



Student Government Association
General Meeting
Tuesday, September 24th, 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: Justin Wald, Sarah Harrington, Austin Morgan, Jacob Constant, Elizabeth Mercer, Daniel Currier, Nicholas Palumbo, Isabella Moniz, Anderson Dallaire, William Connor, Travis McLoughlin, Puru Sharma, Christopher Lannan

Members Excused: Melissa Kuzmeski, Sophia Rebenciuc

Members Absent: Joseph Bonilla, Brenna Guiliani, Micheala Vittum

Also, present and participating were SGA Advisors Laura Cafaro and Ryan Meersman.

Acting President Justin Wald 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: Acting President Justin Wald asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 10th, 2024, general meeting.

President's Report: *Justin Wald*

Justin introduced our guest speaker from Residential Life Associate Director John Zocco.

A. Associate Director of Residential Life: *John Zocco*

John came today to talk about an update they are doing on their traditional halls on campus. He mentioned the issues in previous years regarding the locks to the restrooms. Announcing that the decision has been made to remove the card access locks from the bathrooms. Bringing the reasons why, what they are looking to do and answer questions that we might have. He gave a background that the university has been experiencing more and more issues with the locks due to the systems being extremely outdated and the fact that the specific one that the university is using isn't being produced anymore so it is becoming very difficult to find parts to fix the existing locks. He mentions that the cost to replace all the locks would be too high. It was also brought up that there was research done looking into our sister school and realized that we are in fact the only campus that has kinds of locks on the bathrooms in our traditional dorms. Then the survey from last year was brought up, and the results showed that many students were indifferent about having a lock for the bathroom and not. It was mentioned that due to the locks breaking so much, many

of the doors have been propped open so students can actually use the bathrooms and being able to use the basic needs. John brought up the concern of possible vandalism and how there are cameras in place, clarifying that they are not in the bathrooms, but they can find out who is responsible. He mentioned the timeline is that facilities are looking to make the change this semester and have it been sooner rather than later. It will be a process because they still need to make sure that the doors are all set for fire codes and make sure everything is done right. More information will be shared as they get updates. He also mentions that these changes will only affect Courtney, Davis, Dickinson, and Lammers. John also clarifies that the locks inside the bathroom stalls will still be there, it would only be affecting the locks to get into the restroom itself.

- I. Daniel Currier – Thanked John for explaining the rationale for the decision but then brought up that from the survey it wasn't the majority wanting to keep the locks in some capacity. Also brings up the fact that during campus tours prospective parents and students really appreciate their being locked and it is a nice feature to have. Daniel also mentioned that he is concerned about the repercussions of the change and if the benefits outweigh the cost of it.
 - a. John Zocco – Mentions that it was taken into consideration when the decision was made, and it wasn't made lightly. Also, including the safety aspects of having the locks not being used because the doors were having to be propped open. Including that they will be monitoring the halls and having those conversations and making sure that they don't see a change in it. Adding that they want to hear from those who are concerned about the changes, and how it is a real concern to make sure there is a process for it. He thinks that they need to start to educate students about the why's behind the decision and make it aware that students couldn't access the bathroom trying to balance safety and access.
- II. Christopher Lannan – Asked about what is being done to ensure student safety whether you are a male, female, non-binary, trans-student making sure everyone will be safe no matter what bathroom they go to.
 - a. John Zocco – Explains that removing the locks in a sense is helping sure people have better opportunities to choose the restroom they want to use on their own. Also allowing flexibility when guests come on campus. Adding that RA's do their rounds during the night, and they will address the issues as they come up. Also, over the past few weeks the bathrooms have been propped open and there haven't been any issues come up.
 - b. Christopher Lannan – Re-addressed Chris asked if they could do an information session to ease students' concerns.
 - c. John Zocco – They are looking into seeing what options they must do something like that.
- III. Jacob Constant – Asked about because this school is unique to have the locks and for the students who picked this school because of them, wouldn't that drive them away?
 - a. John Zocco – Says that he can't really say for sure if students choose this school for that reason, but it very well can be accurate for some out there, if that is the case they can try and address their concerns. Again, clarifying that it was not an easy decision to make. He also talks about the difficulties in the perspective from operations and how after room changes you might not be able to get into a bathroom for a while
- IV. Maggie Balch – Clarified that it is very important that we never say that people are safe 100% of the time. Includes that there may be safety pieces to this, but there are safety issues walking across Western Avenue. She also included that we are all student leaders in this space and if you see someone trashing the bathroom, you can say something. She also

mentioned that this is her sixth institution and has never had an issue with the bathrooms, and none have been locked.

Student Trustee Report: *Daniel Currier*

Daniel started with the meeting that he had with Dr. Thompson, the PVTA changes and how it is no longer free for students, but now having a pass that can be picked up at the SAIL office. Adding that the Executive Council is looking into a long-term solution where the university can possibly negotiate and possibly add as a waivable cost to a student's bill to be able to utilize financial aid. Trying to make the model compared to how it is at several universities, particularly those in Boston with the MBTA. Dr. Thompson's previous institution, UMASS Boston, is one of those institutions and Dr. Thompson is in favor of the model. Then about how SGA is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and how Dr. Thompson has encouraged us to take this occasion as an opportunity not only to celebrate with SGA alumni, but to fundraise for an initiative we are passionate about. With one idea being a scholarship that benefits our fellow students. Daniel including that Elizabeth Mercer's Special Committee on Publicity and External Relations will be taking the lead on the celebrations. Finally, Daniel mentioned that Sarah, Joseph and himself will be meeting with the co-chairs of the Academic Policies Committee (APC) regarding the common hour proposal.

Vice President's Report-Student Life: *Justin Wald*

Justin started by talking about his meeting with Sarah Lazar from Banacos and specifically talking about accessibility on campus. Mentioning ways to combat the accessibility concerns around campus with not much stress. The first being faculty training which would increase the knowledge of the staff and accommodation to combat classroom barriers. The second was to get a "Submit a Report" option that could send different issues around campus directly to facilities. Then the last idea was having a survey sent out to students asking simple questions relating to accessibility.

- I. Anderson Dallaire – Anderson asked if it would be possible to add an elevator in every residential building allowing the building to be accessible to everyone.
 - a. John Zocco – Explain that it wouldn't be reasonable to add an elevator to those buildings because especially with the deferred maintenance with getting everything else up to code. Also it would be millions of dollars. Some of the buildings are grandfathered in which is why some buildings are more accessible. So because of the way they are built, they are too small and didn't have an elevator in mind making it not possible to add elevators to the buildings.
 - b. Daniel Currier – Point of Information Daniel explains that deferred maintenance is a major problem that we are dealing with and he should have more information regarding it in the coming months. Also explaining that we don't have the money required to put elevators in the buildings, especially with the useful life of the building being at 0.
- II. Ashley Thom – Mentioned how there are certain buildings on campus that do not have the handicap buttons to get into the building, and there is a student who is in a wheelchair, and they saw them having to walk into Dower because of the no handicap door. Also including that in the DC they can't see the food because of the wheelchair.
 - a. Justin Wald – Mentions that Sarah Lazar also mentioned in their meeting that there are around 12-20 students on campus that have mobility issues. Then went into the buildings with handicap buttons.
 - b. John Zocco – Included that University, New Hall and Courtney all are handicap accessible with buttons, with Courtney being a little different where a button is given to the student to press the button when near the door.
 - c. Justin Wald – Talks about the academic buildings giving the example of Ely and how they are usually broken all the time, and he is aware of them. Then for the DC they don't

have any major planning with capital projects, but it was asked about including that to make the DC more accessible. The things that are being done currently is staff training and making sure everyone is aware.

- d. Isabella Moniz – Mentions that this should be one of the most important things because if people can't access food that is a problem.
 - e. Justin Wald – Explains that Melissa is taking all of this seriously and she is trying to think of so many ways to make the DC more accessible.
 - f. Tony Casciano – If a button isn't working report, it to make someone aware of it and they can fix it.
- A. Food Services Committee: **Justin Wald**
- Justin explained that the committee met last Friday and primarily focused on changing the name of the committee, the committee charge, and defining its purpose, the new committee's name will be "Dining Services Committee" a charge will be provided next week. There are now fully functional meal swipes at every location. Create your own is back on the GET app for Owl Cafe with most of the options. Late night has gone from 90 a night when it was in the Bistro to nearly 200-300 a night. Wednesday is the "You're Not alone, Owl! Meet your community" event, with homemade pies and tarts.
- a. Jacob Constant – Don't forget about Cooking with Maria!!

Vice President's Report-Academic Life: **Sarah Harrington**

Sarah met with the Provost on September 19th to discuss the Provost Advisory Board and the CARE center's move to Parenzo. She's currently working on a charter for the board, which she'll review with him at their next meeting on October 15th. Concerns were raised about the CARE center taking spaces from the education department, but an analysis showed it wouldn't significantly impact class scheduling. The move aims to centralize student services, which could help with retention. They also discussed digitizing registrar forms, an idea he plans to explore, and bringing back the Day of Service for next October's calendar. They also talked about potential changes to the class schedule and common hour as well. Sarah also explained that she is also creating an SGA Dictionary to assist new senators and would appreciate any suggestions.

- I. Christopher Lannan – Mentions that he wants to make sure that it is brought up that because the education department is already stretched thin with their classrooms that putting other departments there wouldn't be a good idea.
 - a. Sarah Harrington – Explained as she said in her report there was an analysis done and it wouldn't affect any classes. Also, that the Education Department is prioritized for classes in those rooms.
 - II. Justin Wald – Asked how it would affect the Political Science Department.
 - a. Sarah Harrington – Explained that it wouldn't affect it.
 - III. Ashley Thom – Vocalized that the CARE center's current location is a great place with having a physical community.
 - IV. Isabella Moniz – Mentioned that other departments should be prioritized over other departments. With the example given, the Social Work department being in Dower and having classes being interrupted by music classes.
 - a. Sarah Harrington – Completely agrees, however the information provided is that this move is to allow all campus resources to be in one general location on campus rather than being scattered around.
- A. Curriculum Committee: **Sarah Harrington**
- Sarah announced that Scott Doan has graduated and will no longer handle the UCC reports, so

she will be taking over for now. She shared that UCC met on Friday, September 20th, from 1:40-3:30. The meeting began with Lynn Shelley presenting the SCORE practice standards, which were passed after some wording amendments. The SCORE team is in its final semester of preparing to roll out the new Gen Ed program. The committee then revisited two Art courses from April, which needed completed Gen Ed forms before passing. A proposal for a Graphic Design minor was tabled due to missing prerequisite course lists. The chemistry department proposed adding a C- minimum grade requirement for about 25 courses, but this was also tabled for further discussion with the registrar due to potential implementation challenges. Four new elective proposals for the GPS minor were passed, as well as an accounting class. Sarah mentioned that she has more detailed notes available if anyone needs clarification on the courses discussed.

- B. Special Committee on Reforming General Education (SCORE): *Sarah Harrington*
- Sarah shared that SCORE/WISE met this morning to continue working on the rollout of the new Gen Ed courses. SCORE has adopted a new name for the curriculum: WISE (Westfield's Integrative Student Experience), following a suggestion from Admissions. During the meeting, they discussed progress on the First-Year Journey (FYJ) courses, and a recent lunch was held for professors teaching these courses to discuss their needs and share ideas. The FYJ rollout has been successful, with plans to increase the number of sections from 8 to 12 in the spring to accommodate all first-year students. While taking the course in the first year is ideal, it can be completed in the second year if necessary. Sarah mentioned that the practice standards passed in the UCC meeting are now moving to AUC for implementation. She plans to meet with UCC chair Nicholas Aieta to improve the productivity of meetings, as they have been lengthy due to extensive discussions. SCORE is also working with each department to ensure a smooth integration of the new Gen Eds, focusing on advising, writing in the major, and integrative experiences, which are university requirements. They reviewed the rough draft of progress report 8 to finalize it and discussed professional development plans for fall and spring, including assessments, ePortfolios, exploring complex issues, and hard resets. SCORE also expressed interest in speaking with the senate, particularly first-year students, about the Gen Ed rollout, and Sarah will coordinate with Joseph to schedule this.
- a. Jacob Constant – Asked what day the committee meets.
 - b. Sarah Harrington – Tuesdays

Vice President's Report-Finance: *Austin Morgan*

Austin brought a finance proposal for the Exercise Science Club.

MOTION made by Austin Morgan, seconded by Travis McLoughlin, to approve the finance propose for the Exercise Science Club of \$500.00.

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

- A. Foundation Report: *Austin Morgan*
- Austin attended the Westfield State University Foundation's yearly meeting, where he learned about the organization's role in raising funds and managing charitable gifts to support the University's growth. The Foundation, an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) nonprofit, provides numerous scholarships to students. Two student speakers shared their impactful work made possible by the Foundation's support. Pending approval, Bill Hynes will be the new executive director, and Daniel Currier won the 2023-2024 Foundation Stewardship Award for his efforts in securing

funds for the new FinTech lab. Inspired by the experience, Austin plans to focus on fundraising to support the Foundation's mission.

Vice President's Report-Publicity: *Elizabeth Mercer*
No Report

Executive Secretary Report: *Jacob Constant*

Jacob reported that the elections are currently in full swing and will be ending tonight at 11:59 PM. The results will be shared via email and posted on the SGA's Instagram (@westfieldstate_sga) tomorrow morning. He encouraged anyone with questions to reach out to him.

Commuter Council and Class Council Reports:

A. Senior Class: *Nicholas Palumbo*

Nicholas shared that the "Welcome Back Senior Toast BBQ" is happening this Friday, featuring live music, food, games, a cash bar, and raffle prizes, including a free cap and gown. He reminded everyone that the event is open to all seniors and encouraged them to invite friends and classmates. Nicholas also announced that Nestor will be attending. Additionally, plans for a "Senior Weekend," a 3-4 day event allowing seniors to stay on campus and switch residence halls, are being mapped out, with more details to come. Lastly, he mentioned brainstorming ideas for the "100 Day Toast," but the main focus is making Friday's event a memorable start to the year.

I. Sarah Harrington – Asked about the seniors that don't currently live on campus.

a. Nicholas Palumbo – Explained that all seniors would have to be on campus.

New Business:

MOTION made by Justin Wald, seconded by Sarah Harrington, to open new business.

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

A. Constitution Amendment Review

Daniel Currier went over briefly the amendment that all the senators were given the day before to review. The amendment includes the process for removing an SGA member, and Club Approvals.

MOTION made by Daniel Currier, seconded by Christopher Lannan, to approve the amendment.

There being no discussion,

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Nicholas Palumbo	Yes
Isabella Moniz	Yes
Anderson Dallaire	Yes
William Connor	Abstain
Travis McLaughlin	Yes
Puru Sharma	Yes
Christopher Lannan	Yes
Justin Wald	Yes
Sarah Harrington	Yes
Austin Morgan	Yes
Jacob Constant	Yes
Elizabeth Mercer	Yes
Daniel Currier	Yes

Passed with 12 YES and 1 ABSTAIN

MOTION made by Daniel Currier, seconded by Austin Morgan, to approve the amendment.

There being no discussion,

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Nicholas Palumbo	Yes
Isabella Moniz	Yes
Anderson Dallaire	Yes
William Connor	Abstain
Travis McLaughlin	Yes
Puru Sharma	Yes
Christopher Lannan	Yes
Justin Wald	Yes
Sarah Harrington	Yes
Austin Morgan	Yes

Jacob Constant	Yes
Elizabeth Mercer	Yes
Daniel Currier	Yes

Passed with 12 YES and 1 ABSTAIN

MOTION made by Justin Wald, seconded by Travis McLaughlin, to close new business.

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

Announcements:

- I. Daniel Currier: Is pleased to announce that the Accounting and Finance Club has a full board, and asked if anyone could attend an event which is being held this Thursday at 4:30 PM and there will be public accountants there.
- II. Nicholas Palumbo: 234 days to commencement.

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 September 24^h, 2024.

Executive Secretary Jacob Constant

Signed: **Jacob Constant**

Date: **9/26/2024**