** |

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| **I.** | **Call to Order** |
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***Grace Drechsel, VP of Governmental Affairs, called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.***

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| **II.** | **Additions and Changes to the Agenda** |
|  | No changes, but to prioritize the Ethnic Studies Proposal to be mindful of their time. |

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| **III.** | **Approval of Minutes** |
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|  | *MOTION LAC-19-F-11* | *by Balasa* |
|  | To approve the meeting minutes for October 14th, October 21st, and October 28th. |
|  | *Second: Gillihan* | *Action:* ***Passed*** |

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| **IV.** | **Action Items** |
| A. | LAC Proposal- Statewide Ban on Single-Use Plastic Bags (Massey Helber)1. Massey-Helber made an update from last week that 21% of people living in Washington State are already living with some sort of plastic bag ban. This bill doesn’t have protections for those with lower income, and if this bill passes that would be something to lobby for. Although this is the case, if you are on SNAP, or Medicaid paper bags will be provided to you for free. Massey-Helber clarified that this is specifically will affect grocery stores, but the effect on other parties such as farmers will be kept in mind.
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|  | *MOTION LAC-19-F-12* | *by Massey-Helber* |
|  | To approve LAC Proposal of the Plastic Bag Ban. |
|  | *Second: Thrower* | *Action:* ***Passed*** |

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| B. | LAC Proposal- State Need Grant Funding (Massey-Helber)1. Massey-Helber noted that there will be a meeting to discuss the revenue projection mistake to find an avenue to fix this, but there are no other updates.
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|  | *MOTION LAC-19-F-13* | *by Massey-Helber* |
|  | To approve the LAC Proposal of the State Need Grant Funding. |
|  | *Second: Thrower* | *Action:* ***Passed*** |

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| C. | LAC Proposal- Funding for Ethnic Studies at WWU (Drechsel) |
|  | *MOTION LAC-19-F-15* | *by Ortuzar* |
|  | To pass the LAC proposal for Ethnic Studies at WWU within the LAC. |
|  | *Second: Gillihan* | *Action:* ***Passed*** |

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| **V.** | **Information Items** |
| A. | LAC Proposal- Funding for Ethnic Studies at WWU (Drechsel)1. Last year the ESC was in contact with administration about different proposals, but there were roadblocks with funding so they decided to go through the legislative route in the form of an appropriations bill specific to the proposal or something included in the overall budget for higher education at Western. Currently, the ESJ and American Culture Studies as well as other social justice groups are separated and are unable to meet up and work together. The ESC wants to make sure this proposal lasts into the future and is beneficial to these future students.
2. Ortuzar asked whether this would create a major.
3. It was clarifies that that is something in the process of being worked out but other national programs have ethnic studies majors as well as subsets specifying in gender, LGBTQ+, latinx, and black studies.
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|  | *MOTION LAC-19-F-14* | *by Ortuzar* |
|  | To move the LAC Proposal for Funding for Ethnic Studies to an action item. |
|  | *Second: Balasa* | *Action:* ***Passed*** |

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| B. | LAC Proposal- Support for Veterans (Massey-Helber)1. Massey-Helber met with the Veteran Services Center on campus to ask how the LAC could support them through lobbying. Tuition waivers are vague or have a high level of scrutiny, it’s hard to receive these tuition waivers because of the VA calculation of disability, and legally you have to be 100% disabled to receive these benefit, and children have to be between the ages of 17 and 26 to receive the benefits. Our goals is to change the definition of who is covered by completely striking the clause with age restrictions, covering people with a lower disability percentage, and making mental health services for veterans a priority. Currently the office is barely self-sustaining, so they are unable to think about providing these services to the 500 veterans they serve with their 2 person staff. We create an ask for $100,000 every year for the next 5 years to cover a professional to provide benefits for veterans and families of veterans.
2. Balasa asked for a clarification whether we would actually be able to remove the age limit, since it seems to be in the VA, and Massey-Helber responded that this would be possible. The original wording seems to be from the RACW under Washington guidelines.
3. Ortuzar asked whether the veteran’s counselor would be specifically for WWU, or if it would be for all veterans. Massey-Helber clarified that this would be specifically for the Western veteran’s services center. Currently they are unable to hire a person to fill the position, but a counselor from the counseling center will meet with the veteran’s services center.
4. Drechsel asked what decides the percentage of disability a person is, and Massey-Helber answered that there is a calculator on the VA website where users input the mobility of their body parts, as well as factors such as marriage and dependents and gives a number.
5. Erin asked whether the tuition is something that can be un-granted once given in to someone (ex: the first year, tuition waver is granted because veteran is 100% disabled, the next year the veteran is deemed 95% disabled). Massey-Helber and Balasa both stated that they believed this was something that could not be reversed, and could only increase, but further research is required to fully answer that question.
6. Massey-Helber stated that he needs to see how much they are able to lower the percentage of disability, depending on how much funding this takes.
7. Thrower questioned whether there are enough people interested in this legislature so that it would be able to pass. Massey-Helber stated that through the past 10 years legislation in some form focusing on veterans has been prevalent, a lot of small changes in the wording of legislature that opens up the support to this group.
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| C. | LAC Proposal- Western on the Peninsula (Massey-Helber)1. Massey-Helber notes that Western administration’s lobbyists have added this ask to their agenda.
2. Western on the Peninsula has six campuses, there are two different types of tuitions at a University; student supported and state supported. Western on the Peninsula are fully student funded so they pay on average $12,000 more per year that students on the Bellingham campus, on average pay double what on-campus students pay, and are also ineligible for state scholarships or financial aid. This ask would give all 9 of the degree programs state supported tuition, when currently only 2 are state supported.
3. Ortuzar asked about who makes up the student bodies of Western on the Peninsula, Massey-Helber responded that 100% are transfer students with a significant portion being veterans, usually older than the on-campus student.
4. Drechsel mentioned that on-campus students have little knowledge of this program, there should be more communication so that these off-campus students are represented because they are part of the student body.
5. Thrower asked where the campuses are located for the program. Massey-Helber responde that there are 4 in Pollsbo, 1 in Bremerton, and 1 in Port Angeles.
6. Drechsel noted that she will send out a facts sheet for better understanding of Western on the Peninsula and it will be posted by next week as well.
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| **VI.** | **Discussion Items** |
| A. | Timeline for the Legislative Agenda1. Drechsel noted that this is something to figure out this fall quarter, so in the winter the agenda is completely solid. For those who aren’t working on anything, asks will be delegated to start working on proposals.
2. Massey-Helber mentioned that what the LAC chooses to lobby on different than the legislative agenda.
3. Drechsel stated that the LAC campus wide email is going out today, flyers have been posted around the VU and FCC, and initial responses are in. The survey will close this weekend, and maybe late depending on how many responses are collected.
4. Next meeting will focus on the narrowing down of the agenda asks, but even if an ask doesn’t make it on the agenda, Massey-Helber is still able to lobby for it.
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| B. | Delegation of Agenda Asks1. Farmworker Protections- Jose
2. Voting Acessibility- Nicole
3. Mental Health- Pheobe and Connor
4. Indigenous Water Rights- Joselyn
5. Support for Undocumented Students- Joselyn
6. Housing Insecurity- Kaitylyn and Jennie
7. Food Insecurity- Kayl
8. Student Healthcare- Nora and Collin
9. Support for Survivors- Bennett and Kayl
10. College Affordability- Collin and Bennett
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| **VII.** | **Reports** |
|  | **Phoebe, Local Issues Coordinator** stated that elections are tomorrow, the forums were yesterday, the city has started expanding temporary shelters for the winter including non-religious options.**Bennett, Director of Legislative Affairs,** stated that he has mostly been scheduling meetings to prepare for the November committee days as well as working on the legislative agenda and priorities.**Nicole, Organizing and Outreach Coordinator,** stated that tomorrow she will be in red square with an unofficial ballot box, she stated that tomorrow will also be democracy and donuts in the Multicultural Center, and encouraged everyone to vote.**Grace, AS VP for Governmental Affairs,** stated that she also attended the local forums with Phoebe and that next week’s meeting will also be in the VU 462, but all following Fall Quarter meetings will be held in the VU 567. All hotels for lobby day are booked as well. |
| **VIII.** | **Other Business** |
| A. | None |

***Grace Drechsel, AS VP of Governmental Affairs, adjourned this meeting at 5:20 p.m.***