Student Government Association
General Board Meeting
March 23rd, 2015

Present:

**Executive Board:** M. Hicks (President), A. Bullard (Vice President), J. Ahern (Treasurer), E. Drouin (Secretary)

**Advisors:** C. Ambrosio, M. Delaney

**Senators:** E. Benoit, H. Brooks, V. Cosma, M. Ehrnfelt, S. Froehlich, C. Gosselin, P. Hoeps, T. Mack, J. Mazyck, E. McDonald, M. McFall-Gorman, M. Patino, E. Pelletier, R. Rivera, N. Vigorita, G. Wrobel, M. Wysopal

**Guests:** Dan Solomon, Michelle Congleton, Vice President Jim Howarth, Vice President Ken Bedini

Meeting called to order at 3:01 PM

1. President’s Report
   a. The University Budget, Vice President Jim Howarth
      i. Vice President Jim Howarth came to speak to the senate about the tuition increases. Last year there was a 2% tuition increase that was supplemented by state funds. This year, there will be less state funds, so they need to make up the difference somewhere. About 45% comes from the state and the rest comes from the students. If you’re a commuting student, the increase is $456, but if you’re a resident student, you will pay $914 more.
      1. M. Hicks asked if faculty searches would be frozen or ongoing.
         a. Some would be frozen, some would be ongoing. If they remain open, they will be supplemented with adjunct faculty; they might not have as many full time faculty as they have now. A lot of jobs are currently doing dual roles and having Interim positions filling those roles. So there’s faculty, administration, police roles that are not filled.
      2. A. Bullard asked how the budget was going to affect student employment.
         a. The worst case scenario would be to reduce the number of hours but not to reduce the number of students. The President is very adamant about not reducing student employment. If they do go there, it might go from a 12 hour week to a 10 hour week.
         b. The last areas that will be cut are the ones that affect students.
3. J. Ahern asked Vice President Howarth how they think the legislature is going to respond the needs for funds.
   a. Vice President Howarth thinks that there will be some funding, but not nearly enough – just another five or six million for the whole system. It will help but not make a huge difference.

4. M. McFall Gorman asked if the budget would affect the amount of financial aid that is distributed
   a. The student financial aid has increased in the past several years; they try to keep it consistent in the four years that students were here. So, likely not.
   b. M. McFall Gorman asked if the school had plans for financial aid if the state reduces funding and then tuition increases again.
      i. Tuition will increase again. Financial aid will likely not be cut.

5. E. Drouin asked how the current numbers would be affected by enrollment.
   a. Hopefully enrollment will go up again to the 2014 numbers. They have more applicants this year and more that have been accepted. Deposits are down a bit and hopefully come a bit slower.

6. C. Ambrosio asked about the university fee going down
   a. The University Fee could be afforded to be dropped down, that was one area the University lowered to try and lower overall costs

ii. E. Drouin and M. Hicks spoke to Vice President Howarth about the financial aid situation involving an outstanding balance.

1. In 2014, the University had to set aside 1.14 million dollars in debt. Eastern has the highest amount of students that haven’t paid off their debt. There are ways to address the balance such as payment plans. After that, they have to be sent to collections. A lot of students were being sent to collections. The Financial Aid office is trying to raise awareness and increase communication with the office. Over 1600 students had holds on their account. That number is currently down to 700. The number of holds still on the account is around 110. After meeting with E. Drouin and M. Hicks, they sent out a more inviting letter to students that have holds on their accounts. They’re trying to help everyone, but it must be a joint effort.
   a. E. Pelletier asked if it went out in letter or email.
      i. It went out in email and hard copy.
   b. M. Ehrnfelt asked if they wanted to publish the information in the Campus Lantern
   c. M. McFall Gorman clarified that if you have more than $100, you will get a notification. Will this be continuing on to next semester?
      i. Yes. If you currently have a hold on your account you cannot register. VP Howarth approves about 50 waivers due to extenuating circumstances.
   d. E. McDonald asked if a hold affected graduation.
i. It would not impact graduation; it would impact the release of your transcript.

b. Pride Room/Center, Vice President Ken Bedini
   i. Vice President Bedini came to speak about the Senate Resolution regarding the Pride Room/Center. Prior to the Resolution, Vice President Bedini and Dean Diaz spoke with faculty members regarding the evolution of the Unity Wing and the Pride Room. They firmly support the development of the Pride Room into the Pride Center. We’re in a financial situation right now and there’s not a lot of money.
   
   ii. University Assistant
      1. One of the first requests is to have a full time coordinator. Currently there is a University Assistant. One way to keep fees down is to keep positions vacant. We have a lot of positions open on this campus, adding a full time coordinator would just be adding another open position. If the tuition increase is approved, and we have full enrollment, we will still be operating at a deficit. We still have to reconcile the difference between the two. It’s realistic to assume that we’re going to have a deficit that has to be balanced. One way to balance that is to keep certain positions open until you can fill them. We are not in a financial position to add a full time coordinator for the Pride Room. What they’re willing to do eventually is to hire a second University Assistant. They can’t hire a full time person has a salary structured by a union contract and give them health care. With two university assistants, they get the same amount of work but don’t incur the costs of a full time position. They know it is a priority.
      2. On the issue of budget, they’re looking to increase the Pride Room operating budget for next year; it will not be the same as the Women’s Center or Intercultural Center budget, but they’re moving in that direction. He might have to take money from other offices in student affairs.
      3. On turning it into a Center from a Room. The only place that is currently unoccupied is the place of the old Veteran’s Center in Wood Support Services. Moving it there would not make any sense for them. They wouldn’t want to isolate the Pride Center or limit it from a Monday through Friday 9-5. When they designed the Student Center, the Pride Room wasn’t even on the map that was added after the fact. Taking two meeting rooms offline would leave the building with only four meeting rooms. They’re trying to look at other spaces in the building to try and reconfigure.
      4. E. Pelletier asked if he’d consider keeping the University Assistant as many hours as possible but keep them below full time without benefits.
         a. The maximum amount without paying benefits is 19 hours.
      5. C. Gosselin asked if there were other ways to compensate the University Assistant in a different way without benefits, such as housing.
         a. They previously did that through AmeriCORPs through a grant. If there are federal grants that would
provide funding in the form of a full time salary. The Grants Officer on campus is investigating this.

6. E. McDonald asked if there could be an unpaid internship.
   a. That’s a possibility.
      i. E. Drouin pointed out that the Pride Room has two student interns right now.

7. A. Bullard asked if there could be a free standing center, such as URI just implemented.
   a. Nothing’s impossible, but his preference would not to isolate any of the communities. Ideally if they received any capital money it would go to expanding the Student Center.

8. J. Ahern discussed the perspective of Yearbook, which has it’s own room. The room looks bigger than the Pride Room.
   a. It is not.

9. M. Wysopal suggested that taking the Yearbook Room and moving the Campus Lantern to the current Pride Room, and then the Yearbook Room and the Campus Lantern Room could function as a combined space.
   a. That’s a suggestion worth looking into.
   b. M. Ehrnfelt thinks that they’re not big enough. She thinks the Pride Center should definitely be in the Unity Wing. She would back changing those meeting Rooms down in that space.

10. Vice President Bedini closed with that this is an issue that the administration feels important. If the University was in a different position as far as finances go, it would be easier to fulfill. He gave an estimate of 2-3 years to accomplish, depending upon budget.

c. Acceptance of Minutes from 3/9/2015
   i. Motion #82 (A. Bullard, M. McFall Gorman) Motion to accept the minutes from 3/9/15 (19-0-0). Motion Carries.

d. Elections Committee Update
   i. The Elections Committee met the week before break and will be working following the General Board meeting.
   ii. The tentative timeline is for online applications to go out this week, hopefully to be up by Wednesday. It’s going to close at 11:59 PM, Sunday, April 12th. There’s a lot of time to fill it out. Nominations are at the April 13th meeting. You cannot campaign for yourself before you’re nominated. Students vote via email. Students will vote April 20th-April 22nd. Results will be emailed the next morning and will be announced to everyone who ran first and then it will be made public to school.
   iii. During the meeting, we discussed having some kind of information session for those who aren’t familiar for SGA, but the best way for that to happen is to have them come to an SGA meeting. That’s the best way to see if you’re going to like it or not. This will be typed up at publicized more. The goal of the Elections Committee is to get as many people to campaign and run as possible. The most people will vote is if the most people are running. Recruit other people who are in other student organizations. Recruit people who you think can grow as leaders.
iv. M. McFall Gorman asked if we had considered going to different clubs on campus like we did last year

1. M. Hicks said that we discussed that and if you want to target bigger clubs, that’s something that you should definitely do. People just want to hear you come up to them and say “Hey, I think you’d be great for this thing”.

2. Vice President’s Report
   a. Committee Updates
      i. Distribution of Minutes
         1. It is imperative that you guys get the minutes to the senate or at least Ashley quickly. The E-Board needs to know what’s going on in committee meetings. it doesn’t have to be a completed document, but she just needs to know what’s going on. They don’t want to have to pull people in to have a conversation with them. At least send her an update.

      ii. Public Relations
          1. Warrior Wednesday Update
             a. V. Cosma distributed fliers for Warrior Wednesday
             b. V. Cosma passed out signups for their tabling events
                i. Make sure to show up!
               1. E. Drouin said for V. Cosma to let her know who didn’t show up as it counts as an absence.
             c. PR is working on getting coffee sleeves and quarter sheets from Warrior Wednesday
             d. PR got $60 from the Book Store for Warrior Wednesday

      iii. Internal
          1. Banquet Update
             a. The BAM banquet is going to be between $3600-$4200, depending upon how many people show up. They’re going to have invitations sent out soon. The Internal Banquet is April 23rd at 7PM at Science 301.

iv. Student Issues
   1. Shuttle Services
      a. The Student Issues Committee investigated the shuttle and decided that we should definitely keep it. They are going to look into reducing hours.
      b. M. Hicks asked for a report type document for the Shuttle investigation.

2. Issue Survey
   a. The Survey is done and will be sent to Ashley.

v. BAM
   1. RSA
      a. **Motion #83 (M. McFall Gorman, C. Gosselin)**
         Motion to approve the constitution of the Radical Student Association **(13-0-5). Motion Carries.**
      b. Discussion
         i. M. Hicks wanted to make sure that there’s a specific group that the club fits to
            1. Essentially if people aren’t sharing the two ideologies that are already
represented in clubs, the hope is that they're exposed to the ideology of the club.

ii. A. Bullard asked what the ideology of the club is
   1. The E-Board is predominantly Radical Left but they're open to Radical Right.

iii. M. Wysopal asked why they're not just an extension of the College Democrats
    1. The two have different solutions. P. Hoeps is a communist and they have anarchists and those are ideologies that are significantly stronger than a normal democrat.

3. Treasurer's Report:
   a. Accounts Update
      i. General Board is currently at $6,902.47 and E-Board is currently at $2,165.15.
         1. M. Hicks clarified that the BAM Banquet was coming out of BAM.

4. Secretary Report
   a. Financial Aid Update
      i. E. Drouin gave an update on the meeting with VP Howarth and the Bursar, Michael Kowalczuk. The reason behind the change in policy from a $1000 to a $100 is to make it homogenous with other schools within the state. They were also audited for owing too much money. The meeting involved trying to bridge the gap between students and the Financial Aid office.
         1. R. Rivera asked how many people went to the informational session.
            a. The 150 number was the amount of students that were affected from dropping it to $100 from $1000. They were affected by the policy change. The Bursar and Financial Aid held two information like session in the BTR for everyone with holds on the account to speak with them.
            b. R. Rivera is very frustrated as he has a hold on his account and he’s emailed him four times.
               i. M. Hicks followed up with him as the conversation was a way to make him more accessible to students.
               ii. R. Rivera will forward Matt his emails.
            c. The Bursar said that there's a process that a student should go through when they have a hold on their account. There's someone who advises a hold on an account.
               2. E. Pelletier suggested having them be incorporated into the Grades First system.
               3. C. Gosselin suggested that there be a mechanism for students to be reached out to, such as housing. Hall Directors are currently asked to meet with students with financial issues. RAs were asked to do programming on financial aid. He thinks that students don't take housing seriously.
4. M. Wysopal suggested a mandatory workshop such as the library workshop mandatory in their first semester.
   a. Financial Aid used to be a session at orientation but very watered down. It’s very difficult to get them to understand.
   b. C. Ambrosio has had the experiences and gotten feedback that students don’t really have financial aid on their radar as far as orientation goes.
      i. M. Wysopal suggested making it a second semester requirement.
   c. J. Mazyck thinks it should only be required for those who have holds on their account.
   d. G. Wrobel thinks they should do it beforehand so they’re not already in the situation.
   e. N. Vigorita thinks doing it for everyone will help prevent it for the future. It’s easier to do it for everyone.
   f. M. McFall Gorman thinks that it’s not too late to just target those with a hold on their account.
      i. C. Gosselin thinks that there’s a range. Some people have advanced notice but some aren’t and go to register and have a hold. Students are getting held up with such short notice.
   g. R. Rivera got his email two weeks ago. He registers on Monday and he’s heard nothing back.
   h. M. Hicks added that if you hear of any students who have holds on their account for military based reasons, send them up the chain to VP Howarth. Those students are exempt from it as they understand that government funding takes a while.

5. Advisor Report:
   a. Nothing to report.

6. Open Floor
   a. N. Vigorita has seen professors give bonus points at the end if you don’t miss any classes. It’s not healthy for students.
      i. We do not have any control over that whatsoever.
   b. N. Vigorita is wondering if we could buy GPS machines for the SGA vans.

7. Dates to Remember:
   a. Wednesday, April 1st is the Career Fair for the Center for Internships and Career Development.
   b. Warrior Wednesday is April 1st at 11:30.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 PM