



AS Finance Council

May 3, 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: Casey Hayden, Assistant Director Student Activities & Media; Lark Pascual, ASP Major Concert Coordinator

MOTIONS

FC-23-S-08 Approve the minutes of April 26, 2023. **Passed**

Brandon Denny, chair, called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of the Minutes- April 26, 2023

MOTION FC-23-S-08 by Handa

Approve the minutes of April 26, 2023

Second: Gilbert

Vote: 3-0-1

Action: Passed

III. Revisions to the Agenda

IV. Public Forum

V. Information Items

A. AS Productions Lawn Stock Large Event Reserve Request

Doc. 1

Pascual (ASP Major Concert Coordinator) introduced himself to the council. This is their second year working with AS Productions (ASP) and Pascual stated that he has been greatly impacted by his experience working within the AS and ASP. They identify as a queer, trans Person of Color and are a first-generation college student. Pascual said the Lawn Stock large event request has recently been adjusted from \$20,000 to \$18,000 due to headliner costs for the concert. This year, Pascual wants to make Lawn Stock the best event they possibly can by providing unique experiences and a community focused concert that is inclusive to LGBTQ+ students and focuses on gender expression. His goal is to go out with a “big super queer bang”, as this is their last quarter at Western. In the past 2 ½ years, Pascual stated that as a student, large events at Western have been very important to him personally and for others by connecting students to local businesses, artists, and organizations, as well as by giving space, intentional opportunity, and empowerment to artists that have typically not been celebrated equally. As a current performing artist and student, Pascual said that the intentionality behind AS events has been greatly needed and appreciated by themselves and others. This year, the plan for Lawn Stock is to bring to stage bigger acts that center empowerment, representation, and opportunity. Denny asked how many acts there will be and what the event lineup

will look like. First, there will be a drag show featuring performers Sage Valentine and Axe Andros, the Vice President and President of the WWU Drag Club. Pascual will also be performing in this event, but his performance is not included in the proposal budget. After the drag show, they will transition into the music section of the event which will feature artists that follow the theme of being unyieldingly and vocally proud marginalized peoples. The first performer will be Kitty Obsidian, a queer Black fronted R&B group that won the opening spot by winning the Battle of the Bands competition. Next will be LemonBoy, a queer, all women indie-punk / pop trio from Seattle. After that, Black Ends, a Black fronted rock trio from the Seattle/Tacoma area will perform. This group has been very vocal in bringing up injustices within the rock scene in Seattle. Next up will be TezaTalks, a Black alt-hardcore-pop artist who also performed at last year's Lawn Stock. Finally, Skating Polly, a queer "ugly rock" trio will perform. They are the headliners for this year and have released over 5 albums and have been featured on Sound Tree.

There is a focus on providing a fair, equitable, and competitive rates for performers this year, and costs reflect that priority. After the music portion of the event, there will be a circus performance by the Bellingham Circus Guild. Denny asked about the attraction rentals and hospitality costs. Pascual said for the attraction rentals, the goal is to provide activities that would give people a break from the music and align with the "one-day festival style energy". Some of these activities will include a mechanical bull and a slide. The hospitality cost will go towards providing hospitality to artists performing at the event to leave a good professional and personal impression and satisfy industry standards. The advertising cost will cover boosting the event on social media and in-person marketing efforts.

Denny asked if the merch/swag on the proposal is intended for purchase or if they are to be given out. Pascual said the merch/swag will mostly consist of hats and totes with some t-shirts. Last year, t-shirts were not as popular, but hats were extremely popular. Hats are more expensive, but the goal is to have a balance between variety and items that will be popular and attractive to attendees. Part of the merch, namely the hats, will be reserved to exchange for food donations to the VU food pantry. The rest of the merch will be available for sale. Wong asked about the ticketing model. There will be no ticket cost for this event to eliminate the cost barrier and keep with the tradition of Lawn Stock being free to attend. The proposal lists a ticket price, but that is a remnant from the document template and is not planned to be implemented.

Denny asked about the anticipated revenue for the event. Hayden said that the revenue will come from the t-shirts and totes available for sale. Denny asked about the stage cost and noted that the price of the stage is more than the previous year. Denny and Wong asked how this rental cost compares to buying a stage or using one already owned by the organization. Hayden said that last year, ASP got a good deal on the stage that can't be repeated this year, which explains the cost increase. This stage is also mobile, has covers built in, and is larger than the stages the organization already owns. The stage that the VU owns also has a rental cost associated with it for installing covers. Buying a new stage up-front could easily be \$200,000 and there is the challenge of storage to consider.

Denny asked what the expected attendance is for this event. Hayden this year's lineup might lead to the biggest turnout yet, and the event will possibly break 2,500 or 3,000

attendees. Gilbert asked, "I'm curious if Lawn Stock is a large event request every year, are you building it into future yearly budgets?". Hayden said that if funds become available to dedicate to Lawn Stock this would be the plan, and that this is an area ASP is looking for a budget increase in. In the future, if the large event fund was not able to cover this cost, then ASP would need to re-evaluate funding for this event or reduce the size of the event. Hayden said the performers tend to not prefer sponsors for the event, but it could be an option to get local sponsorships if needed.

Hayden and Pascual left the meeting.

Denny said he likes that Pascual built in equitable pay for performers. Even if it is not the most efficient way to save money, it aligns well with AS values. Handa said the performance cost of Skating Polly was alarming at first, but after looking at their Instagram and their popularity and influence the cost makes sense. Alexander said that headliners can have a wide range of prices, and in the past the AS has paid up to \$30,000 or \$40,000 on headliners for events. Handa said "I think it's really cool that they focused on performers that are queer and BIPOC. Since we are trying to be good stewards of AS Fee dollars, we [the council] also need to think about where the money is going to, and if we are paying it back to communities that don't necessarily get a lot of space or attention to perform at events. Even if this might not be the most efficient way to spend AS dollars, equitable pay for performers over efficiency is really important to me in this case. It is a really good investment to be able to show that the AS can monetarily support communities that are marginalized". Gilbert agrees with Handa and is in favor of the proposal for this year but said the fact that ASP has lowered the Lawn Stock budget for next year, presumably with the expectation that the Large Event fund will cover the difference is a concerning trend to see. Gilbert thinks this is another example of ASP relying on the Large Event fund to cover the cost of yearly events. Denny said that based on the projections of the AS and how the budget changes, this cost may be something that needs to be absorbed into ASP, have the cost decreased, or have a set aside Lawn Stock fund. This year, ASP budgeted \$14,600 for the event. Next year this is decreasing to \$12,600. Denny said he is in favor of the event staying the same size as this year but can't see where ASP would make up the excess funds needed other than reducing ASP staffing. Denny does not want to reduce student programming and is in favor of a leaner, more efficient AS which would lead to less overall student employment. Denny wants to see an AS that supports the maximum amount of student programming and employing as many people as possible without hindering that programming. Wong said, "I think with Lawn Stock specifically, I would like to know how much ASP got last year from the large event fund". Monger said it was \$20,000.

B. AS FY24 Budget Proposals Draft

Doc. 2

Denny asked the for the council's stance on the budget and current deficit, and what the council believes would be best for the AS. Denny said that if all budgets are utilized to their full amount, this would mean the AS may need to draw from the reserves in the amount of \$159,526 if all funds are spent (which would not be the normal trend). Denny said that the AS has protections in the form of the reserves, but it is a question of if the council wants to take a more aggressive approach in balancing the budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Alexander said that typically, the budgets are made from the best

guesses of each area in terms of their projected expenses. For example, the council could have conversations about operationalizing the Lawn Stock expenses or keeping it under the large event fund, but there's always a chance Lawn Stock might not happen due to unexpected events or weather conditions. With large outdoor events like Lawn Stock, there is some strategy involved in not operationalizing. Lawn Stock is also a highly variable cost and is not something that needs to happen for the operation of the AS to move forward in its mission. Gilbert asked, "How much is in the reserves? And how would passing the budget at the current deficit affect reserve funds (SEF, Employee Development, Large Event, etc.)?". Monger said, "A total of \$50,900 was used for 4 different events last year: OC Wellness, ASP Films, ASP Lawn Stock, ESP Earth Week. So there was still about \$14,000 left in the fund at the end of the year. This year there is about 400K additional before the other funds would be reduced". Denny said to keep in mind that typically by the end of the fiscal year, not every area has spent their full allocation of dollars, but this is still something to think about in terms of the bigger picture of not overshooting the allocated S&A Fee dollars if there were to be a year of full spending.

Wong is hesitant to cut positions from the Finance Council level and said that he thinks about budgeting not in terms of the number of employees, but terms of labor hours. Wong said some of the reason there might be more employees working less hours is because that is the kind of work that is needed in the program and that is something that should be considered at the individual office level, not at the Finance Council level. Bedard said that when thinking about where to do reductions, labor might be a good place to look because one of the goals of the AS is to enhance student life and put forward programs that really benefit students, therefore it might be good to see where roles can be condensed, but condensing roles across the board might not be the best move. Gilbert said this is because if the hours for a specific role were increased, this may not correlate to increased productivity for students working part time. Alexander said that the people who understand the program best in terms of labor needs are likely those at the program level. Alexander said there is always a chance that budget authorities are inflating their estimates, but one of the goals for budget authorities is to work together on developing budgets to make sure that historical spending is considered and that requests are adjusted to match actuals. Next fiscal year, the AS can support a certain level of deficit via the reserve funds, which may help the AS get by while the AS experiences downturn in revenue from less student enrollment and the upturn in expenses due to rising costs and inflation. In general, the AS still has a positive balance by the end of the year which then goes into the AS reserves. The current deficit is roughly around 6.8% of the budget. Alexander is not happy with any amount of deficit, but thinks the AS is trending towards being able to decrease the deficit.

Handa left the meeting.

Denny wants to reduce the deficit and become more financially secure before making any big changes within the AS. Denny is in support of Wong's proposed wage policy changes presented last meeting but said the AS should decrease the deficit before considering it further. Denny asked if every group within the AS is supported the best they could be and if the council thinks any area is in need of more support. Wong said the Outdoor Center (OC) might be a place to look at reallocating funds towards because the OC is moving towards different revenue model with higher ticket prices have a

history of utilizing all funds. Gilbert seconds what Wong said. Gilbert said the Student Opportunities Council has seen a pretty significant increase in last year or two in OCE usage of funds for certifications that are needed for employees. Alexander said that outdoor recreation is a critical part of Western. For around 40% of students, one of the reasons they attest to coming to Western is wanting to have an outdoor experience. One thing that has been worked on recently is operationalizing more support for the OC that was offered in the form of a grant prior. This allows for staff to be trained and not need to be hired with pre-existing experience running these kinds of programs. Alexander said this also allows for more diversity within the OC since outdoor recreation is historically white male dominated.

VI. Action Items

VII. Other Business

VIII. ADEI Updates

IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:32 p.m.