



Student Government Association
General Meeting
Tuesday, December 10, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Peter T. Mazza Student Government Association Room
Ely Campus Center

A livestream of the meeting for public viewing also took place on YouTube.

Members Present: Joseph Bonilla, Justin Wald, Sarah Harrington, Austin Morgan, Lorraine Fernandez, Daniel Currier, Elizabeth Mercer, Jacob Constant, Nicholas Palumbo, Isabella Moniz, Anderson Dallaire, William Connor, Travis McLoughin, Rachel Luo, Stella Greenberg, Ben Janes, Jakob Trainor, Barney Garcia, Benny Rosas, Brendan Majori, Laura Terry, Mariza Monteiro, Ethan Mallinson, Christopher Lannon, Akile Phakos, Ezekiel Tamarkin, Dominic Zajko, Angel Bethea, Ali Sutherland, SAAC Representative, Angelina Cassella, Puru Sharma, Irini Mahida, Cody Hoisington, Aviannah-Leigh Saulters, Ethan Haynes, Will Onorato, Sicilia Campbell, Melissa Kuzmeski

Members Absent: Raymond Croteau, Troyelle Nosal, Sophia Rebenciuc, GianCarlos Arteaga,

Also present and participating were Guest Speaker's regarding Finance on campus; Vice President of Administration and Finance Stephen Taksar, Director of Residential Life Christina Willenbrock, and Direct of Dining Services Melissa Sikes and SGA Advisors Matthew Dellea, Ryan Meersman, and Shannon Green.

Call to Order: Joseph Bonilla called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded. Members were asked to review the meeting agenda, and a roll call was taken of members present (listed above).

Approval of the Minutes: The minutes from the December 03, 2024, general meeting were approved.

Guest Speakers: Stephen Taksar started the presentation talking about CPI, Comparing the campus to sister campuses, and overall, the state of finances with the University. He goes into the campus budget for the University. As well as enrollment projections and setting up the budget for the following year, and fee increases. After Stephen Taksar portion of the presentation, Melissa Sikes went into her presentation. Going over the dining survey, talking about changes to dining and other important updates regarding dining. She goes into "Where does the Dining Dollar go?" Dining is proposing to not to have a raise in the dining fee. She also goes into talking about getting rid of the Plus Dining plans because not many people were choosing them. Also mentioning that they are working with UMass Amherst to get a new Food Purveyor. After Melissa Sike's presentation, Christina Willenbrock gave her presentation focusing on the budget overview of their budget and where the money goes.

- a. Ethan Haynes asked if the proposed increase in tariffs would affect the University at all.
- b. Aiden Luciano asked a question to Res Life regarding possible budget cuts.
- c. Jacob Constant gave a Point of Privilege asking the speakers to come to the podium to answer the questions to help with the minutes.

- d. Ezekiel Tamarkin asked a question regarding the number of new students and with the increase of new students could we expect things with expenses to be more positive.
- e. Christopher Lannan thanked the speakers for coming down.
- f. Brendan Major asked a question regarding the proposals of how to deal with the debt focusing on Residential Life.
- g. Ali Sutherland asked if hosting events benefits us.

President's Report: Introduced the guest speakers. Then requested the meeting to enter a 5-minute recess.

MOTION made by Joseph Bonilla, seconded by Justin Wald, to enter a 5-minute recess.

There being no discussion, **VOICE VOTE** passed unanimously.

After the recess Joseph gave a brief progress report that the Executive Council gave to the Campus Cabinet.

- a. Ianana Gordan asked a question regarding a new Club on campus.

Sustainability Committee Report: Sicilia Campbell reported on the Sustainability Committee's meeting held Monday morning, November 25th. Updates included the launch of a dedicated sustainability website accessible via the Westfield homepage under the "About" tab. Key initiatives discussed included a video showcasing the campus kitchen's food production and waste processes, incorporating sustainability into the University's strategic plan, and advocating for a campus decoration plan emphasizing sustainability. Transportation efforts are focused on acquiring electric vehicles for campus, transitioning shuttles to electric, encouraging alternative modes of transportation, conducting a spring survey, and exploring the introduction of bikes and increased bus usage. Energy updates highlighted the power plant's significant contribution of 900 billion BTUs annually and stressed keeping windows closed for energy efficiency. Grounds initiatives include the installation of pollinator gardens, with plans for a garden/meadow near the greenhouse and collaboration with Admissions to include the area on campus tours. Waste and recycling efforts aim to improve signage around bins to educate people on proper recycling practices. A procurement meeting is forthcoming, and the committee is seeking new members. Interested individuals are encouraged to contact Tarin Weiss to join.

- a. Sarah Harrington asked about the locks on the Recycling bins
 - a. John Zocco let everyone know it is because students don't put the correct things in the recycling bins and when students don't they get billed.
- b. Joseph Bonilla asked if there is anything in the works for education about recycling.
- c. Ashley asked a question about more signage to help education.
- d. Jacob Constant mentioned that during his tabling events a lot of concerns were brought up regarding trash cans and recycling
 - a. Christopher Lannan gave a point of information regarding that it is something that we are looking into
- e. Will Onorato asked a question regarding Electric Vehicles, possibly seeing if there are tax breaks for having them.
 - a. Daniel Currier gave a point information that because we are a tax-exempt entity, we cannot have any tax breaks.

Student Trustee Report: Daniel Currier provided updates from the December 9th Board of Trustees meeting held in Scanlon Hall's Loughman Living Room, where various topics and votes were discussed. Highlights included retention data presented by Provost Salka, which revealed achievement gaps among key demographic groups; strategies such as early engagement, dedicated advisors, and financial support aim to address these gaps. Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola shared demographic data showing increasing campus diversity while raising concerns about student climate, particularly for minoritized groups. The University is nearing completion of its branding study, with plans to launch a refreshed brand next semester. A consultant for Institutional Advancement discussed preparations for a capital campaign, including hiring three staff members. Dr. Hearn provided insights on enrollment marketing, followed by Counseling Center and Health Services updates highlighting increased mental health crises and the need

for more resources. Chief Information Officer Alan Blair reported on a state audit of cybersecurity preparedness, which revealed non-compliance with mandatory training for employees and students. Daniel suggested requiring cybersecurity training and phishing simulations for students to improve network safety. He encouraged those interested in succeeding him as Student Trustee to reach out for guidance and preparation. The next Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2024, in University Hall's Multi-Purpose Room. Daniel concluded by wishing everyone a happy holiday season and thanking them for a successful semester.

- a. Ali Sutherland asked about the three new hires and asked about the descriptions of these roles.
- b. Ali Sutherland asked a second question about diversifying the campus.

Vice President of Student Life Report: Justin Wald provided an update on the Green Bandana Project, a Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention program at the University. The program seeks students willing to advocate for mental health, reject stigma, support peers, and serve as resources. Requirements include completing online training during winter break, attending weekly group meetings with two scheduling options, and offering compassionate peer support. Those interested can find more information on the back table, visit www.thebandanaproj.org, or email Mike Norman at mnorman@westfield.ma.edu.

- a. Christopher Lannan asked a question regarding the shuttle tracking app.
- b. Ashley asked a question regarding the shuttle and how the shuttle should run on Saturdays.
 - a. Chief of Police Tony Cassino responded to the question about how the drivers are students and they are limited to the number of students that can work for them as well as for if the shuttle isn't running students can call the university police and someone will go and get you.

Student Affairs Committee Report: Justin Wald reported that the Student Affairs Committee met last Friday, focusing on updates to the area outside the fitness center. They decided to maintain the current white walls with blue accents and plan to add vinyl wraps of student event photos on the pillars to create a student-centered environment. The committee conducted a detailed review of club activities and events, analyzing factors such as hosts, dates, times, and attendance to identify what works and what doesn't. Using this data, they intend to draft a report for the Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs to highlight optimal days and times for events, showcasing current strengths and areas for improvement. Justin emphasized that this analysis supports the advocacy for a common hour policy, which could enhance event attendance and engagement, providing more opportunities for students, including commuters, to participate in campus activities.

- a. Ali Sutherland asked a question regarding how to have a common hour.
 - a. Austin Morgan gave some information about APC, and their meeting times and how they are open meetings and some of the things that you can bring up at the meeting.

Dining Services Committee Report: Angelina Cassella delivered her first report, summarizing the December 6th Dining Services Committee meeting. Meal plans will end on December 19th and resume on January 19th. The committee discussed an initiative for students and faculty to donate meals for students unable to afford them over the winter break and sought SGA's input on the idea. In January, a coffee showcase will take place in the DC, featuring businesses such as Atomic Coffee and Jim's Organic, with potential participation from Fog Buster and Circuit Coffee. A poll will narrow down the options, followed by a final vote to select the campus coffee provider. A Food Show is also being considered for March. This week, the DC will host healthy events, including a build-your-own charcuterie board event on Friday, December 13th.

- a. Christopher Lannan thanked Angelina about being on the committee next semester and thanked her for her first report.
- b. Sarah Harrington thanked Angelina in her first report! Then I asked a question regarding donating meals for people over the break.
 - a. Jacob Constant gave a point of information about the meal plans and the donating of meals.
- c. Daniel Currier asked about possibly doing a Dining Dollar donation because the Dining Dollars do roll over to the next semester.

- d. Justin Wald gave a point of information regarding the meal plans because he had a meeting with Melissa the Director of Dining and gave more of an insight.
- e. Isabella Moniz asked to define what a meal is.
- f. Christopher Lannan asked Jacob Constant a question regarding meal plans over winter break.
 - a. Jacob Constant responded that there is just no meal plan over winter break.

Special Committee on Club Relations and Celebrations Report: Benny Rosas delivered his first report, summarizing the December 5th committee meeting. The committee discussed sending an email to RSOs before the semester ends, reminding them to track events and attendance through the Nestwork/Involve platform. Plans for an Owl Celebration in the spring semester were also reviewed, including awards for RSOs in categories such as Academic & Career, Art & Music, Faith & Heritage, Leadership & Service, Sports & Leisure, and others like most attended or innovative events. Additional topics included organizing a Spring Semester Club Fair and creating a Club Cheat Sheet with helpful guidance on topics like requesting SGA funds, using Nestwork, hosting events, becoming an RSO, and utilizing campus spaces.

- a. Sarah Harrington congratulated Benny on their first report.

Vice President of Academic Life Report: Sarah Harrington welcomed everyone back and expressed gratitude for spending her final semester at Westfield with the group. She shared updates from her meeting with the Provost, starting with the new course evaluation system, which will be piloted this year before being assessed. Sarah invited anyone with feedback on the system to direct it to her. Regarding a comments section in the evaluations, she explained that it is a state-negotiated decision with the MSCA to exclude it unless professors administer separate evaluations. Sarah also followed up on discussions about reducing the number of online courses students can take, noting that the Provost is open to visiting SGA to discuss this further. She clarified that any changes would be implemented gradually through adjustments to the course schedule rather than immediate restrictions.

Academic Policies Committee Report: Austin Morgan reported on the Academic Policies Committee (APC) meeting held on Friday, December 6th, at 1:40 PM in Wilson 109 and via Zoom. The primary discussion centered on proposed edits to the course repeat policy. After extensive deliberation, the committee tabled the discussion to the next meeting to allow faculty to consult with their respective departments. The final 15 minutes focused on the highly anticipated Common Hour Policy, during which Austin provided the rationale behind the proposal and helped establish a subcommittee within APC to further develop it. The next APC meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 19th at the same time and location. Members are encouraged to reach out to Austin with any questions.

- a. Sarah Harrington asked why APC would meet if it were a governance day.
 - a. Daniel Currier encouraged that they are still on contract and they should meet if they are able to

University Curriculum Committee Report: Melissa Kuzmeski reported on the December 6th University Curriculum Committee meeting. Three English courses were reviewed and approved: *The Graphic Novel*, a 200-level course open to all majors for literary analysis; *The Literary Experience*, proposed to transition from a 200-level to a 100-level course under the WISE program for first-year students; and *Chinatown*, an interdisciplinary course aimed at exploring complex cultural issues and open to all students. The committee also reviewed the SCORE progress report. The first-year journey section was tabled for further discussion, updates to the Integrative Experience practice standards were approved to progress, and the WISE courses sunset policy, designed for reevaluating courses every five years, was recommended to move forward. The next UCC meeting is scheduled for December 20th. Melissa concluded by thanking everyone for their collaboration and wishing them a happy holiday season.

Vice President of Student Equity Report: Lorraine N. Fernández reported on her weekly meeting with Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola, Director of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning, held on Tuesday, December 3rd, to discuss the status of the Unity Council and the establishment of the Advisory Committee for the Advancement of Equitable Representation (ACAER). Unity Council, a biweekly gathering of affinity club representatives that plans Unity Week in April, will now fall under the Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning. This office will also include a Senior Coordinator of Multicultural Programming, a position expected to be filled by Spring 2025, to assist with Unity Week. Additionally, ACAER, chaired by the VP of Student Equity, will include representatives from SGA,

affinity groups, and underrepresented student populations to recommend and implement diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives. The approval of ACAER will be discussed later in the meeting. Lorraine concluded by thanking everyone for a great semester and wishing them a restful winter break.

- a. Joseph Bonilla gave a point of information about the new positions.
- b. Daniel Currier asked about the relation between Unity Council and S.A.I.L.
 - a. Joseph Bonilla gave some information that they are looking for someone that can give a DEI lens specifically.
 - b. Matt Dellea gave a point of information because the senior position that will be hired will be working very closely with the S.A.I.L. office.

Executive Secretary Report: Jacob Constant reported that last week's tabling events were a success, gathering significant feedback from the campus community. Notable suggestions included adding more outdoor trash cans and recycling bins, as well as feedback regarding dining services, which was shared at the dining committee meeting. One major topic raised was coffee, aligning with plans for the Coffee Showcase next semester. Jacob wished everyone luck on their finals and final projects and extended holiday greetings.

- a. Christopher Lannan asked about the detailed statistics of the tabling events.

Constitution Review Committee Report: Ethan Haynes reported on behalf of Constitutional Review regarding the mission, vision, and values being adopted for this year's review. The mission emphasizes the SGA's role as the longest-standing open forum at Westfield State University, bridging student needs and administrative goals, representing undergraduate voices in governance, and engaging with the community. The vision aspires to empower students to create change, foster student leadership, and promote personal and professional growth among student leaders. The values outlined include Responsible Stewardship, Compassionate Leadership, Innovative Thinking, Belonging & Inclusion, Accountability & Reflection, Fostering Opportunity, and Providing Transparency. These principles aim to guide SGA's efforts to effectively represent and advocate for the student body.

- a. Justin Wald thanked Matt for taking everyone to the Hangar.

Senior Class Report: Isabella Moniz provided updates on the Class of 2025's initiatives. The Lawn Sign Fundraiser has been active for 2.5 weeks, with sales steadily growing. The 100-Day Toast, scheduled for Thursday, February 6th from 7-9 PM at Westfield River Brewing Company, will feature Raising Cane's as the food option, complementing the event's tropical theme. Senior Week plans have been finalized, featuring three major days of activities. Monday, May 12th, will be "Westfield Day," with highlights including a Senior Sunset on the green and an evening at Gabe's. The second day will include a Student-Faculty Brunch and a trip to Mohegan Sun for dinner. The final day will feature a trip to Block Island and dinner in Providence. Ticket prices have been reduced to \$120 to increase accessibility. Seniors are encouraged to purchase tickets for these memorable events leading up to commencement.

First-Year Class: Jakob Traynor, a first-year class representative and History Education major, reported on the Class of 2028's successful "Week of Kindness," which took place from December 2nd to December 5th. The week began on Monday with Ben Janes and Thomas McLaughlin distributing Dove chocolates in the DC and commuter lounge. On Tuesday, Aiden Luciano and Angelina Cassella handed out 350 carnations across campus, which were well-received. Wednesday featured a giving tree set up by VP William Onorato and class representative Michelle Trieu outside the SGA room, allowing students to share what they were thankful for. The week concluded on Thursday with a Class of 2028 meet-and-greet, attended by around 60 students and SGA member Austin Morgan. The event included free drinks, mashed potato bowls, and a raffle with prizes such as a water bottle, Legos, and a TV. Jakob deemed the week a success and expressed excitement for future events.

- a. Joseph Bonilla mentioned that it is great that our sister class did a week of kindness!
- b. Sarah Harrington congratulated Jakob on his first report!
- c. Ben Janes gave a point of information stating that Lorraine Fernandez was also at the event's.

New Business:

MOTION made by Joseph Bonilla, seconded by Justin Wald, to open new business.

There being no discussion, **VOICE VOTE** passed unanimously.

MOTION made by Lorraine Fernández, seconded by Ethan Haynes, to accept the charge or the Advisory Committee for the Advancement of Equitable Representation (ACAER).

There being no discussion, **VOICE VOTE** passed unanimously.

MOTION made by Joseph Bonilla, seconded by Jacob Constant, to close new business.

There being no discussion, **VOICE VOTE** passed unanimously.

Announcements: The following announcements were made:

- Joseph Bonilla announced the official date of the SGA Retreat being on January 20th 2025, with more details to come over break.
- Matt Dellea congratulated everyone in SGA for all of the work we have done this year.
- Samantha Dyer announced that the Sophomore class is hosting an event tomorrow in the DC of making cards for a nursing home.
- Ali Sutherland brought up the importance of Green Bandana and gave some information about it!
- Jacob Constant told everyone happy everyone happy holidays and to have a great break!
- Nicholas Palumbo stated that there are 164 days till Commencement.

Adjournment: There being no further business, President Bonilla adjourned the meeting at 7:29 pm.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the approved minutes of the Student Government Association (SGA) general meeting held on December 10, 2024.

Executive Secretary Jacob Constant

Signed: _____

Date: _____