General Assembly Meeting: February 24, 2013

Agenda:
Opening of the Meeting: Meeting called to order at 7:00pm

1. Fight song and role call
2. Open Forum
3. Tuition Discussion
   a. Malter: This coming board meeting the board will be discussing whether or not to peg Wesleyan’s tuition to the rate of inflation. President Roth is worried about the sticker shock that Wesleyan’s tuition causes, it is one of the highest in our peer group. This increase on its own doesn’t really affect people receiving generous financial aid packages, but it does affect how much aid we can offer in aggregate - there will be fewer people receiving aid or a less generous formula with a smaller tuition.
   b. Brudnick: Are we concerned about high tuition squeezing out the middle class?
   c. Malter: You’re going to see a lot of people at the poles, people who have either a lot or a little and less in the middle class. Professor Skillman cited a study that he had undertaken that we’re giving more of our financial aid to the lowest brackets than the rest of our peer group.
   d. Jesse: I disagree with the assessment that our aid giving is bimodal, 90% of the nation identifies as “middle class.” This change directly affects the amount of financial aid, but based on the current policy, how much aid there will be for 2017.
   e. Christian: Just a couple questions- what do we want to get out of the discussion tonight? What is the university’s definition of “middle class”?
   f. Zach: To get an idea as to the assembly’s general opinion of President Roth’s shift.
   g. Chase: If they lower tuition, do they not meet full need for financial aid?
   h. Zach: We’d be able to meet full needs, but there would probably be fewer students on financial aid.
   i. Mari: POI: Roth is committed to meeting full needs for
   j. Andrew Trexler: The definition of “full need” is different at every school.
   k. Noah: The difference between us and other schools is that we do allow for lower income students to have a liberal arts education, even if that means placing a bigger financial burden on middle/high income students.
   l. Alton: I agree with Noah. But that would mean there would be a bigger gap between
higher income and lower income students.

m. Arya: Where our tuition is now is amongst the most expensive but we’re in a cohort of schools that have similar tuitions. Raising the tuition for higher income students doesn’t make too much of a difference to them, but for lower income students it’s going to make a very large difference when deciding to come to Wesleyan.

n. Andrew Trexler: When the education is relatively equivalent at Wesleyan as it is at peer schools, we have to keep in mind that radical tuition differences will make an impact on peoples’ decisions to come here.

o. Mansoor: As Alton said, the students of the middle class are going to be shafted to most if you consider grants/scholarships available to them.

p. Nicole Updegrove: I don’t know where I stand on this issue, but we should keep in mind that for parents it’s pretty tough to find that salaries change with inflation but tuition doesn’t. This is a financial burden for everyone, including higher income students - some parents are taking money out of their retirement to pay for tuition because Wesleyan costs a lot more in the second, third, and fourth years than it did in the first, which makes it hard to plan.

q. San Usdan: I think that the tuition could be raised as long as the cap for financial aid is raised. Raising the tuition makes it more difficult for socio-economic diversity, and makes cohesion difficult so we’d have to try to find a good compromise.

r. Adam: We’re not choosing between good and bad, we’re choosing between bad and less bad.

s. Jesse: Regarding the eligibility for financial aid, it’s difficult to affect change in this regard because it depends on federal eligibility for financial aid. We can’t fill peoples’ needs if it can’t be complemented with federally subsidized loans. No matter what, we’re going to encounter difficulty with expecting tuition increases every year.

t. Kate: I don’t know if this is statistically proven, but from my experience, a lot of alumni won’t donate because the tuition is so high- they think that the university is not efficiently using our money.

u. Andrew Trexler: Two bits of information- firstly, Wesleyan is consistently ranked in the top ten most expensive colleges in the country. Secondly, the plan in the long term is to link tuition and financial aid increases with inflation together.

v. Jason Shatz: What happens to funds that goes other places than financial aid? We’d have to prioritize or increase tuition- we can’t both fund everything that we do and have a lower tuition.

w. Mari: [ I missed this :( ]

x. Arya: When it comes to the Board of Trustees, many of them have benefitted a lot from financial aid. I hope that we can remain competitive with other similar schools, and that
high tuition doesn’t make us less competitive.
y. Zach: Just a few questions to throw out- what is our competitiveness in different income brackets, how would different levels of tuition affect the discount rate, to what extent based on the income rate of various students are we bimodal compared to other schools
  i.
z. Glenn: Is there any information on information for the 100-150 thousand bracket?
aa. Andrew Trexler: It really depends on the family and their situation. The only official rule that I know of is that no loans will be made to families making less than 40 thousand dollars, only grants.
bb. Glenn: Which income group gets particularly shafted by our policies?
c. Andrew Trexler: There’s no way to answer that accurately- it depends on each family and their needs.
dd. Nicole Updegrove: There are a lot of variables that go into your expected contribution - how many kids parents are sending to college, how many cars they own, etc.
e. Zach: Glenn, your question is definitely a very important one to ask. But probably what most people say is that work-study expect too much from work-study here.
ff. Kate: The way that I would be being “shafted” is how dramatically your lifestyle changes between before and after sending your child to college.
gg. Jesse: I would say that net price by income bracket is worth looking into. Last time President Roth said that the WSA should hold the administration to our standards and maintaining student diversity and we should be looking into this issue all the time.
hh. Mansoor: What I meant by “shafted” is “blindsighted”. When you’re going to college, you want to know what you’re getting yourself into.
i. Glenn: We’re overlooking the fact that peer institutions are also raising their tuitions. Is there a way to compare these tuitions raises?
jj. Andrew Trexler: That data does exist. From memory, Wesleyan has increased tuition slightly faster than most of our peer schools.
kk. Mary: What is the exact definition for “full need”?
ll. Zach: Straw poll: Do you agree with President Roth’s tuition policies (tuition tied to inflation)? (Minute takers note: This polled those present in the room, not just WSA members.)
  i. Yes: 18
  ii. No: 2
  iii. Abstain: 10
mm. Jason: I don’t think we answered Mary’s question.
nn. Martin: When the situation calls for it, does the financial aid package rise with the
family’s growing need?

oo. Andrew Trexler: For the most part, yes.

pp. Glenn: I think that this issue is very personal as well- while it is important to show the WSA’s opinions to the Board of Trustees, it’s very important to consult the entire student body beforehand.

4. CID Recommendations (Link)

   a. Christian: These recommendations are going to go through several bodies before going to the Board of Trustees. These recommendations reflect what we hope the school focuses on.

   b. Scott: I think there is going to be some resistance with publishing the Wesleyan Public Safety Guidelines.

   c. Alton: Just to clarify where these recommendations are coming from, these were written without budget in mind. We wanted to indicate the direction that we would wish the school to move in, not thinking about budgetary restraints.

   d. Sam Ebb: In terms of curricular support for African-American Studies Program, there is more support to strengthen the program. But what specifically are you looking to do regarding this issue?

   e. Jesse: I think it’s important to look into why current students thought that the current resources through the office of diversity are inadequate. I was surprised that people didn’t direct more of their concerns towards Sonja Manyon.

   f. Mansoor: I thought these points were great but that they were lacking in certain aspects- the definition of “diversity” and of “student of color”. The Student of Color Program here is great, but benefits some groups of students more than ideas. I think diversity in disability is also not as strongly emphasized. But I do like these points.

   g. Jason: I think that we need to give Sonja Manyon some benefit of the doubt because her position is so new. This document suggests that there should be a mandate of sorts for social justice training for students.

   h. Jacob: In terms of definition, I think that “Social Justice Training” could also be better defined. In terms of number 11, I was wondering what you would want changed specifically.

   i. Sam Ebb: It’s difficult for us to “cluster hire” because there are usually only so many spots available for faculty. You can have a diverse search, but the spots that need to be filled may not be diverse

   j. Scott: FIRE IN HI-RISE OMG

   k. Christian: Regarding SJT, there will hopefully be a menu of options each year for different parts of the Wesleyan community. Regarding the issue of “students of color”, there is a Latino and Asian WesFest intern for the different groups of students in the
Admissions Office. We’re not making SJT courses/programs mandatory, but rather more pushed or emphasized. I got the “cluster hire” idea from Tufts.

l. Sam Ebb: The SJT courses sound like they’d need a separate segment on WesMaps which would be difficult because it’s already very clustered. Also, it’s difficult to tell faculty what to do other than teach their class as we have seen with the Essential Capabilities that are now being phased out as students did not use them and faculty did not always include them.

m. Zach: THE FIRE IS OUT WOO THE FIRE IS IN THE TRASH

n. Mansoor: Do you think you have the proper resources at your disposal to capture all the issues on campus? I understand that your group is a young one.

o. Christian: [shit I missed this one too]

p. Zach: Please make sure to send any other recommendations you may have to Christian.

q. Alton: I’ve been thinking a lot about what MEI means. I’m doubtful about what diversity means for this campus- even though I helped write these recommendation I realize now that a lot of these are geared towards race. We need to expand our diversity discussions beyond race. Students aren’t tired of hearing about race, but rather tired of not hearing about other forms of diversity.

r. Christian: I’d have to push back on your arguments. Students on campus get most heated about race and students have indicated most discontent with race issues on campus.

s. Alton: I find it problematic that when I think of “social justice” I’m usually only thinking about race.

t. Mari: I think that Alton raises a great point- we need to take into account that many more types of diversity other than race do exist. As we focus on specific outcomes for these recommendations, we need to think about other types of diversity.

u. Mansoor: Race problems are the easiest to identify, but other problems like disability rights often fly under the radar. I’m curious as to what different measure you may try to take to break down the invisible wall hiding the other types of diversity problems.

v. Andrew Trexler: How do you want to expand the Campus Climate Log?

w. Christian: Next year there will be a person in charge of putting things in the log.

x. Andrew Trexler: Isn’t that already the job of Dean Renee?

y. Sam Ebb: Though the document doesn’t take into consideration financial boundaries, the financial boundaries are real and must be taken into consideration.

z. Christian: The order of discussion was, “in a perfect world, how would diversity work fall into place”.

aa. Kate: I just want to note that hiring more faculty may not necessarily be the solution- we could reorganize the current system or hire more student workers. Hiring student
workers could help solve some problems- more student pay, more knowledge regarding campus climate, etc.

bb. **Zach Straw Poll: Which objectives should be priorities**
   i. Item #1: 4
   ii. Item #2: 17
   iii. Item #3: 11
   iv. Item #4: 32
   v. Item #5: 11
   vi. Item #6: 6
   vii. Item #7: 24
   viii. Item #8: 12
   ix. Item #9: 3
   x. Item #10: 9
   xi. Item #11: 23

cc. Christian: There was an interesting push for the Gen-Eds. Number 6 will probably get more weight, and number 9 was emphasize in the faculty subcommittee.

5. Vote on the Social Justice Training Blog Post - **Tabled to next week**
   a. *The Social Justice Training last week happened during a closed portion of the GA meeting, however we think it would be excellent for the community to hear about the most general aspects of our experience. It would take a 2/3 majority to suspend the closed meeting and allow the blog post to be published online. Please read the attached blog post and email me with any problems, feedback or suggestions you may have to make everyone more comfortable before the vote.*

6. Minutes
   a. 2/10: Approved
   b. 2/17: Approved

7. Committee Reports

8. New Business and Announcements
   a. Gabriela: We need to get rid of the second amendment because it contradicts things within the resolution and dilutes the power.
   b. Scott: It does not contradict anything but adds to it. The Assembly did vote this in.
   c. Nicole Updegrove: Having two different audiences within the document - the preambulatory clauses and first operating clause are directed to the P & Z; later addressing CenterPlan makes it weaker. I will happily write a new resolution using operative clause number two if Planning and Zoning does accept Centerplan’s resolution.
   d. Jesse: I agree with both Scott and Nicole. It’s not contradictory but it might be
confusing.

e. Zach: I would be in favor of a resolution if P & Z makes zoning changes to direct to CenterPlan. Only clause one is useful, the rest of the document is not helpful to the P & Z. If you believe that the development shouldn’t happen, get rid of clause two. Clause two won’t be received well by Middletown.

f. Adam: We can say whatever, but we have to consider the legitimacy. If we want to be taken seriously, we have to potentially separate and not dilute the message with the amendment.

g. Scott: It is still clear that the WSA is saying with the resolution, with amendment, that the community is not in support of the development, but is still important to include the alternative (if P & Z makes the zoning changes), and to allow us to be apart of the conversation. This is the direction we should be going.

h. Adam: The developer is not stupid. Once it is there, it will be. The shops that are going to be there will have impact.

i. Gabriela: It is clear that the WSA is not for the development, but it makes this resolution weaker with amendment. We need to consider seriously the comments of State Senator Matt Lesser who was on the P & Z and a Wesleyan grad that thinks that we need to remove the amendment.

   i. Jesse: Can you expand on his reasoning?
   ii. Gabriella: This resolution is meant for P & Z and the amendment not for P & Z so it is useless. If the zoning proposal goes through, then we can tell CenterPlan to include all stakeholders.

j. Jake straw poll: All in favor of removing the Amendment.

   i. Yes: 21
   ii. No: 3
   iii. Abstain: 6

k. Grant: Motion to close debate and bring the previous question to the floor.

   i. Yea: 22
   ii. No: 6

l. Introduction of Resolution 9.34. Sponsor: Nicole Updegrove

   i. Arya: I morally agree with this resolution, but I am adamantly against this because Neon Deli is a more convenient location to buy cigarettes. Smoking is not as big of a problem compared to drinking. It is a student’s right. We should not tell a business what to do.

   ii. Grant: There were 435,000 smoking deaths in 2000 versus 85,000 drinking deaths. Smoking causes more deaths than HIV, illegal drug use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined.
iii. Nicole Brenner: I am against this because I do not know if this is our place to pass such a resolution. It is one of the aspects of the business at Neon Deli, and I do not know if it is fair to attack their business in such a way.

iv. Jake: I am for this resolution because we have the right as this is a Wesleyan-owned building. There are other establishments close to get cigarettes.

v. Scott: It is interesting that we are now regulating what a business can do. We should consult the student body. Not our place.

vi. Andrew Trexler: The Assembly has the right to assert the opinions of not only the student body but also the Assembly itself.

vii. Adam: Cigarette access or taxes disproportionately attack the poor. Why are we telling the rest of the Wesleyan community what they can and cannot do. Not a good idea.

viii. Zach: Props to proposing this resolution. I am still curious to why this has been proposed. Who has been consulted?

ix. Nicole Updegrove: This was originally written because of Alcohol Edu data, as after six weeks of being at Wesleyan, 15% of freshmen have smoked in the past two weeks - up from 10% prior to those six weeks. Student - and community - health is an important priority for the University. It is not that much farther to get to another store to buy cigarettes if you’re committed to it - but access makes cigarettes tempting for students who haven’t yet started the habit. Overall, though - we as a university should not be profiting as an institution from something that is hurting community health.

x. Jesse: We are arbitrarily taking business away from one to another business. Also, people who start smoking after 18 are less likely to get addicted than before 18.

xi. Sam Usdan: We cannot directly compare this to CenterPlan because we do own this property. There are certain concessions that must go with this for Neon Deli. The fact that this is damaging to student health it is in the university's best interest to curb that as much as possible.

xii. Alton: This is not preventing people from being able to smoke on campus, but as Nicole said, makes it more difficult to obtain. You can still smoke if you want to. There is an indirect revenue for the University.

xiii. Glenn: I am against cigarette smoking, but Wesleyan should not be restricting things that are part of reality and that constricts rights.

xiv. Jake: This resolution has nothing to do with the right to smoke, but it is just the university saying that they do not support smoking. The university should not be
involved with that sort of business.

Nicole: In response the idea that the resolution is paternalistic - this resolution is directed to Wesleyan. It is advising the university on how to rent property. We have a plastic water bottle ban—we do not tell students they cannot have water bottles, but we don’t sell them. We used to sell cigarettes at WeShop, and you could buy them with points. That’s unbelievable. It’s my hope that the idea that Wesleyan rented to a store that sells cigarettes to our population will also seem unbelievable some day. One of the Neon Deli owners once said to me that she found smoking deplorable (and she made some pretty negative stereotyping comments about smokers), but although they don’t support smoking they profit off of it. Is that an attitude we want to support?

Andrew Trexler: I have more data. By reducing the ease of access, you do actually reduce the rate of incidence.

Adam: When do we decide to ban soft drinks then? Where does it stop?

Sam Usdan: Neon Deli does not serve alcohol, the university takes a hard stance on that. Why should cigarettes be any different? Soft drinks are different.

1. Trex: No business can sell liquor from that building Neon Deli is housed in.

Kate Cullen: What would be the next step if this was passed? What does the administration think?

1. Nicole Updegrove: Dean Mike and Nate Peters seemed to be supportive and said that it is doable. When the lease is up with Neon Deli, this could be written into it.

2. Mari: When is the lease up?

3. Nicole Updegrove: We will know soon.

Motion to close Stack

1. Passes

Scott: The argument that Adam refers to is that we can find arguments that say other things are also bad, what are trying to accomplish? We are just forcing one individual business to sacrifice profit to another business. This is a bad precedence.

Mansoor: I conditionally support this, but for a different reason—I support it because the university can still be cautious of where its money income is coming from. We should also trust Wesleyan students more about their decisions. A larger problem is why students start smoking cigarettes, maybe because of the stress in college. It is possible they choose a cigarette over another form of
stress management. Trust them more.

xxiii. Christian: I am currently against the resolution but what could sway me is an understanding of causality. Is the increase of smokers all coming from Neon Deli? This seems like we are saying we don’t want smoking, and this is a wrong target.

xxiv. Jake: For me, the most important point is not about how we feel about smoking, but how we take indirect profits from smoking. Smoking has been something the university has dealt with before. I support Gasman as an institution. They’re great.

xxv. Jason: I do not think that this resolution will spawn “a Bloomberg style soda ban.” Substances like these are not the issue. The clause that says that assert the students can use the substances they want renders the argument about rights and paternalism moot. This is a matter of respecting other people. Respect the air.

xxvi. Sam: What is interesting how many students have bought a cigarette? Is buying going to affect something?

xxvii. Andrew Trexler: We passed the bottled water resolution last spring, which already makes a precedent. As a student, not necessarily as a representative, I would completely support a ban on smoking for the whole campus.

xxviii. Jacob: This isn’t going to cut smoking, so this is going to be useless.

xxix. Nicole Brenner: You do not buy cigarettes until you start smoking them, this is not the solution.

xxx. Zach: Please talk about other interventions.

xxxi. Alton: We’re not trying to get rid of smoking. This is about the university taking a stance against the sale of cigarettes on its property.

xxxii. Mari: I support this. We did ban the sale of soft drinks in Freeman. This is taking a stance on ethical issues. It is not far to get to Gasman. Wesleyan needs to take a stance. We need to enforce the ban of smoking near entrances or in buildings.

xxxiii. Nicole Updegrove: (You can still get bagel bites.) With all respect to some people who have spoken - this is actually not about the people around us but about the stance that the university is taking. There are other things that can be sold at Neon Deli that make higher profit margins than cigarettes, including greeting cards, makeup, and bottled water. It is hypocritical for us to have property that sells cigarettes when we are combating smoking in some classes, our housing policies, and Davison Health Center. I will find a study that says
increased access leads to increased initiation and send it to you all. As for other things we can do to combat smoking, I’m not even sure I want to do other things. This is about the university’s stance and not about combating smoking.

xxxiv. Straw poll on 9.34
   1. Yea: 13
   2. No: 10
   3. Abstain: 7

Meeting Adjourned: 10:12pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Grant Tanenbaum ‘15, Ellen Paik ‘16, Alton Wang ‘16