**Western Washington University**

**Services and Activities Fee Committee
Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, May 6, 2022; 1:00-2:00 pm**

**Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** Michael Sledge, Debbie Curry (recorder), Linda Beckman, Eric Alexander, Glory Busic, Noemi Bueno, Steve Card, Steve Brummel, Mac Franks, Adam Leonard, Caitlin Summers, Cody Fowler, Lucy Caples, Travis Cram, Rebecca McLean, Jack Herring, Mary Piekarczyk, Quin Wilder

**Absent:** Raquel Vigil, Ichi Kwon

**Guests:** Megan McGinnis (DRAC), Susanna Schronen (VU)

**Agenda Items:** 1) Approval of 4/29/2022 Meeting Minutes, 2) Continued Budget Discussion, 3) Summer 2021 Preparation, 4) Next Steps

Quin Wilder called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm.

**Approval of 4/29/2022 Meeting Minutes:**

Quin asked if there were any questions or corrections to the minutes of the April 29 meeting. Mac asked for the spelling of his name to be corrected in the minutes – Debbie apologized for the error and agreed to make the change. Noemi asked for clarification regarding chat comments being used it the minutes. Debbie explained that the chat feature is a recorded part of the TEAMS meeting and officially represents part of the conversation. There were no further questions. Quin moved to approve the minutes and Mac seconded the motion. By a show of hands, the minutes for the April 29, 2022, meeting were unanimously approved as corrected. No one abstained or opposed.

**Continued Budget Discussion:**

Quin acknowledged at the end of the last meeting Mac had made a motion to vote on the percentage distribution and he asked if the committee wanted to continue with this motion, or share why they may not be ready to vote at this time. Quin also added he had received word from Michael that the enrollment numbers had changed. Unfortunately, the number had decreased.

As Linda joined the meeting she explained the reasons for the different numbers, that she had updated the spreadsheet with the new enrollment number, and felt it is as accurate as it can be at this point. With the revised enrollment projection of 14,434, even with a 4% increase in enrollment fee, this adjustment leaves the distribution projections $35,000 short of the constituent’s initial requests (not the total needs requests discussed at the last meeting). Also, we had been hearing enrollments for new freshmen were strong for the fall. But the last couple of years of lower enrollment are now rippling through the system, so even though enrollment for new students looked good for fall, it is going to take a couple of years before we get beyond this impact.

Quin appreciated the context of Linda’s clarification on the numbers she provided. Speaking as a student voting member for DRAC he added that correction in numbers follows what DRAC had stated previously, that enrollment numbers would probably keep dropping. From his perspective this thinking matched that of Campus Rec in hoping to maintain their percentage divides. He also asked if it would be worth looking at another method of distribution or did the committee feel it best to stick with the percentages already voted on. Quin opened the floor for other comments.

Glory shared she felt groups keeping their percentage not based off actual need seemed pointless and greedy. Situations can shift and it seems more reasonable to look at actual needs rather than sticking to the percentages requested. She also acknowledged her comment was not very filtered but that it was her honest opinion and she thought Noemi agreed with her.

Noemi confirmed her agreement adding the AS had questioned the 15,000-headcount seemed optimistic, their concerns regarding the locations included in this headcount, and the trend in reducing class sizes. Noemi agreed with Glory that a continued discussion was appropriate.

Travis reminded the committee that a significant point of agreement is the difficulty of expressing real needs in a spreadsheet and that all programs have needs well above what shows up in a spreadsheet. The budgetary tools in terms of what is a core cost versus a mandatory cost are helpful tools but do not always translate well to the nature of the fee - which is meant to sustain student activities and services. What is mandatory from a budgetary perspective may not be the same as what a mandatory cost is from an activities perspective. Budgetary tools we use do not always translate well to the unique terrain this committee navigates. This is not just a budgetary exercise but also a decision making and democratic deliberation exercise.

Steve shared he was not sure looking at requests versus need is the right way to decide. He reiterated Athletics original request was based on a percentage increase relative to the 4% maximum amount allowed to raise the fee and asking for a higher percentage made no sense. He also reflected in their request the actual budget allocations for 2020-22 that the Athletics shortfall is $152,000, which was over the request made of $76,000 for the programs outlined in the budget request. Steve also made the point that Campus Rec had also requested to maintain their existing percentage not the dollar figure put forward in their request.

Adam added from the chat that if the committee is talking “need” Campus Rec would be asking for an additional $300,000 to cover Sport Club costs. They have tried to keep the S&A support of Sport Clubs at 40%.

Mary stated she felt trying to base requests off of need was not going to be a fruitful conversation, making the point that each group even within a constituency like DRAC, do not clearly understand each other’s needs. We will always be biased towards ourselves and our programs, so trying to decide who needs what the most is not going to be constructive. All of our programs offer things for students, and we all offer different things - none more special than another.

Mac commented that it sounded to him like there are those who want to keep requests the same which was what he felt most equitable and made the most sense because the fee can only be increased by 4%. Mac again formally made a motion to keep the percentage allocations as requested; seconded by Cody; additional discussion and debate pursued.

Eric appreciated the conversations adding that these conversations have been the crux of challenges for this committee year after year; the differentiation between mandatory increases and need, and they highlight what Travis alluded to - the need to develop consistency around what that is. For another perspective, over the last number of years there have been significant inflationary costs that have disproportionately impacted groups here in different ways: two-fold increases in minimum wage in a five-year span, annualized cola increases, and other things. While he agreed with the sentiment of the equity from parsing out and maintaining fee levels as done in the recent past, going back a few years that was not the way it happened. Different constituents gained large percentages due to increases, whether that was Athletics or others. Eric agreed being conscientious and continuing to do the equitable percentages is a good place to start, but we need to look at the last three to five years where programs have not even been able to catch up with the increase in the minimum wage for students. Eric did not have a recommendation of which way to go, but felt the added context was important to the conversation.

Quin thanked Eric for his comments and asked for input from student voting members. There were no other comments.

Travis appreciated Eric’s perspective but suggested the only real way to verify a disproportionate affect would be to look at comparative assessments of how programs are experiencing these changes in costs. Travis hoped that students realized that an organization extremely travel-dependent will disproportionately have resources affected due to travel inflation, compared to an organization affected by mandatory minimum wage increases, so it is important we do not use mandatory versus whatever term for what is a disproportionate effect. Programs have a thin boundary between a mandatory cost versus a programmatic activity in a structure of programs established by those who have managed those programs. That is a reflection on their decisions made to provide the best support and services for students. Construction of these programs reflect choices that stakeholders have made to construct programs in that way. If we continue down the path of only giving credit to state mandated increases, we ignore ways programs have opted to structure their programs perhaps to build up permanent staff or in a way that tries to incentivize student activities. If that is our path, programs that provide more resources to students and try to put those resources in student’s hands are the ones who suffer. Travis’ point was not to ignore these factors but acknowledge they exist in a different context.

Noemi shared that she felt this committee lacks a sense of organization and a sense of equity and wanted to point out similar problems have come up consistently over the last several years. Last year she raised questions regarding the S&A membership itself and that the number of voting members on this committee was out of line compared to other councils on campus. She had suggested the committee meet last summer to find a resolution to these issues and was unable to get committee members together. She is hopeful after the budget decision has been made this suggestion can be revisited.

Steve asked Linda if she could show what the effective increase in fees would be based on the motion of maintaining existing percentages with the updated enrollment dollars. He felt this was relevant to deliberating the motion on the table and helpful if each constituent could see what the increases would be, which are significantly short of requests. Linda directed Steve and the committee to the section on the spreadsheet where this information was shown and reflects the increases which are significantly short of anyone’s requests. Steve thanked Linda and added there is not a lot of money to go around; basically $145,000 available.

Quin thanked Linda and Steve for that information.

In an effort to better understand their perspective, Quin asked Noemi and Glory to please provide their personal thoughts around their fear or hesitancy towards pushing this motion forward.

Noemi responded she did not feel like it was fear, she thinks that is an assumption the AS is afraid. That she is a discussion person and likes talking things over and feels the conversations could be deeper and that is part of her concern. Noemi did not feel it realistic to keep the same percentage every year, especially if the fee increases. It seems to her other groups are afraid of losing their percentage and that they will not be able to get it back in future years and she does not believe that is true. She also shared it feels like the AS is being attacked in this conversation. But the past couple of years the AS has taken reductions, pulled from reserves, and worked hard to be equitable within this committee; Noemi feels the AS has done a lot to support this committee and that support has not been reciprocated. Noemi also added that neither she or Glory are attached to an office, are they representatives of the entire AS and student council, trying to promote a better future for their programs. Due to money shortages, the AS will be looking at fewer student employees, cutting programs, or asking for financial help and that she and Glory are just worried.

Quin thanked Noemi for her response and appreciated how open to conversation she is, her honesty and clarity of communication.

Quin stated he felt from DRAC’s perspective, they had wanted to stay conservative and maintain a sense of stability but it became clear through discussions that raising the fee this year was something that needed to be done. At the same time, he did not feel the discussion around dividing funds was completely clear cut and further conversation is needed to avoid rushing to decision and overlooking something important. He also indicated he personally had strong feelings to avoid trying to breakdown costs.

Adam reiterated that over the last 17 years on this committee Campus Rec’s percentage has dropped from 8% to 6.9%. A continued drop will continue to bury them. Even if this committee asked for a 4% increase every year, Campus Rec would never catch up. Linda’s numbers showed a gain of $10,000 over what the requested dollar amount was - that does not even put a dent in our Sport Club spending this year, not even $300,000 would do that. Putting into perspective how volatile the Sport Club budget is, Adam shared that as we are having this conversation, Caitlin asked for an additional $60,000 on travel - that is just for this month. Considering we all had carryforward funds last year, Adam shared he did not expect this group to take an increase at all, because we were dormant for a year - except for Steve who continued to have athletics, but still got hit. Adam reminded the committee he was very clear in his presentation that he was under the assumption we would not take an increase, especially considering what our students have gone through on this campus paying for services over the last couple of years they were never able to use. Adam again stated that his request only supports Campus Rec to about 39% of their budget.

Eric commented to the committee the conversations held last year may have been almost too conservative and have unfortunately led to some of the impacts we are seeing this year. Although he understands the decisions made last year and all the challenges we all faced he wants to be sure we are all thinking about that time again. He made the point that we do not know what revenues the S&A will be producing. We have been hearing for the last few years the cliff is coming, we are going to see a shortfall of students, the national economic downturn has led to a reduction of college age students for the next three to five years, and so the trend will continue. Eric encouraged the committee rather than taking decisions on one-year increments, which in some ways we must as that is the committee’s charge but recognizing how one year’s decision will impact the next three, four, or five years is important. As costs continue to rise, we will all get to the place where we either decide to reduce spending, reduce the way we do our work, or come up with new revenue generators - a different line of thinking than this group may be in right now-making the point he feels like we are stuck. Decisions can have a ripple effect consequence for multiple years; last year’s decision was tough and having a much larger effect than we ever could have assumed this year.

Quin thanked Eric for his thoughts and shared he appreciated the everyone’s willingness to do their best advocating for their groups and students. Quin encouraged the committee to regroup, check their own biases, have conversations within their groups and we will continue to move forward with a decision next week.

Returning to Mac’s motion for a vote. Quin asked by a show of hands who wanted to leave percentages as originally requested. 2 approved; 4 rejected. Mac’s motion was not approved.

Mac addressed the committee stating as we return to conversation next week addressing dollar amounts, he requested that the AS come with a number in mind they would like to receive. There was no response from the AS.

**Summer 2021 Preparation:** *This agenda item was not discussed*

**Next Steps:** *This agenda item was not discussed*

Today’s meeting adjourned at 1:52 pm

Next meeting: Friday, May 13, 2022, 1:00-2:00 pm, Teams Virtual