



AS Finance Council

March 11, 2020 2:30 p.m. VU 543

Members: Present: Nate Jo, Chair (AS Business Director), Adah Barenburg (AS Student Senate Pro Tempore), Selome Zerai (VP for Activities), Nicole Ballard (Student Senator), Corey Griffis (student at-large), Keenan Kaemingk (Activities Rep), Rachel Walsh (Central Services Rep) Christina Ngo (Resources Rep) **Absent:** Lani Defiesta (AS President)

Advisors: Leti Romo, Assistant Director for Representation & Governance, Raquel Vigil, Business Manager

Secretary: Cindy Monger, Dean of Students Unit Fiscal Specialist

Guests: Casey Hayden, Assistant Director of Student Activities; Jeff Bates, Publicity Center Manager; Soleil De Zwart, AS Review Editor in Chief

MOTIONS

FC-20-W-07 Approval of the minutes of March 4, 2020. *Passed*

FC-20-W-08 Approve \$18,000 for the Multicultural Center Programming Grant. *Passed*

Nate Jo, chair, called the meeting to order at 2:39 p.m.

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of the Minutes

MOTION FC-20-W-07 by Walsh

Approval of the minutes of March 4, 2020.

Second: Zerai Vote: 7 - 0 - 0 Action: Passed

III. Revisions to the Agenda

IV. Public Forum

- In the event of Suspended Operations due to the Covid-19 pandemic we may have remote meetings. Jo will post any changes to scheduling.
- S & A update the Enrollment projections have not been released yet, but they expect fewer first year students than last year. However, this year more students accepted than anticipated

V. Action Items

A. MCC Programming Grant Proposal

Jo said this is a Grant Proposal for this year. Zerai feels that the cost for welcoming events were high. Ngo said that it is \$2,000 per quarter for spring, fall, winter, and spring. This involves food each quarter and it is expensive. Zerai asked how they will sustain the funding for this after the grant is finished. This is a pilot project to test and see how much funding is actually needed before it is added to the operating budget. Ngo asked if there would be a separate MCC Budget in the future. Jo said right now the Budget Authority is Eric Alexander and the Student Coordinator is the AS VP for Diversity.

MOTION FC-20-W-08 by Zerai

Approve \$18,000 for the Multicultural Center Programming Grant.

Second: Walsh Vote: 7 - 0 - 0 Action: Passed

VI. Information Items

Jo said these are the three budgets that didn't rise to the point of a decision package but did include major restructures.

A. AS Productions

Walsh said the AS Pop Music Coordinator is being changed to handling major concerts. Casey Hayden, Assistant Director of Student Activities said that the restructure is to AS Pop Music. The programming model change comes from conversations with the student coordinator about the struggles with the old model. They would like to try moving from doing 5-7 concerts per year into doing 3 large concerts. Lawnstock was moved into its own budget last year. They have consistent success with Lawnstock every year. They would like to duplicate that once per quarter. In the fall it would be WestFest, in the Winter Sound Block, in the Spring Lawnstock. The hope is that this would generate excitement for the festival that would happen each quarter. Also, these would all be free concerts. They think it is possible that it would increase the amount of people that go to events this would be able 3,000 people attending. In the last few years they have only been able to get this attendance with 5 shows. The norm is more getting about 200 students at a good show. They have not been able to keep the cost down for highly in demand artists. They used to be able to spend \$16,000 to get a recognizable artist, now it is more like \$30-50,000. The acts that they get now do not have the same name recognition. Hayden thinks that the demand for going out to shows may be lower partially because of streaming services, but this is not backed up with data. They are hearing from students that ticket prices are too high. In that past tickets were \$15-\$20 and they would sell out shows, but he felt like those acts were meeting an indie, primarily white, northwest type artist. They are also not able to bring people with name recognition. Even when they are charging \$10 or under, they are still seeing less attendees. Hayden things that removing the costs and making it a longer concert with several acts, will hopefully make it more memorable. They have also been relying heavily on the Large Event Reserve for funding. Jo said that this is not a significant change to the allocation but is a change of a restructure to the number of concerts and a large decrease in revenue. Hayden said that the revenue in there is hopefully from the conference that they host in the spring. Vigil asked how many people support this directly. Hayden said that the Coordinator directly, and then part of a few more positions. Vigil asked because the students should be aware that by going to a system of subsidizing this program, they are making a value statement. For instance, in the ESC the students are producing events. So, a program that used to generate ticket sale revenue is no longer doing that. Are the dollars spent in this area a value of the AS. Jo said that they need to show the revenue that they generate. The AS is very low in revenue generating areas. There is a value of keeping fees low for students, but also making sure that the events are accessible to students. Hayden said that they reduced other line items to accommodate for the revenue decrease. This has been difficult to project in terms of how much an artist might cost and how much they may be able to make in revenue. Jo said that the only other area they can think of that makes revenue is the Outdoor Center. The current coordinator wanted the council to know that WSU pays \$150,000 for one concert in the spring.

B. AS Review

Soleil De Zwart, AS Review Editor in Chief requests that all but \$1,000 of the printing budget is reallocated to cover wages for student employees. This year they made the move to completely online news from the bi-weekly publication. They will print a welcome back guide for new students in September and perhaps an end of the year wrap-up. She thinks writing for a student publication is an important experience. They are also working on a Podcast called "Tripping on Bricks", which would need more writers. They have seen an increase in followers because of the increase in articles available. There are currently 4 writers, a Editor in Chief and an Assistant Editor, as well as a photographer. Bates said that students are not allowed to write for the Western Front at the same time, so they sometimes lose employees to that for a quarter. They average

about 2,000 readers in a month. De Zwart feels like this additional writer is a necessity because they are able to meet more needs if they have more writers. People want more stories covered by the AS Review. The Western Front has about 30 reporters on staff, so they are able to cover more areas. In a week typically each writer has 2-3 stories to work on. One long form story, an event, and something else. De Zwart wants to be accurate so she knows it may take longer to publish the stories because of this. They also have writers assigned to specific areas such as student government, events, etc. Vigil said that as she looks at the pattern of spending in this area, they are not meeting the budget each year. Bates said that one thing they are trying to launch is the Podcast and that will take time. Bates said that they are trying to negotiate with the Western Front to allow people to work for both publications occasionally. Vigil said that in looking at the money spent in the last few years, they have not spent all of their funding. Last year they left about \$10,000 in their staffing. She wondered if they could spend the whole allocation with an additional writer, instead of increasing their budget further. De Zwart said that there have been a lot of turn over. Walsh said they reclassified the writers to be at a coordinator level, so this is part of the increases in cost over the last few years. Jo asked if they could have in the requirements that they are not allowed to work for the Western Front during the terms of their position. De Zwart said that they do discuss this with students, but their plans change, and they can't really enforce it. Walsh said that they do have to write for 2 publications before they graduate, but there are other options. Jo said that this is here because it is a huge restructure in programming and that is why they wanted to let the council know about the change. The rest of the budgets are simply carrying forward similar services. Jo feels that they need to all work together, because there are many requests and not necessarily enough resources. They should all work together for the final product of the AS Budget. Vigil said that the Finance Council is a check and balance. Budget Authorities are responsible for presenting their budgets. Representatives sitting on the Council should be well versed on what those changes are and be able to speak to some of those changes. Vigil said they are still in a state of flux and trying to figure out who is in charge of approving things. In the past a program change would be authorized before funds would be moved around. There is a void in the current system for this so it's not being approved anywhere. This group is serving as a check and balance. This is a program change in this area. Typically, if there is a change like this where they no longer need the funding for printing, this would return to the Council to decide where it might be needed. There is an OC Training request for \$30,000. If they have departments that are holding on tight to their money and finding other ways to use it, that is where the Council decides the money would be best spent, and that might be growing the program and adding another writer. It should at least be transparent that this change has happened. Romo said that this is not the Personnel Committee. Jo said that the Personnel Committee doesn't decide on funding, they wouldn't decide whether 4 or 5 writers is needed. Jo said that students have always had authority to decide how their funding is spent because it is a student run organization. Ultimately, everything goes to the Associate Dean Alexander and they couldn't blindly reallocate all of the funding. There is some level of understanding that in the past it would have been sent to the Budget Committee and the AS Board. Now the process is AS Finance Council approves and AS Executive Board and Student Senate have veto power. Walsh said that this is an approved description and if it came to her, she would refer to Assessment or Finance Council. Jo said that when this Council makes a decision about the full AS Budget, they are in effect approving all of the changes made to the base budgets as well. The area representatives were encouraged to review the budgets for their areas. These three budgets were brought because there were significant changes to these budgets. Romo feels that this is not trusting and is concerned about this. Jo said that explaining base budget restructures helps have an open and transparent conversation about spending. Zerai feels this discussion should be happening separate of this presentation. Zerai said that moving this online is one discussion and one is hiring another position. Vigil is having trouble understanding why another \$6,000 needs to be added to the allocation when over the course of 5-

7 years, the allocation has not been fully utilized. Bates would like to recognize De Zwart for their leadership in the move to an online publication. That was not an easy transition and they have identified a podcast as a way to reach more students. He feels that they really need the additional position to make the podcast happen. Vigil said that this would be a good grant proposal. Ballard wondered if they could hire another writer with the budget that is there since they haven't been able to spend all of the funding, especially since they have people drop for a quarter. Jo said that they have to budget the maximum amount for an employee because that is in their job description. De Zwart said that they have to put it in so that they can work up to 19 hours per week, it is in the calculator at 14 hours per week, because there are weeks that they work less than 19 hours. Vigil said that they can hire someone with the current budget because the budget tool is a guide, it is a management tool. It is up to the staffing as it ebbs and flows. There is nothing that prevents them from hiring a 5th person. If people aren't working all of their hours, then they can hire more. Within the budget they can hire 6 or 7. De Zwart said that they currently have 6 writers.

C. Representation & Engagement Programs

Romo said that this has been a conversation for the last 2+ years. In talking to students about how to best use the funds. The newly created Office of Civic Engagement to help with name recognition and to allow to grow in programming and focus on developmental goals instead of just people who are already engaged. The current positions would still exist, but they would add two positions. The formal Legal Information Center (LIC) and the assistant would transfer over from the Student Advocacy & Identity Resource. They would change to be Coordinator for Civic Involvement and the Legislative Education Assistant. Students were using the Legal Information Center as a place to get legal advice, however none of the students have this type or training. Even though employees weren't giving advice, people were perceiving it that way. The Civic Involvement Coordinator would offer opportunities for students to come to together to be involved in things happening civically, State of the Union Watch Parties. Opportunities to learn about the activity or just to engage with others around this. Currently the Voting Coordinator is trying to get people to engage in voting and this. This would allow for more focus on the education. The Legislative Education Assistant would be to offer support to the programming and to the Director. The Local Liaison will be working with the Housing and Hash browns program that was previously through the LIC. Vigil asked how the Legislative Action Fee potentially fit into funding this new proposal. Romo said that the LIC is carrying over funding. Jo said that this is an Information Item to talk about moving a budget into a different area. Vigil thinks that they don't talk about the other pools of money that is available to students. The Legislative Action Fund has collected money and has accumulated some funds. It can only be used to enhance what the AS currently provides. This is a new proposal, so if the LIC goes away typically that money returns to the AS. If they are enhancing legislative activities, then would it be possible to use those funds. At a certain point the AS needs to talk about new initiatives, such as the podcast that is new and could be a 3-year pilot program. Romo doesn't see it as going away, it is a repurposing of the office. They do not belong in the SAIRC anymore. What the LIC is doing is more connected to the REP at this point. There is about \$60,000 in the Legislative Action Fund. Ballard said that they are using the fund more this year to support expanded programming and there are talks about increasing the Washington Student Association fees. Ballard works in the REP and thinks that having the positions in their budget would help people use the money.

D. FXXREP Decision Package

Romo is requesting funding to focus on areas that she believes they have been failing their students due to a lack of resources. Having a subscription to the Bellingham Herald is important to stay connected to what is happening in Whatcom. Other things would be to have receptions

and meetings for events for food to get people to come to the forums. They see this as an opportunity to enhance what they are doing. Democracy and Donuts was successful, and they had a lot of questions about what a referendum was and where to find accurate information to help them decide to vote. Walsh said that the two position descriptions were approved.

VII. Other Business

Jo encouraged people to review the AS Budget as a whole. There may be some hard decisions as they do not have unlimited funds. They have needs and wants, but also don't want to increase student fees. Jo asked area reps to be aware of budgets in their area. If there are any other questions, please reach out to Jo.

VIII. Adjourn

The Meeting was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.