



Western Washington University Associated Students

AS Board of Directors

June 3rd, 2020

MS Teams

Board Members: *Present:* Lani Defiesta (President), Selome Zerai (VP for Activities), Yesugen Battsengel (VP for Diversity), Grace Drechsel (VP for Governmental Affairs), Emily Gerhardt (VP for Student Services), Trever Mullins (VP for Sustainability, and Adah Barenburg (Senate Pro-Tempore)

Absent: None

Advisor: Leti Romo (Assistant Director for Student Representation & Governance)
Annie Byers (AS Board Program Coordinator)

Secretary: Sierra Templeton

Guest(s): Ina LaGrandeur, Sargun Handa, Hunter Stuehm.

Motions:

ASB-20-W-26 To approve consent item A for appointing members to the election board.
Passed.

Lani Defiesta, AS President, called the meeting to order at [insert time].

I. Approval of Minutes

None

II. Revisions to the Agenda

A. AS Senate Elections Code

Drechsel asked whether the board wanted to go over the information item AS Senate Elections Code, since this may take a while and she wanted to refrain from taking up time that could be used for the discussion item. The senate revised the code last week.

1. Mullins asked when the information item would be discussed if not today before the elections occur. Drechsel responded that if the board does not vote today, it will become an item for the next executive board over the summer.
2. Barenburg noted that the main change was the dates of the election since this may change every year.

III. Public Forum (*comments from students and the community*)

None

IV. Information Items - Guests

A. AS Senate Election Code- Doc 1 (30 Minutes) Drechsel

1. LaGrandeur stated that they changed the restriction of a specific date, more malleable for the differences of every year, and is more of a recommended timeline. They also made the code more pandemic-friendly, with campaign social distancing and the ability to apply online. They removed the requirement for signatures since this was a big barrier in Fall quarter for new students and

extended the voting period by a week so students could vote after the forums. The verbal declaration of candidacy means that candidates can privately tell colleagues or friends but cannot make posts that may be construed as campaigning until the campaign period starts.

2. Defiesta asked why the dates were removed. LaGrandeur respinded that with this change the code wouldn't have to be changed every year.
3. Zerai asked about the rule that social media ads would not be reimbursed, since a lot of campaigning now is conducted online.
 - a. LaGrandeur stated that the code was changed so that software such as Canva Pro can be reimbursed for advertising purposes, but the committee wasn't sure about changing the rule concerning Facebook ads. Ballard added that Facebook approves the ads that are allowed, and so different positions and candidates may not be allowed to run ads, making the election unfair.
 - b. Zerai stated that she doesn't see how this is a valid way to control online ads, since candidates who are able to pay for ads would still be able to and those who are not would be barred. LaGrandeur stated that nowhere in the code does it say that ads are permitted and in the past reimbursements were not provided for this purpose. The change allows for software to be reimbursed.
 - c. Defiesta asked if this meant to bar ads altogether. LaGrandeur responded that the idea is to bar ads since they are not included under permitted campaigning. There is the option to pass today, but it is not rushed to pass. Recommendations can be provided through email afterwards and a committee meeting can be scheduled before the end of the year.

V. Action Items - Guests

A. None

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

A. None

VII. Action Items - Board

A. None

VIII. Information Items - Board

A. None

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

A. Election Board

1. Drechsel stated that before she was under the impression that members were not able to be added during elections, but Zerai and these students brought it to her attention that this is not stated in the code, so it is only fair to review the candidates.

LaShaiah Dickerson

Rukhsar Sadat
Zion Gemechu

MOTION ASB-20-W-26 by Drechsel

To approve consent item A for appointing members to the election board.

Second: Zerai

Vote: 6-0-0

Action: Passed

Yes:

No:

Abstaining:

X. Discussion Items

A. An analysis of Anti Blackness within the AS, Western, and our community. Doc 2 (60 Min) Zerai

1. Zerai started off by saying that Anti Blackness is not new, this has been said for years. It is the root of most oppression and racism in the U.S.
2. Current Culture and Environment
 - a. Statement written by Black at WWU by 20+ students in 2018. “We are fighting against an institution that exploits us but felt just as exploited by the same people that were supposed to support and give us space.” Historically AS has not supported or given black students space.
 - b. There are five black employees in the AS, three of which are board assistants, while this is the 78th years of Black History Month, 2020 was the first year BHM (Black History Month) was celebrated by the “whole” AS. Zerai has not seen a black speaker or artist come to Western on behalf of the AS that wasn’t requested by black students or during BHM, while some speakers who do come exploit black culture.
 - c. Zerai stated that advocating to bring a College of Ethnic Studies does not absolve you from Anti-Blackness, it shows that you only care about the nonblack people of color that benefit from an Anti-Black organization. You are not an ally to anyone if you are not an ally to black students. The narrative that if you are an ESJ student, you are “woke” is a cop out.
3. Do Black Lives Matter to AS Employees?
 - a. Zerai stated that historically, black lives don’t matter to AS employees. The AS wouldn’t be having these discussions if they did, and it should’ve been consistent not just when black students were/are angry. Black students should not have to start the discussion. The AS forgets that black people can have multiple identities (the inclusion of ACC as well as BSU). She asked the rest of the board for their input.
 - b. Defiesta stated it makes her sad that Zerai has to come forward with this presentation, but she appreciates the love Zerai has for this space to do it.
 - c. Mullins stated that it’s important to seek conversation with black students in how they best need to be supported when the institution isn’t welcoming or supportive enough for it to be a space that black students to come to. Then to actually put in the action and make change.
 - d. Battsengel noted that they tried to start conversations about anti-blackness in the ESC and the MCC with Asian peers and professors, but the conversations had just started.

- e. Zerai stated that it's a problem that the MCC and the ESC, which were founded by black students, are now notoriously anti-black. However, why was the ESC the only place for black students to go in the first place? It's important to have black spaces and support.
 - f. Black students don't feel comfortable in the AS because there's no representation on student or pro-staff, no knowledge about the AS and no trust between black students in the AS, and no representation during office events.
4. Who is to blame?
- a. If there wasn't a viral black death, black students probably wouldn't be on the agenda. The AS tends to blame higher-ups rather than taking accountability with black student's issues.
 - b. White silence is violence, but what does that say about the AS of WWU's silence? Black people should not slip through the cracks.
5. Open discussion
- a. Battsengel mentioned that a section about supporting black pro-staff should be added in the statement. Drechsel noted that there's a section about holding pro-staff accountable because there is not the same yearly turnover as there is with student staff, and this would be good to add.
 - b. Defiesta added that there should be training for anti-blackness, making sure there is funding available for this. Drechsel noted that this would support students overall, and asked what the board thought of holding a event of support and care for black students.
 - c. Romo acknowledged the hard work and love Zerai put into the presentation. Romo and other staff will be holding a retreat/meeting centering prioritizing and supporting black students and staff, focusing on faults and opportunities for growth including hiring.
 - d. Mullins asked what the board is doing with the statement. Zerai responded that once it's completed, it will be in a mass email to students and perhaps posted on the website.
 - e. Defiesta asked if it would be a good idea to ask for the next lobby day to put defunding for the Bellingham Police Department (BPD). Zerai responded that she was not sure of the purview that the AS has, but this would eb a good statement to hold. Drechsel stated that she has been in contact with her successors about this plan.
 - f. Gerhardt mentioned how the Western Alert System (which is in connection with the BPD) selectively ignores reports of white supremacists on campus which puts black students in danger. She stated she wants to change Western Alert, so students are able to decide what is an imminent threat to them, not an outside force.
 - g. Zerai asked how the statement should be changed before it is released. Defiesta responded that it's important for board members to ensure successors are informed in further action. Drechsel asked if it would be smart to go more in depth upon the quarterly or annual assessments. Zerai questioned how much can be done quarterly at WWU.
 - h. Romo stated that it depends upon what is hoped to be done with the data; pre and post the end of the year, or mid-year to gauge need, etc. If there is a Black Student Coalition, they would also dictate the process. Battsengel asked about having a beginning a middle and end assessment of progress upon the issue. Romo is pushing for goals and outcomes rather than just requirements to make sure it's intentional and meaningful.

- i. Defiesta whether the board can create the assessment before the next year begins so it doesn't get swept under the rug. Zerai stated that for now she would like to see both short-term and long-term goals as well as public shame, making this assessment accessible on the AS website. She would love to have the document done by tonight.

XI. Board Reports

None

XII. Other Business

A. None

Lani Defiesta, AS President, adjourned this meeting at 7:45 p.m.