



Western Washington University Associated Students

AS Executive Board Emergency Meeting

[April 6, 2020]

[Microsoft Teams]

- Board Members:** Lani DeFiesta (President), Adah Barenburg (Senate Pro-Tempore), , Grace Drechsel (Vice President for Governmental Affairs), Emily Gerhardt (Vice President for Student Services), Trever Mullins (Vice President for Sustainability), and Selome Zerai (Vice President for Activities), Yesugen Battsengel (Vice President for Diversity)
- Advisor:** Annie Byers (AS Board Program Coordinator), Leti Romo (Program Advisor)
- Secretary:** Jude Ahmed
- Guest(s):** Nate Jo (AS Business Director)

Motions:

- ASB-20-S-1** Motion to move AS Finance Council Fee reduction recommendation from an information item to an action item. **Passed.**
- ASB-20-S-2** Motion to endorse the AS Finance Council Fee 85% reduction recommendation. **Passed.**

Lani DeFiesta, AS President, called the meeting to order at 4:26pm.

- I. **Approval of Minutes**
- II. **Revisions to the Agenda**
- III. **Public Forum** (*comments from students and the community*)
- V. **Action Items – Guests**
- IV. **Information Items - Guests**
 - A. AS Finance Council Fee reduction recommendation – DeFiesta

Jo wants to recognize that cumulatively hundreds of hours of work were put into this recommendation and looking into this budget and wants to thank the budget authority and committee members that contributed to this work.

Jo is here on behalf of the AS Finance Council that met twice last week to review the Spring 2020 Associated Students budget and make recommendations as to what change should be

made to the Services and Activities Fee (S&A Fee), which is where the Associated Students draws their budget from.

The budget review and recommendation is in the context of student concerns about the cost of college tuition and fees, as many have lost jobs or sources of income due to COVID-19 and cannot access the same on campus resources. As of 3/31/2020, 4,658 people have signed a petition urging WWU to reduce tuition and fees for Spring 2020. Jo explains that the council acknowledges that AS money collected through the S&A Fee cannot be turned into an emergency fund and given to students because that is an illegal gifting of public funds. The finance council also recognizes that the best way to use the available AS budget is to use as little as possible, including of the reserves so that there are still reserves available for future quarters, in case the impact of the pandemic continues well into the future.

The AS receives 36% of the total S and A fee. Looking at current finances there are program and personnel expenses which are for projected hours of work minus known savings from people that said they are reducing hours or not returning to their jobs. Program expenses are for core operations and money set aside for virtual programs.

AS operating balance is \$340,071 beginning of Spring 2020 and then they have \$281,600 in Operating Reserves. Other AS Accounts include the Student Enhancement Fund and Large Event Reserve. They have an available budget since there is no travel occurring this quarter or large events. VU Organization Reserve is for unforeseen expenses and state mandated salary or pay increases. All unspent money at the end of the year is distributed into the various reserves and what's left goes into the Discretionary Reserve which sits at \$409,086. The total balances of all these accounts are the available liquid balance. That is how much money they have on hand at the start of Spring Quarter 2020. The total liquid balance is \$833,263.

Jo presents the various levels of S&A Fees for Spring 2020. The total revenue from the S&A fee assumes a 5% drop in enrollment for Spring 2020. Students usually pay about \$81 for the S&A fee. **The Finance Council recommends a 85% reduction in the S&A fee** which would make the S&A Fee \$12. They also provide several options including a 75%, 90%, and 100% reduction in the fee with the projected use of reserves. All these options maintain all AS employees working standard hours with the exception of those that did not want to work at all or have already communicated that they are working with reduced hours.

Battsengel asks how much other constituents of S&A are requesting. Jo states that other offices that draw from S&A like DRAC and Campus Recreation have indicated they could receive no S&A revenue and draw from reserves. Mullins asks if the Operational Reserves have ever been used by the AS. Jo says that the Operational Reserve has never been used before and that money is set aside for catastrophic or sudden events like this one. Battsengel asks if money is collected for students next year and Nate says money collected this year is for use by students this year.

Zerai recognizes the petition and the desire of students to have 0 student fees. Zerai says that there are offices in the AS working hard to plan virtual events and find other routes to support students online and wants to shout out the innovative work of those offices. Barenburg says they looked at all sorts of different potential fee reductions and feel that 85% is the most they can take off this quarter because they want to be ready to support students in their activities in the AS if this carries on into the future. Barenburg sees that if they do a

complete fee reduction, it would completely deplete the reserves and negatively impact future students if the economic impacts of the pandemic continue into several quarters. They feel they made a very informed decision. DeFiesta agrees that they want to make sure that students can access AS resources into the summer quarter and the future and not immediately deplete reserves. Drechsel agrees that it is important to maintain a cushion into the future for students in case this continues for a few quarters and the reduction from \$81 to \$12 dollars is a significant reduction.

Jo is presenting the recommendation to the Executive Board and the Board can either agree to endorse this recommendation and the Senate has the same option, or vote to discuss this further. The recommendation will then be brought to the Board of Trustees at their emergency meeting on **Tuesday, April 7th at 12:00PM** and they have the final say on how the fee can change.

Zerai asks if the 5% drop is confirmed since classes began today. Jo says that it is sitting at about 3-4% right now. Romo says that they have to wait until the official drop date to confirm the number. Zerai asks what happens if more than 5% drops. Jo says that is unlikely but that they are committed to making sure that AS employees are employed even if they start next year on a low balance reserve fund.

Battsengel asks what they can do to push for admin to support other departments or where people were laid off on campus elsewhere, even if they cannot use AS funds for anything other than the AS. Jo confirms that they cannot use the AS Budget and repurpose it for relief efforts unfortunately but that they in their positions can speak with admin and related groups to explore how to support students that are now unemployed or unable to work. Romo says there is a University committee that is looking at Student Employment and they are seeking ways to support students that have been laid off. Gerhardt says that all ResLife Positions, not just the RA's have been laid off because the drop in students living on campus means there is no funding in ResLife anymore. Jo says there is a hiring freeze and now they cannot hire students into the AS anymore.

MOTION ASB-20-S-1

By: Battsengel

Motion to move AS Finance Council Fee reduction recommendation from an information item to an action item. **Passed.**

Second: Mullins

Vote: 7-0-0

Yes : 7

No : 0

Abstaining : 0

MOTION ASB-20-S-2

By: Drechsel

Motion to endorse the AS Finance Council Fee 85% reduction recommendation. **Passed.**

Second: Zerai

Vote: 7-0-0

Yes : 7

No : 0

Abstaining : 0

VI. Personnel Items *(subject to immediate action)*

VII. Action Items – Board

VIII. Information Items – Board

IX. Consent Items *(subject to immediate action)*

X. Board Reports

Lani DeFiesta, AS President DeFiesta says there will be a town hall on Wednesday and an Executive Board meeting afterwards. DeFiesta asks if anyone has any finance related board updates

Yesugen Battsengel, VP for Diversity will be providing a board report at the Wednesday meeting.

Grace Drechsel, VP for Governmental Affairs Drechsel wants to give a huge shout out to those that put into work on these recommendations.

Adah Barenburg- Senate Pro- Tempore Barenburg says anyone is welcome to tune in to the Senate Meeting where this will be discussed as well.

Selome Zerai- VP for Activities Zerai asks how the public forum will work for the next meeting since they want to make sure the public forum can be open.

Emily Gerhardt- VP for Student Services Gerhardt adds communicated that Hunter Stuehm, AS Communications Director has ideas. Teams live broadcast has a Q&A feature that they can practice using for the town hall.

XI. Other Business

Annie Byers is the best and is working hard to support the board and their efforts to communicate with students!

There is a town hall **Wednesday, April 8th at 4:00PM** for students to voice their comments and concerns and input and update everyone on what the board has been doing to support students. Following this town hall will be an **Executive Board Meeting at 6:00PM**

Lani DeFiesta, AS President, adjourned this meeting at 5:08pm.