



AS Finance Council

May 17, 2023 1:00 p.m. Teams Online

Members: Present: Brandon Denny, Chair (AS Business Director), Sargun Handa, Vice Chair (AS President), Bella Bedard (Activities Rep), Madi Gilbert (Central Services Rep), Gabe Wong (Delegate for AS Student Senate President), **Absent:** MJ Manaois (ADEI Rep)

Advisor: Eric Alexander, Executive Director for Student Engagement & Director of the VU

Secretary: Sam Hughes, VU Business Services Program Support; Cindy Monger, VU Administrative Specialist

Guests:

MOTIONS

FC-23-S-11 Approve the minutes of May 10, 2023. **Passed**

FC-23-S-12 Approve the ASWWU Fiscal Year 2024 Finance Council Budget Recommendations (Doc. 1) with stated changes and edits for clarity. **Passed**

Brandon Denny, chair, called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of the Minutes- May 10, 2023

MOTION FC-23-S-11 by Wong

Approve the minutes of May 10, 2023.

Second: Bedard

Vote: 4-0-0

Action: Passed

III. Revisions to the Agenda

IV. Public Forum

V. Action Items

A. AS FY24 Council Budget Recommendations Draft

Doc. 1

Denny read Doc. 1 to the council. Wong asked if the FY23 AS Budget Proposals pie chart on page 6 should say FY24. Monger said it is a typo and should be corrected. Wong said in the context section on page 1 sentence 4, that saying "ASWWU asked budget authorities to reduce budgets where possible" should be reworded since the organization as a whole did not ask. Monger proposed changing the language to say: "Budget Authorities were asked to". Wong agreed. Wong also proposed adding to the context section a sentence about the Outlook update sent out by the university in order to give more context to the university's financial situation as it relates to the AS. Alexander said the assumption of needing to reduce the budget where possible came from the Central Budget Office and was recommended down from the state, to the university, to the program level. For clarity, "These requests are in alignment with WWU Central Budget Office projections" was added to the context section.

Wong was unsure about the wording for the Potential Increase section on page 4, given where the conversation left off last meeting. Denny said that the intent is to have the Finance Council next year discuss these changes once minimum wage increases are announced and more information is known. Wong is specifically concerned about the

first sentence which states "...to bring student pay closer to the rate considered a living wage in Bellingham". Wong noted that there is not a statement in the section saying that the viewpoint of the Finance Council is that wages should increase. Wong is unsure if this viewpoint was decided on by the council at the end of the previous meeting. Denny is hesitant to say that the council decided that wage levels should be increased, as there was no vote taken. Denny said as of last meeting, the council understood that there is a possibility of increasing wage levels going forward, but that there are too many unknown factors at this time. Denny said this proposal should not be rushed, and instead there needs to be time to deliberate on the changes once everything is known, including potential wage increases and the S&A (Services and Activities) Fee allocation and distribution for the next fiscal year. Denny said that the wage level increases are achievable, but that they need to be achievable in a sustainable manner. The Potential Increases section was changed to say, "The Finance Council started reviewing a proposal for increasing the levels in the AS Wage Policy to bring student pay closer to the rate considered a living wage in Bellingham. Considering many unknowns in the next year, the council approved a recommendation to next year's council to review the AS Wage Policy after the minimum wage rate for 2024 is announced and after the fall quarter Services & Activities Fee distribution. This will create a clearer picture of what is possible or needed for the AS".

Denny opened a revised version of Doc. 1 with the changes discussed on a shared screen. Wong asked if the Central Budget Office (CBO) is at the university level or state level and said that clarifying this could be helpful. The CBO is at the university level. The document was changed to say, "WWU Central Budget Office".

Wong is still hesitant about the wording under the Potential Increases section. Wong wants the council to motion a statement saying that the council believes that the lowest wage level being increased to the living wage level should be prioritized next year. Wong said that this could then be reflected in the budget recommendations as opposed to being something tentative. Handa said "We could put it to a vote". Monger said that there is a chance that minimum wage could increase to what is considered the living wage in Bellingham next year, making the proposed wage policy changes not relevant. Monger said the Potential Increases section was written this way keeping those potential changes in mind, but Monger is open to wording changes. Alexander said that he doesn't know if WAWU, the new union being created for student employees, has any influence on this policy and which students will be part of potential wage increases. Changes collectively bargained by WAWU would override the current AS wage policy. Handa said, "I'm confused on how WAWU covers the AS wage policy". Denny said that if students join WAWU and the AS decided to go in that direction, then WAWU bargains with the university which would affect the wages of student employees within the AS. This would then make the AS Wage policy irrelevant because the AS would be part of WAWU.

Based on feedback by Wong and the council, Monger proposed the wording for the Potential Increase section to say, "The Finance Council started reviewing a proposal to increase the levels in the AS Wage Policy to bring the lowest wage level up to the rate considered a living wage in Bellingham". Wong said that this wording works. Handa said that having a statement about what the Finance Council believes in is a good statement to have in the proposal, and that it is helpful to leave a paper trail of what the current council believes for the next Finance Council.

MOTION FC-23-S-12 by Wong

Approve the ASWWU Fiscal Year 2024 Finance Council Budget Recommendations (Doc. 1) with stated changes and edits for clarity.

Second: Handa

Vote: 4-0-0

Action: Passed

VI. Information Items

A. AS Student Employee Wage Policy Draft

Doc. 2

The proposed edits to the wage level changes are highlighted in red on the document. There are also additional changes to the definitions on the policy and the numbered steps in the policy. The wage level changes to this document cover the less aggressive option on the original proposal, which detail increased wage rates for positions 1A, 1B, and 2A. Monger said, "Are we discussing it now to get on record this Finance Council's thoughts on the policy?". That is correct. Alexander said we want to make sure students aren't crafting their own position descriptions and start working at a different level, then assume there should be backpay for the work they are taking on. Alexander said that each position has a position description with a described wage level, and if there is a need for a change, there is an official process. Monger said, "Backpay is an internal process done by staff if there is an error in the wage entered". Alexander said that position descriptions need to be crafted, reviewed, and changed by the supervisor.

Alexander recommended working on this policy with Monger to update some of the language, make clarifications, and fill in gaps in the policy changes, as Monger is trained in policy review. Alexander said the council should utilize people highly trained to mediate changes in the policy and help interpret labor laws, for example by connecting with WWU's Office of Human Resources and talking to an Employee Relations Specialist. Handa said "It could just say "in the exception of cases where the wage policy would violate WWU policy or state/federal law" or "in consultation/agreement with *insert person here*". Handa said that having highly trained people looking at the policy is important, but also having the Student Senate and AS Executive Board looking at the policy is important as well. The highly trained people can help ensure everything is in accordance with the law, but having student representative voices creates accountability. Handa said since the AS is for students, by students, it is important that students are part of the conversation.

Monger said that the main purpose of the AS wage policy is to set wage levels, and where things start getting muddied and require interpretation is the addition of things that should be part of the personnel policy. Monger said how job descriptions are rated is a separate topic. Monger said this is where confusion may be coming in.

Denny said that "I think it's extremely important that if we're discussing labor and back pay, given the legality risk to the university it is important to have outside input in regards to mediation. That doesn't mean that Senate and AS Executive Board shouldn't be involved in the conversation. But I also think to avoid biases, it is necessary to have someone that is not part of the AS that is specifically trained in these areas to be discussing alongside Senate, AS Executive Board, and whoever else is involved in the event of discrepancies. Ultimately, that is HR's job. It would make no sense to me that Senate and the AS Executive Board would be mediating and deliberating on things that were originally crafted from the HR policies. HR should definitely be involved in those conversations". Wong said Denny's interpretation of the student government's

involvement is a bit more involved than what is written down. Wong said in section 9, the intent is for the student government to act as a judiciary. Denny said that there is still a risk of biases. Handa said the solution may be that the HR consultant, the Finance Council, and the student government must all be in agreement since it is a collective decision for the policy to be passed. Handa said the policy should say “in compliance with Western policy procedures and state and federal law” so that there is insurance that no laws are being broken while still giving autonomy to students and making it to where highly trained people are being consulted in the process. Monger asked “what I understand at this point, is that the council is giving input on the policy so that we know moving forward what we might do when we look at this again at the end of October and November. But this wouldn’t be passed until then”. Denny said this is correct. Wong said that these policy changes have been passed by the AS Executive Board and Student Senate, and if Finance Council thinks there are things that can be changed this can sent back the student government with recommendations. Monger said, “I’m confused about it being approved because Finance Council is charged with passing all Financial Policies” and the policies do not have to be reviewed by anyone else to be approved.

Handa left the meeting at 2:25pm.

Due to the loss of quorum, the meeting officially ended but discussion continued.

Denny said he agrees with Monger, and he assumes that before this document goes to student government, it would have to go through Finance Council. Wong said the through line of institutional knowledge may have caused issue with the process, but he feels that the Board and Senate have final authority. Monger said, “The Student Government delegated the authority to pass policy to the AS Finance Council since the last time that the policy was passed”. Alexander said that he’s assuming that #11 is not new. Wong said that 11 is new and he clarified the process in his edits. [Note: that the change to #11 was not noted in red, along with other changes.] Alexander said that Finance Council was created to be a check and balance, where there are members of the AS Executive Board & Senate on the council but also people who aren’t associated with those areas. Finance Council is charged with the financial duties for the AS. Denny is confused as to why the new policy states that it needs to be reviewed and approved by Finance Council and then to refute the policy and charge of the council by not following the process stated.

VII. Other Business

VIII. ADEI Updates

IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.