WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
ITEM SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees
FROM: President Sabah Randhawa on behalf of the Associated Students
DATE: December 11, 2020
SUBJECT: Associated Students
PURPOSE: Associated Students Report

Purpose of Submittal:
AS President Abdul Malik Ford will brief the Board of Trustees on recent activities of the Associated Students.

References:

Attachments:
ASWWU Resolution – Equal Representation for the ASWWU Governing Bodies
Letter of Support (2)
ASWWU Resolution – ASWWU Support of Shred the Contract
A Resolution of the
Associated Students of Western Washington University

“Equal Representation for the ASWWU Governing Bodies”

WHEREAS, the (AS) Executive Board President of the Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU), also known as the Chair of the ASWWU Executive Board, is a recurring invitee to the Western Washington University Board of Trustees public meetings;[1] and

WHEREAS, the (AS) Executive Board President of the Associated Students of Western Washington University, also known as the Chair of the ASWWU Executive Board, meets regularly with the University President and Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services;[2] and

WHEREAS, the (AS) Senate Pro Tempore of the Associated Students of Western Washington University, also known as the Chair of the ASWWU Student Senate, is not a recurring invitee to the Western Washington University Board of Trustees public meetings; and

WHEREAS, the (AS) Senate Pro Tempore of the Associated Students of Western Washington University, also known as the Chair of the ASWWU Student Senate, does not meet regularly with the University President and Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services; and

WHEREAS, a total of 744 people have signed a Change.org petition requesting that the WWU Board of Trustees send the ASWWU Senate Pro Tempore a recurring invitation to their public meetings;[3] and

WHEREAS, the ASWWU membership voted to revive the ASWWU Student Senate as an equal governing branch to the ASWWU Executive Board (effective Fall 2018 to present) and to transform the ASWWU Board of Directors into the ASWWU Executive Board;[4] and

WHEREAS, the ASWWU Student Senate and ASWWU Executive Board currently are the two bicameral equal-in-power branches of the ASWWU student government, meaning the Chairs of both branches are the equal co-leaders and co-representatives of the ASWWU membership;[5] and

WHEREAS, the Executive Board President of the Associated Students of Western Washington University cannot fully represent the ASWWU membership nor can the Senate Pro Tempore; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Board President and Senate Pro Tempore of the Associated Students of Western Washington University must collaborate in fully representing the ASWWU membership; and
WHEREAS, the 2019-2020 ASWWU Executive Board President was not present at 33% of the WWU Board of Trustees public meetings, leaving no representation for the ASWWU membership; and

WHEREAS, the WWU Board of Trustees public meeting minutes of June 9, 2017, includes a report of the new ASWWU governing structure that received 97% affirmative vote from the ASWWU membership and the Board’s response was, “The board acknowledge[s] the work of the current Associated Students Board and their commitment to this restructure;” [4] and

WHEREAS, the ASWWU Executive Board approved the “ASWWU Student Senate Pro Tempore Job Description,” in which the Position Responsibilities include, “Serve the Students of Western Washington University by: Representing the interests of WWU students on all issues that come before the ASWWU Student Senate. Serving as the spokesperson of the ASWWU Student Senate, in coordination with the AS Executive Board. Regularly communicating with WWU Administration, including the University President, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services, and the Dean of Students. Attending Western Washington University Board of Trustees meetings as a recurring invitee;” [6] and

WHEREAS, Article XII of the ASWWU Constitution approved from Spring of 2019, states, “Constitutional Amendments: All amendments to this constitution must be approved by a majority vote of the ASWWU and will be presented to the WWU Board of Trustees for ratification;” [5] and

WHEREAS, the Preamble of the approved ASWWU Constitution states, “We, the Associated Students of Western Washington University, have the right and responsibility to serve as a resource and advocate for all students. For this purpose, the governing bodies of the Associated Students of Western Washington University shall, 1) represent student interests and opinions to the University Administration, the Board of Trustees, academic governance structures, and appropriate external government bodies;” [5] and

WHEREAS, Article XI of the ASWWU Student Senate Bylaws states, “Amendment One, Section One... the Western Washington University Board of Trustees shall review, and permanently establish the aforementioned Granted Authorities to the ASWWU Student Senate following a successful academic year of 2018-2019, with consideration to an advisory vote of the Student Senate in favor of the Granted Authorities. To permanently establish the Granted Authorities in consideration to the future of the AS WWU Student Senate... the Western Washington University Board of Trustees will need a simple majority vote according to their Charge & Charter... This vote will be held prior to the end of the 2018-2019 Academic Year;” [7] and

WHEREAS, the ASWWU gave the WWU Board of Trustees a report on the 2018-19 ASWWU Student Senate’s successful academic year on June 14, 2019, “Eckman provided the board with an update on the accomplishments of the newly formed Student Senate. He noted that the Student Senate
held its first election of student senators which included **sixty students running for positions in nine colleges**, and that it passed **four resolutions intended to help improve the quality of life for students at Western**. Eckman reported that students sat on **over forty-five campus committees, including with voting privileges on college curriculum committees**. He noted that a new Senate Pro-Tempore has been elected for the upcoming academic year for the **first full year of the student senate**;” [8] and

**WHEREAS**, Article IX of the ASWWU Student Senate Bylaws states its Granted Authorities, “The ASWWU Student Senate shall be granted the authority to fulfill its responsibilities within... the following granted authorities... **To appoint student representatives to standing University committees, and other bodies upon request... To reserve the right to have a student chair**, in consultation with the University President or designee, on all committees overseeing and appropriating mandatory and voluntary student fee dollars,” which the WWU Board of Trustees oversees; [7] and

**WHEREAS**, Article XI of the ASWWU Student Senate Bylaws also states, “Amendments: The Student Senate will have the power to make, alter, and amend the Student Senate Charge and Charter or By-Laws by an affirmative vote of a 3/4* majority of the ASWWU Student Senate, and approval by the University President;” [7] and

**WHEREAS**, it is currently unclear if the WWU Board of Trustees and University President ratified the ASWWU Constitution, granted the ASWWU Student Senate's Granted Authorities, and approved the ASWWU Student Senate Bylaws; [4] [8] and

**WHEREAS**, legal advisement from Assistant Attorney General Melissa Nelson states that there are RCW’s and Washington State Supreme Court hearings in place that require the Board of Trustees to approve student government governing documents; [9] and

**WHEREAS**, the University President's website does not recognize the Student Senate's existence and refers to the ASWWU Executive Board as the Board of Directors, “The AS also acts as the student voice in university administration, with governance consisting of a student board of directors, Legislative Liaison, business office, personnel office, communications office, and general services;” [10] and

**WHEREAS**, the Western Washington University (WWU) Board of Trustees meeting minutes constantly refer to the ASWWU Executive Board as the Board of Directors, as well; and

**WHEREAS**, the term Board of Directors transformed into Executive Board, as the former term referred to the AWU's outdated one-branch student governance power structure and was no
longer deemed appropriate due to the mandate by the ASWWU membership for an equal Student Senate; and

WHEREAS, the current public understanding of the ASWWU governing structure, the Student Senate’s power, and the Executive Board’s new name by the WWU Board of Trustees and the University President as shown in their meeting minutes, websites, and lack of approval of the ASWWU’s governing documents is outdated and does not reflect the new bicameral equal-in-power ASWWU student governance as voted upon by the WWU student body.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY:

THAT, the ASWWU requests that the WWU Board of Trustees and University President recognize the new governing structure of the ASWWU and that they reflect that understanding on their websites, future meeting minutes, and language; and

THAT, the ASWWU requests that the WWU Board of Trustees and University President send out formal statements that acknowledge the ASWWU Student Senate as an equal and separate branch to the ASWWU Executive Board in terms of power; and

THAT, the ASWWU requests that the WWU Board of Trustees and University President send out formal statements that recognize the ASWWU Senate Pro Tempore and ASWWU Executive Board President as equal co-leaders and co-representatives of the ASWWU; and

THAT, the ASWWU requests that the University President and Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services meet as regularly with the ASWWU Senate Pro Tempore as they do with the ASWWU Executive Board President; and

THAT, the ASWWU requests that, from here on, the WWU Board of Trustees ratifies the ASWWU Constitution and grants the Granted Authorities of the ASWWU Student Senate and Executive Board Bylaws and the University President approves the ASWWU Student Senate and Executive Board Bylaws for all past and future changes in compliance with their legal responsibilities as advised by Assistant Attorney General Melissa Nelson; and

THAT, the ASWWU requests that the WWU Board of Trustees sends a recurring invite to the ASWWU Senate Pro Tempore and ASWWU Executive Board President for their public meetings in the spirit of shared governance, student representation, equity, inclusion, and justice [11].

THAT, this resolution be distributed via email to Governor Jay Inslee, the Western Washington University Board of Trustees, Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Trustees Paul Dunn,
Passes and approves by the Associated Students of Western Washington University Executive Board at their regular meeting on November 20th, 2020.

Passes and approves by the Associated Students of Western Washington University Student Senate via electronic vote on November 23rd, 2020.

ATTEST:

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Abdul Malik Ford
Chair, ASWWU Executive Board

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Sargun Handa
Chair, ASWWU Student Senate

Appendix

[1]: BOT Rules of Operation

[2]: AS Executive Board President Job Description
https://asvuwu.blob.core.windows.net/media/up/2017/01/as20president20jd.pdf

[3]: Change.org Petition
Finding—Intent—2012 c 148: "The legislature finds that decisions made by governing boards of each respective institution greatly impact the lives of students and that student participation in the decision-making process can provide insight into the impacts of actions by trustees that are not always measurable through reports and statistics. Students are on campus every day using services and experiencing aspects of the institution that board members may only see on paper, providing a unique and valuable perspective that should not be overlooked.

Students serving on governing boards of higher education have proven effective in Washington and in over thirty other states. For over ten years students at Washington's four-year institutions of higher education have served as voting members on the board of trustees, regents, and the higher education coordinating board, providing greater depth in board deliberations and a well-educated conduit for students to voice ideas and concerns...

Being on campus and in class every day, students are exposed to a more diverse group than any member of the board representing any one group of the community.
Student positions on governing boards are also a valuable tool for developing leadership through experiential learning. Student members learn processes of institutional governance, become involved in campus projects, analyze policy proposals, and participate in board discussions and decision making.

It is the intent of the legislature to enhance... a more dynamic relationship between students and institutions through the encouragement of student participation in policy development and decision making at the district and state level."

2012 c 148 § 1
Nov. 23, 2020

Western Washington University Board of Trustees
516 High St,
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Chair Meyer and WWU Board of Trustees,

I hope this letter of support finds you all in good health. I write to you all, as a previous Student Trustee and Associated Students’ Board Member, to encourage the Board’s openness to evolvement and growth with shared governance. It has been three years since I have left Western, and since then I have continuously had student leaders reach out to me asking: How did you do it? How were you able to get the University and the Board of Trustees to listen to the student issues you were raising? Though the issues have stemmed from different matters, my response has been quite similar in that I depended on shared governance among students, staff and faculty, and administrators and the Board of Trustees.

During my time on the AS Board of Directors, the Board of Trustees had begun a conversation about shared governance. On March 3rd, 2016 the Board of Trustees participated in an open dialogue with the Associated Students on the role the Trustees and administration had in hearing and engaging student voices. During this conversation, both Boards concluded that maintaining accessibility between students and the Board of Trustees was crucial in “shared governance”. Fast forward four years and still the issue of including student representation at the Board level is at issue.

Once I was the Student Trustee, the AS had begun the process of governance restructuring. For too long students have had issues with the power vested in 7 students for a campus of over 15,000 students; the AS finally listened and altered what student representation could look like for Western. Alongside the tradition of having one student trustee at the table, the AS president is symbolically recognized as being able to sit alongside the faculty senate and WWU administrators at “the table”. What logically follows is for the Senate Pro Tempore to also sit at the table as the new and representative structure of the Associated Students.
As we all know, we are living in unprecedented times; for students this time brings continuous waves of uncertainty and concern. As a graduate student myself, the pandemic and civil uprisings have made me even more attuned to the decisions being made that will ultimately affect my future. Western students are paying attention to the decisions being made about their futures, now is the time for the Board of Trustees to send a message to students that their best interests are being considered by recognizing and instating the Senate Pro Tempore at the same level of the Associated Students’ President.

During my time as the Student Trustee, I made it a priority for students to not only know about the Board of Trustees, but to understand the function of the Board. Too many students do not know who the people are that are making the decisions that affect their everyday student lives. By adding the Senate Pro Tempore, the Board communicates to the student body not only that their interests are sought and discussed, but that it recognizes and respects the students’ own governance structure. Again, I encourage the Trustees to welcome even more student representation and involvement in the important decisions made that not only affect students, but the greater campus community. Western students have historically mobilized around necessary changes for the University, that have led to the campus becoming more diverse, funded, and relevant in the world of higher education. In the spirit of shared governance, adding the Senate Pro Tempore continues Western’s commitment to necessary transformation.

Sincerely,

Abigail Ramos, c/o 2017
Student Trustee, 2016-2017
Associated Students Vice President for Diversity, 2015-2016
Letter of Support for Sargun Handa

To whom it may concern,

It has come to the attention of the Washington Student Association that there has been some question to the inclusivity and transparency of the Western Washington University Board of Trustees.

The student who has brought this to our attention, Sargun Handa, has made exceptional contributions as a part of WSA and Students of Color Coalition, which is why her request for support has been met at our organization. While serving as a voice for students of color and as a representative of the WWU student body, Sargun has demonstrated great leadership, drive, and dedication to the work that she does. She has gone above and beyond to ensure that historically underrepresented students are serving in leadership positions, and demonstrate qualities that will allow them to be good leaders.

In the age of globalization, and much more in times of social unrest, it is invaluable to find these students who are willing to serve others. From what I have seen of this particular student leader’s work, is that she will stand up for what is right despite popular opinion. Sargun has given the WSA reason to trust her word and actions, with the integrity with which she carries herself as well as her reliability and openness to the opinions of others.

By allowing her to serve on your board, I am certain that she will make great contributions and offer a different perspective, to solve problems with creative solutions. The representation of students at these meetings cannot be overlooked, as students are the population that institutions of higher learning are meant to serve.

Thank you,

Gina M. Vasquez,
VP of Diversity
A Resolution of the
Associated Students of Western Washington University

“ASWWU’s Support of Shred the Contract”

WHEREAS, Western Washington University informed its students that they intend to extend their 10-year contract with the Aramark Corporation (due to expire in September 2021) through September of 2023. This contract places all dining, large-expenditure catering, supply chain management and other related activity for WWU’s dining system under the sole operation of Aramark; [1] and

WHEREAS, The ASWWU Student Senate and Executive Board are some of the very few recognized voices for all students of the university; and

WHEREAS, The ASWWU Student Senate and Executive Board passed a resolution named “Future of Dining Operations at WWU” in Spring of 2020 in support of the Shred the Contract campaign; [2] and

WHEREAS, Despite reaching out multiple times in the past several months, Shred the Contract and the WWU students were not informed by the WWU administration of their final decision to extend the contract with the Aramark Corporation until the Western Today statement to the general student body. In addition, the ASWWU leaders who had been communicating with WWU administration were not made aware until the morning of the Western Today statement to the student body; [1] and

WHEREAS, Many student groups and petitions have expressed the need to end the contract with the Aramark Corporation. Included in these groups are Shred the Contract (Students for a Self-Operated Dining System), Black Student Organizations and their petition that received over 3,500 signatures, and Students for Sustainable Food and their petition that received over 1,800 signatures; [3][4] and

WHEREAS, WWU administration signed on to the Real Food Campus Commitment in 2016, stating that “We believe colleges and universities must exercise leadership in our communities and throughout society by modeling ways to support ecologically sustainable, humane, and socially equitable food systems;” [5] and

WHEREAS, The stated vision in the Dining Services section of the 2017 WWU Sustainability Action Plan is to provide, “meals that... support socially- and economically-just and ecologically-responsible food production and delivery systems;” [6] and

WHEREAS, Although the reasoning behind extending the contract with the Aramark Corporation surrounded cost, the Dining Services section of the 2017 WWU Sustainability Action Plan clearly
states that, “Social equity not only encompasses student costs, but also addresses the social and economic impacts of our purchasing choices on the surrounding local and regional community;” \[6\] and

**WHEREAS**, The Fall 2017 Feeding Western survey found that over half of WWU students are facing food insecurity, illustrating that WWU’s current food system is not affordable or nourishing for many students; \[7\] and

**WHEREAS**, Aramark is contracted with over 500 jails and prisons around the U.S. and has a track record of serving food that is unhealthy and unsafe, including food containing maggots and rocks; \[8\] and

**WHEREAS**, The 2018-2025 WWU Strategic Plan stipulates a, “Commitment to student success, critical thought, creativity, and sustainability” as well as a pursuit of “justice and equity in its policies, practices, and impacts;” \[9\] and

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY:**

**THAT**, the ASWWU further echoes and reaffirms the “Future of Dining Operations at WWU” resolution passed by the 2019-20 ASWWU Student Senate and Executive Board.

**THAT**, the ASWWU formally endorses the Shred the Contract Campaign and demands that WWU administration and ourselves, the ASWWU leadership, commit to discontinuing WWU’s relationship with the Aramark Corporation upon the expiration of the contract in 2021.

**THAT**, the ASWWU requests that the WWU Board of Trustees allows Shred the Contract members to attend their December 11th meeting to give the organization a platform to discuss their concerns with the WWU administration’s decision to extend the contract.

**THAT**, if the WWU administration cannot end its extension of the current contract through 2023, the ASWWU demands that the WWU administration commits to meeting regularly with Shred the Contract, first and foremost, as well as ASWWU leadership to collaborate on a tangible plan for transitioning to a self-operating dining system - which will be run entirely by the university, rather than a third party – in partnership with the AS Outback Farm (as the WWU administration committed to in the Sustainability Action Plan) and local food producers by 2023; and

**THAT**, the ASWWU demands that the WWU administration creates more transparent and consistent communication with Shred the Contract, ASWWU leadership, and WWU students that does not occur the morning of or even the week of a decision being made; and

**THAT**, the ASWWU demands that the WWU administration commit to doing everything in their power, if possible, to ensure that this self-operated dining system preserves the current dining
union, rehires all current student and full-time staff, honoring pay rate and seniority, with the exception of those staff who were brought in by the Aramark Corporation.

THAT, the ASWWU demands that the WWU administration honors the Real Food Campus Commitment, Sustainability Action Plan, and 2018-25 Mission & Strategic Plan. In addition, the ASWWU demands that the WWU administration reflects upon the petitions and actively listens to the demands of thousands of WWU students to end this contract.

THAT, that copies of this resolution and the “Future Dining Operations at WWU” resolution be distributed via email to President Sabah Randhawa, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services and Interim Executive Director of the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance Melynda Huskey, Director of University Residences Leonard Jones, Associate Director of University Residences Kurt Willis, the WWU Board of Trustees, and the general WWU student body.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Associated Students of Western Washington University Executive Board at their special meeting on November 30th, 2020.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Associated Students of Western Washington University Student Senate via electronic vote on November 23rd, 2020.

ATTEST:

________________________________________  ______________________________________
Abdul Malik Ford  Sargun Handa
Chair, ASWWU Executive Board  Chair, ASWWU Student Senate

Appendix

[2]: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b8peji8EE_cOn3S7eaqRJ0L3aEQ6YLB1Q/view?usp=sharing
[3]: https://www.change.org/p/western-washington-university-demand-wwu-support-black-students
[4]: https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/shredthecontract
[5]: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByDvp1xyc9jNkl3MULxLXpjVnFwaWNDb0tKVnRaSIBXFg0/view
[8]: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/prison-strike-protest-aramark