



# SUSTAINABILITY, EQUITY, AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

November 19<sup>th</sup> 2019

8:00am

Viking Union 462B

**Present:** Trever Mullins (ASVP for Sustainability); Emily Gerhardt (ASVP for Student Services); Soumya Ayelasomayajula (ESC Assistant Director for Club Logistics); Kayl Gilhan (SAIRC Representation & Outreach Coordinator); Kelsey Leppek (Environmental and Sustainability Programs Director); Alexis Blue (Business and Financial Affairs Representative); Leigh Chaffey (Student at-large); Grace Wang (Environmental Studies Chair); Turner Campbell (SEJF Project Coordinator); Jonathan Riopelle (SEJF Program Coordinator); Shannon Sandberg (SEJF Project Coordinator); Greg McBride (Assistant Director of Viking Union Facilities); Seth Vidaña (Director of Sustainability)

**Secretary:** Jude Ahmed (AS Executive Board Assistant)

**Guest(s):** N/A

*Meeting called to order by Trever Mullins at 8:05am*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### a. Land Acknowledgement

### b. What is your relationship to sustainability?

## II. HISTORY OF THE SEJF FUND

### a. GEF > SAF > SEJF

McBride explained that the fee was developed as the Green Energy Fund exclusively to pay for renewable energy credits (RECs) to help western greenify its energy consumption. The cost of credits went down and that freed up more money within the fund. As students were looking around at what other colleges were doing it was appealing to create a grant fund and take sustainability. This was a fairly novel idea cropping up in places like UC Berkley. In 2010, students voted to change the fee so that it didn't just focus on carbon offsets but expand it to create a grant program. A graduate student ran the program and an AS employee marketed the program.

Riopelle added that Students for Renewable energy were the ones to reach out to the administration to offset carbon offsets. When Western students initially voted to fund the fee, it passed with about 86% of the student vote. WWU's student body became the first in the nation to tax themselves, which is huge. Students realized that they had the knowledge to take action on climate change and green energy, and just needed the support and then the funding for such. They wanted to make sustainability and green energy more sensitive to issues of equity and justice around campus, as

outlined in Westerns Sustainable Action Plan. That is an important statement to make because sustainability doesn't work without equity and justice.

Vidaña added that student staff and faculty have wanted to do more for the state of the world but have been prevented from doing so due to shortage of funds. There is no shortage of ideas. Western is also entering the [Green Direct Program](#). WWU will partner with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and other energy around the area to fund the construction of wind farms through RECs. This program is intended to put new wind energy on the grid. We'll be starting with about the same 50k spent on RECs to be spent on windfarms and that will increase in cost over time as power becomes more expensive for everyone in PSE so that fee will go up to match that curve. In contract for 20 years, allows PSE to build a \$190 million windfarm in Centralia. We are just one of many partnering with PSE including the City of Bellingham, REI, and more.

Sandberg added that the SEJF is on an upward trajectory of funding more and more projects. Last year there were 33, the year before were 30 projects. Both of those are record amounts of projects. Currently there are 13 teams. The fall deadline to submit projects is November 12<sup>th</sup>, and the next will be in February. They are in the process of hiring another pro staff and have some behind the scenes work to get the program where it needs to be.

### III. SEJF PROGRAM AS OF TODAY

#### a. Budget

The office receives funds on a quarterly basis and uses funds on approximately a bi-weekly basis. Throughout the year, they receive credits and adjustments based on student enrollment, since that is where the funds come from and projected enrollment is not always accurate. As a result, the budget is fluctuating on a weekly basis and the budget is largely a projection. There are two fairly accurate numbers. On July 1st this fund had \$435,000 in it. If everyone that was anticipated to enroll **throughout the whole year** does, nothing is bought by the SEJF office, and no one that works with the fund is paid there will be an estimated \$390,000 added to the fund. Currently it looks like there are going to be \$398,000 coming in based on enrollment. This brings the total SEJF budget to \$833,000. From this budget, \$135,200 is allocated to paying staff, and includes the funds encumbered for a pro-staff position that they are currently hiring for. SEJF will ask the committee to approve \$13,100 in funding for the office to purchase posters and attend conferences and contribute to other program expenses. \$50,000 goes towards RECs. There are also \$267,000 in encumbered funds that have been approved by previous committees for pending grants that have not been released yet. Sometimes, as the grant develops to its final stage, not all of those encumbered funds are used. For example, \$115,000 of those encumbered funds will be going towards an ethnic student community space in Huxley, but that money has not yet been released by the grant for use.

There are also encumbrances. This means that last year the committee approved 2 abstracts for large grants, and put money aside for them for when they are actually in process. Those teams will come before this committee with a final application or those

committees will disappear and if they haven't reached out within twelve months the money will go back into the available budget.

If the \$228,000 is approved for use and is spent, then there would be \$139,700k available for this year's projects. This is essentially a minimum projection of the budget, as there is possibility for funds to come back. There is also some play in how grant funds are released; for example, for the Outback Farm Coordinator position which is an active grant this year, the Dean of Fairhaven has agreed that they don't want three years of funding for the position at once and will take that payment of \$142,000 in yearly installments.

In summary, the **SEJF program formally anticipates a \$139,700 budget for grants for this year**, with an understanding that there is continuous fluctuation in the actual budget amount. That number includes the Spring and Winter tuition that hasn't been paid yet, so the \$833,000 is a projected estimate for the total annual budget for SEJF. Riopelle believes that the fund likely has about \$235,000-\$240,000.

### **b. Small vs Large Grants**

Campbell spoke on the three tiers of grants: small, medium, and large. Small grants are of between \$500-5,000 and are usually used for conferences, speakers, and events around campus. Smaller items are reviewed and approved by Riopelle and Vidaña. Riopelle clarified that they will bring some of the small grants to the committee if there are any issues they want to discuss and to get student input. Medium grants are \$5,000-35,000 and have a onetime approval process by the SEJF committee, and usually have a short 5 minute presentation for the committee. Large grants are any requests that are over \$35,000. They have a two –step process. First they send in an abstract to the committee for approval. The committee evaluates if it is appropriate and if they should continue their work. Then they come back with a final one. These large grants are usually infrastructure based projects or personnel projects. SEJF tried to implement club grants as a project ties last year but it wasn't utilized as much as the small event requests.

### **c. Active Grants**

There are currently several active grants as listed in the SEJF Budget for 2019-2010. Active grants are ongoing grants in the implementation period which are currently being funded by the SEJF program, and thus continue to check in with the Fund and Committee. For example, for the electric vehicle charging station grant, the committee agreed to fund electricity and maintenance for 5 years and after that period, facilities management and parking services will take charge of them. The electricity is free with a purchased parking permit. You can use those for free and are clearly marked because you get a ticket if you are not parking an electric vehicle.

### **d. Pending Grants**

Pending grants usually refer to large grants which require approval of the abstract from the SEJF Committee before work can be continued on the final grant. The amount of funds requested in the abstract can change between the abstract and the final fund request. The amount requested in the abstract form of the pending grant is encumbered until the final request. One of the pending grants is a probiotic digester

which is a huge project that is looking to cost upwards of \$100,000 and will hopefully come for final approval in winter quarter. Free the Toiletries is another pending grant to put free toiletries in bathrooms around campus.

Riopelle stated that the Fall deadline is tonight (11/12/19) for grants and then the three of them will review to see which projects are appropriate for the committee. They expect to see four or five applications for this quarter. They have thirteen active teams, don't always know if they will come in when they say they will. They expect that two medium grants are ready to go for Tuesday 11/19 and that two small grants will come before the committee and a few more might finish up this week.

## IV. Teams

### a. Ground rules for teams

Everyone on the committee is added to the SEJF Teams Page. Grant documents will be posted in the weekly meeting folder so that everyone can take a look at documents and make notes beforehand. The Conversation function in Teams will be used to let everyone know when a grant has been posted or for updates on meetings. It will not be used for discussion on whether grants should be approved because that should be done in public committee meetings. The Conversations tab is also a good way to keep the legacy of this committee going so that there will be an easy backlog in one location for future committees to keep up to date. In some circumstances, e-votes can be done through the app on Teams called POLLY. Terms and Definitions is a blank page that will be added to throughout the year in order to make sure that when we are talking about sustainability, we are using clear and accessible language for all.

*MOTION SEJF-19-F-1 By: Mullins*

To continue the meeting as an informational item

*Second:*

*Vote: 6-0-0*

*Action: **Passed***

*Yes:*

*No:*

*Abstaining:*

## V. FEE LANGUAGE AND BEING THE “TRUSTEE OF THE FEE”

### a. Roles and expectations of key people

Trustee of the fee serves as a framework for this committee. When student money is being used by the university, it is important that there isn't just one person allocating funding based on their subjective views and experiences. Having a group of people with multiple diverse perspectives and understandings of the campus community to steward the fund ensures that educated decisions are being made about how to properly manage student funds. The processes surrounding the fees must also be flexible and reflective of what the student body at each time wants to see from the program. The trustees are particularly versed in the process of the fees and navigating university

structures and how the fund fits into those places. This fee isn't just about the environment, the second half highlights the ways in which the fund may be used. This is something the whole student body pays for but is advised by this committee, so it is crucial that the values of sustainability apply to that as well. As voting members, you have a hand in how much students pay to attend this university and how the value of this particular fee comes back to students.

### **b. Terms and definitions in the Fee language**

Mullins states that the fee language document is what will be used to guide our grant approval. This includes other scopes of the fund that were drafted with the VP for Student Life, Leti Romo, and the ESP director from a few years ago to look at how sustainability is changing and the important of equity and justice. Mullins asked that committee members **please peruse this document before next week's meeting**. Mullins wants to have a discussion next week on the fee language and where voting and non-voting members stand on that.

### **c. AS Board**

This is a subcommittee of the AS Executive Board as the governing body of students and is in charge of the fee process and making sure that the fee language is approved and voted on, and then the affirmation of the membership, so who sits on this committee. Your work happens are arms reach of the board, helps keep the board informed on how the strategic direction of the fund goes and bringing in the perspective of the broader student body or AS offices. SAIRC and ESC are important because they bring perspectives that have not been previously represented in this fund. Board members and faculty are also other valuable perspectives.

## **VI. CHARTER AND RULES OF OPERATION**

### **a. Ethics**

Abstention is not counted as part of quorum, it should only be used if there is a conflict of interest and should rarely come into play. It's not a legal vote cast. Last year it reduced quorum if there was an abstention, but from Johnathan's perspective I should be that they are not at the meeting and quorum does not reduce. But in the charge it says that they must obtain a majority of legal votes cast, so it would reduce quorum. Abstention does not impact their ability to be there and participate. It does lower the threshold for approval because of the language of the charter. This is a discussion that can be continued at the next meeting.

***Trever Mullins adjourned this meeting at 9:34 am.***