

# Mailchimp for the Associated Students

## Grant Proposal

### Overview

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**Contact:** Ryan Morris (she/her), AS Communications Director, [as.communications@wwu.edu](mailto:as.communications@wwu.edu)

**Summary of proposal:** The Associated Students Communications Office is requesting funds to use Mailchimp for AS to student communications. This will increase accessibility to AS events and content, improve our tracking of analytics, and encourage unified branding throughout the AS. In addition, this grant will propel the AS into better tools for content creation and collaboration. Mailchimp will and can be used for the AS weekly newsletter.

**Total fiscal impact:** \$5,800 or \$200 per month

**Duration:** March 2022 through July 2024

### Information

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**Grant Objectives:** The objectives for this grant are increased student engagement and visibility in the AS, representation of student voices to the University community, direct marketing to students by students, and additional communication support for all AS programs, offices, and clubs. The overall goal is direct student communication from the AS. This has been lacking with the current regular communication by the University, with Western Today and other outreach. This direct marketing, storytelling, and connection will be for students by students.

**Details:** The grant will allow the purchase of a Mailchimp membership. The Associated Students Communications Office will have access to direct marketing tools and analytics that allow us to reach students as well as understand what they want to see from the AS. As it stands, the AS does not have any analytics tools to gage the engagement from our student audience. The communications office does not have the funds to purchase this on our own and ask for this grant so we can better support over 200 AS programs, offices, and clubs in reaching students and creating a more connected experience for all students at Western.

### Fiscal Impact

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With the [standard plan by Mailchimp](#) the grant would pay \$200 per month for the Associated Students to reach up to 20,000 contacts, including but not limited to the over 16,000 students at Western with the option for subscribers. This plan involves integration with social media apps for marketing, branding consistency for trustworthy messaging, a marketing calendar for all Mailchimp created content, email and marketing campaign templates, automated email sending, full analytic reports of engagement and more, as well as accessibility features such as alt-text.



Mailchimp operates at a monthly charge based on the number of emails you send, and the contacts subscribed. We would need a plan in the “up to 20,000” category for contacts to include all students.

The standard plan has everything the Associated Students need to be successful, accessible, and inclusive in this investment.

The next level down for funding would be the essentials plan, at \$170 per month for 20,000 contacts. Although this is a more economical option, it offers less than half of the analytics features available in standard, does not create custom templates necessary for creative marketing, and does not allow us to download our designs created in Mailchimp. In addition, there are less collaboration options in the essentials package — limiting the number of collaborators.

## **Justification**

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After over a year of virtual school, work, clubs and more, connecting with other students is of the utmost importance to the AS. This grant allows for regular and targeted outreach to every Western student. We do create a weekly newsletter, which began about two months ago, and this grant will allow us to continue to grow that connection with the student body.

We have already received positive feedback from students. After our very first weekly email, Gunnar Lone responded: “Thank you for sending this! Would really appreciate if you did this more frequently!”

Student employees have also responded with positivity, seeing this as an opportunity to showcase their work and involve students in important causes — such as Western Lobby Day, Kindness Week, campus art installations and more!

Currently we are using Bullseye to send all-student communication, but it is a challenge. Every time an email goes to all students the university has to approve it. I cannot schedule these emails ahead of time, so they tend to go out at low engagement hours (when I am working). In addition, Bullseye does not allow for the use of apostrophes, alt-text, specific links and other issues with both accessibility and grammar. This option cannot continue to support the AS on a weekly basis because it is not accessible for all Western students.

This grant supports equity through a weekly uplifting of student voices and a direct line of communication support for every AS office and program. This avoids current barriers for some offices of contacting University Communications. No office, program, or mission will get priority over another. On the topic of both equity and integrity, AS emails would finally be accessible. We would have access to alt-text, headers for informational hierarchy, link text and more to support every student being included in AS messaging. With Mailchimp, we can also use the subscription option to encourage inclusive communications — a goal of the AS Communications Office.

Students would be able to opt in or out of the direct marketing, which is not currently an option. Engagement with students is a key value here. The AS promises connection and networking to



students. With a more accessible list of events and opportunities each week, students can more easily find their way to offices, programs, or clubs they'd like to be involved in. This is increasingly important as it encourages both on- and off-campus engagement with the AS even during COVID-19. Students who live off-campus or rarely leave their dorm will directly hear from the AS and will be invited to interact with us. With this grant, awareness of leadership opportunities for students will also rise.

The weekly use of Mailchimp allows the AS to take control of the student narrative in a way that highlights student voices and invites more in. The AS can always use more engagement, and this will support us in those efforts to uplift student work.

The weekly newsletter is already built into my job as communications director, as a weekly task, however this does not minimize the inefficiency of the current system. I create a calendar of events weekly and include stories or asks that other AS offices send me as well, which would continue should we receive the grant for Mailchimp. All of this is complete with links to the WIN events for easy access for all students. In addition, University Communications and a couple AS advisors review these emails weekly to support the content through sharing or editing. KUGS also reviews these emails before they go out so they can announce upcoming AS events in time for students to attend. Mailchimp is necessary to create a more accessible and efficient workflow for this weekly task.

Not only can I guarantee we will continue the weekly newsletter with this grant, but I suspect it will drastically improve with the use of analytics, targeted messaging features, and better mobile compatibility from Mailchimp. We will be able to understand what receives the most interactions and who is engaging with the content. This allows us to tailor our message to the needs of the student body and increase their enjoyment of the content we put out. This is beneficial to the entire AS, not just the communications office, as every program has a marketing need.

