General Assembly Meeting: March 3, 2013

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

1. Fight song and role call
2. President Roth Discussion
   a. President Roth: I come after the Board meeting. Standard Board meeting. Highlights include MEI discussions in Campus Affairs. The Board wants to embrace implementing diversity discussions. Board retreat in fall will be talking about diversity. UR Committee presentation about Facebook, email, and Twitter usage and importance, especially in regard to the campaign. Finance Committee tentatively approves budget, set tuition—raising tuition only in sync with rate of inflation, just under 3%. Moderating tuition increases, modest increase now. Decide to change stance of tuition as such. Good conversation of the role of research at Wesleyan. Kicked off the campaign $283 million raised in the quiet phase of the campaign. Have put in double (from the past) into the endowment from campaign. By the end of the year, we will have fully endowed Center of the Humanities and College of Environment.
   b. Mickey Capper: I want to talk about hosting bans. Great spaces for different student groups on campus in fraternities and societies, but hosting ban is a punishment that does not make sense, inhibits student activity. Other punishments may be possible but not a ban on events. Hosting bans are an arbitrary ban that hurts student groups that want to put on events. Unfair for Residential Life to do this.
      i. President Roth: I don’t really know much about this. This is more for Mike Whaley. I will try to find out.
      ii. Jake Blumenthal: We are working on this.
   c. Zach Malter: Question from the community, who attended the Planning and Zoning meeting. Does Wesleyan still plan to withdraw from selling its property on Wash St.?
      i. President Roth: We have no plans right now to enter anything with CenterPlan. We don’t mean to align ourselves with any faction. Preserving the neighborhood is a priority.
   d. Arya: With Wash St., discussion on greek life—has there been any changes on the approach to greek life? The greek societies that don’t have access to houses? Your opinions of no new greek life?

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i. President Roth: My opinion hasn’t changed. We make sure all societies and fraternities operate under a standard set of rules.

e. Sam Usdan: The cost of running the University is above the rate of inflation but the tuition increase is going to be at the rate of inflation—how is the gap going to be covered?
   i. President Roth: Through efficiency and fundraising. Find more ways to waste less money and be productive, such as finding energy savings. We want a balanced budget but it is crucial in the long run to build the endowment now to aid the operating budget.

f. Anwar Batte: So are we still selling the property on Wash St.?
   i. President Roth: We are contractually bound to sell right now, but in discussion to not do so.

g. Jesse Ross-Silverman: Last time we talked about need blind, you said it is the responsibility of those we care about the issue to take charge of the issue. Does your administration plan to look into the effects of being need aware on socioeconomic diversity and the budget?
   i. President Roth: Yes, we do plan to do so. We carefully look at the conventional measures of diversity at Wesleyan, even as they have been pointed out to not necessarily be adequate. We were concerned about the effects too, but on the traditional scales, diversity in the applicant pool has been as good as they usually are. We had more financial information about applicants this time, so after the process is over we can look at those different groups and the effects of our policy. We are early on in the process right now. The financial information goes to the financial aid office and not admissions. It seems encouraging right now. We will know more after matriculation.
   ii. Zach: What about tuition and the information we can get from that?
   iii. President Roth: This body has said steep tuition would affect students, so the Board has altered their stance. A thing we will look at is if steep increases in tuition in excess of inflation is sustainable. In our peer group, we are the most expensive by far. The risk of being a price gauger is great. Getting rich people to pay should be from philanthropy and not price. We should get gifts for financial aid.

h. Mari Jarris: Two questions about admissions. We wanted to remove the financial need info from the application/work card, and what are institutional priorities in making up a class? Can we get other people to put in input on those priorities? We want more transparency.
   i. President Roth: I don’t think the first part has changed, now it is just going to be more clear. For years, I’ve wondered why there are financial aid fluctuations year-to-year. I’m not sure if there is a better way to get

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financial aid info. It should be helpful for admissions to know the general qualities that Wesleyan, even student groups, are looking for in new students. We’ve had this discussion of what we should be looking for in admissions.

ii. Mari Jarris: We want students to be able to get input in too.

iii. President Roth: Let’s do it, maybe through the WSA. It couldn’t hurt.

i. Adam: I am curious of some financial practices. Are there any other compromises, as in need blind to need aware, in our future that will come from building endowment? What about socially responsible investing?

i. President Roth: We have to be careful of how we use our resources. We still have been finding savings, which may seem like a compromise to some people. For example, cutting back on Psychology graduate program because they did not need too much more help as they had external funding for research. Something like this might have implications for other parts of the University. We are looking for things that are more affordable but are helping students. With socially responsible investing, we want to maximize returns in minimizing risk. Investment policy will not be a political statement or a representation of values largely. I don’t see that changing other than the Committee for Investor Responsibility to urge changes.

j. Sam Ebb: Faculty course load relief?

i. President Roth: We have scaled back significantly on course load relief. We cannot subsidize external work, we already have a low teaching load and generous sabbatical policy. We don’t want to cut back in sequester mode but look at specific cases.

k. Anwar Batte: Just on investment practices, such as fossil fuel divestment. There is research that investment portfolios with responsible (like clean energy) investing that can be profitable.

i. President Roth: I agree that can be successful.

l. Jason Shatz: Are there any other academic programs that will receive a focus on endowment since CHUM and COE are going to be fully endowed?

i. President Roth: Definitely. The money that would have been going there can be going elsewhere. The Center for the Study of Public Life in Albritton is an example of what we want to raise more money for. Another is the College for Film and the Moving Image. We try to steer resources to places where there is a great deal of flexibility, where seniority does not have priority, but where we can support new ideas. Shapiro Writing Center with a $3 million dollar gift.

m. Zach Malter: Are there any changes to facilities being considered? Such as repurposing facilities?

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President Roth: We have the Dean of Arts and Humanities to be working on facility issues on the arts, pressure for performance spaces. Looking at existing structures that can add more such spaces, potentially even a year from now. We are also moving books from Art Library to Olin—that area will be made into a digital design, photo, media area to get more student use. I want to create a space for entrepreneurship, a place for students to work, make stuff happen, and make stuff. We have Patricelli Center, but I want open spaces where students can go to work together on things. The reason we wanted to move the bookstore is to take that space to become something like this, but we are not doing that. We are going to look at the spaces that we already have that we can turn into such a space. We should have such a design and organizational space.

Sam Ebb: Has there been progress on the space in Olin for the Art Library to move to?

President Roth: I really don’t know. The biggest issue is just clearing a space. The books should just be accessible. Get the books there and get out of the way.

Nicole Updegrove: As we consolidate, we run out of space to store books. We do have space in Long Lane that could accommodate more infrequently used books. Are there proposals to store books there or anywhere else?

President Roth: There have been, but we aren’t going to do that now. We have to get books quickly. Most books we buy aren’t taken out. The future isn’t about storing books in boxes. It seems like a mistake to do something like that. We’ve never had the library with a strong collection in all fields. You don’t have to own all the books to have access—access is what is important. I don’t see us building storage facilities that won’t be frequented often.

Christian Hosam: Event I went to “Retention Rates of SOC.” Some have been asked to leave, what is your perspective on asking people to leave for a semester?

President Roth: It’s not that common, but it does happen. It’s a pretty small percentage. We do want to see what groups it has been affecting or are overrepresented in that. There are times where it seems like it is the wrong time for people to be in school at the time. Required resignations are pretty rare, but do happen. We do have cut-off points. Would they be better off in school or is this not the right time for them to be in school? Sometimes Wesleyan is still the best place for them. It’s a balance. We need to fix bad advising, the lack of information. It is also important to build cohorts to have people to go to to talk about these issues, not just deans, but students.
q. Grant Tanenbaum: I know we spoke at the last Board Meeting about the role of the Honor Code at Wesleyan and its effectiveness and if we should expand or diminish its place in academic life. Does your administration have a new approach or policy on this?
   
i. President Roth: There is a task force working on this, faculty and students. I have my opinions, but I’m going to wait for them. Some in the faculty have differing opinions on this. This has come up in Academic Affairs—many students say they cheat before college, Wesleyan is not immune. It will be interesting to see how it can be easier for students to do the right thing. They usually know when they are cheating.

3. Open Forum
   a. Sam Ebb: Adding to Christian’s question, C or above, professor does not have to submit unsatisfactory progress report. C - or below would require one. Anyone can petition academic leave. Have people who are unhappy talk to me.
   
i. Mari Jarris: The standard for required resignation is one year. It is automatically triggered from the criteria.
   
b. Jason Shatz: I am disappointed people did not show up to discuss research with Roth on Thursday.

4. Minutes Approved (Minute taker’s notes: Arya Alizadeh votes nay)

5. Motion to approve the blog post - Passes

6. Board Reports

7. Committee Reports

8. Resolution X.34. Sponsor: Nicole Updegrove
   a. Scott Elias: I’m wondering why there wasn’t an all campus to get feedback on this. I’ve been approached by people opposed to this. I don’t think we should force a firm to act a certain way. It’s oppressive. I would look at this differently if this could have a tangible impact on students smoking on campus. It’s not a voluntary agreement from Neon Deli to do this. It’s paternalistic.
   
i. Nicole Updegrove: The resolution has not been fully covered by Wesleying yet, so we didn’t send a survey. But an all-campus may not be productive - no one wants a tyranny of the majority.
   
b. Mansoor: Last week it didn’t seem to be geared against Neon Deli in particular, but information today seemed to be geared to Neon Deli.
   
i. Chloe: It was specific to clarify to the campus.
   
ii. Mansoor: Is there a way to remove Neon Deli specifically from this resolution?
   
c. Alex Rachlin: Is there a statistic on the profits from the sale of cigarettes? And we should include Neon Deli because it is a prime spot for this. Singling it out may be necessary as an example.
   
d. Nicki Softness: Not renewing the Club Liquor isn’t comparable. I’m against this.

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e. Arya: I just want to point out that they used to sell cigarettes in WeShop—that was pulled as a demand from parents and alumni. It was an unpopular decision. Cigarettes and alcohol used to be accessible on our points system.

f. Christian Hosam: We can take an ethical stance on an issue. There is a lot of talk about the administration’s ideals, it can be a bit vague. We should have a gauge of where the administration is first.

g. Adam: There is a difference between school’s meal plan and Neon Deli. New smokers are a problem, but this does nothing to attack that. I question the effect of this. We are not really making that much money from this. This goes against the wishes of the student body.

h. Andrew Trexler: I question the statement that this goes against the wishes of the student body. I do not think that the precedence is the Club Liquor removal, but it is the bottle water ban. Propose a friendly amendment to include that the WSA passed a resolution on the ban of water bottles. This idea came from administration, they need expressed student support.

i. Jake: I disagree that those who buy cigarettes are already addicted. I don’t view this as stopping students from smoking. People who aren’t addicted but may still buy. We are focused on Neon Deli, but we should see if we should support the values of this in terms of the University.

j. Scott: I don’t think the water bottle resolution is a good example, it was already happening when we passed the resolution. This is different. The biggest issue shouldn’t be indirectly profiting from this. Is this the most pressing issue? What about clothes from child labor? This resolution could only accomplished is redistributing income from one business to another.

k. Nicki: This would be a terrible PR choice. We are adults. I am against smoking, but this is inappropriate.

l. Alex Rachlin: It’s important to consider alumni, but this is primarily a student issue. Can we send out a survey? A lot of what we are talking about are assuming what students are thinking.

m. Syed Ali: This isn’t banning smoking. The resolution is specific in not saying that. We need to break out of thinking about PR. We should be getting input. I want to fight against the idea that because this isn’t a big issue, so we should ignore it. I don’t want to ban smoking on campus, each person has the right to it, but it is a concern that the University has some revenue from this. This can be an avenue to make bigger changes.

n. Lily Donahue: I propose an amendment to the same clause Trexler amended, to specify that the water bottle ban also applies to Wesleyan-owned properties, not just campus.

o. Andrew Trexler: I disagree vociferously with Scott’s points that the water bottle ban is symbolic. I have doubts that anything would have gone into effect without

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the WSA resolution, as principal sponsor. I urge everyone to read the comments on Wesleying and Argus. I will motion to table this until next meeting to get the campus input.

i. Scott: I wasn’t saying that it was symbolic.

p. Jake: I do not think this is about banning cigarettes. This is about the university taking profits from the tobacco industry. We aren’t enforcing high school paternalism. There is no reason to not consider this resolution. I do not understand why you refer to “exploitative.”

i. Scott: Any contract can be exploitive, but by mandating what a firm can or cannot sell is exploitative.

q. Nicole Updegrove: I will support the motion to postpone this vote. I also do not know how I will vote—I brought the idea forward because I wanted to discuss it. This isn’t by any means my biggest priority, but this is something we are talking about now - if you have a bigger priority, bring it up. For the record, talking about shifting profits from one firm to another also applies to divesting from fossil fuels - it shifts the profits from us to other, less ethically-oriented universities. On the PR note, Neon Deli asserts on their website that they are on-campus, and if we are allowing the sale of cigarettes on campus, it means something. The only good argument I’ve heard against the resolution so far is that Neon Deli will suffer financially. But, they have been turned down from getting into Middletown Cash in part because of their sale of cigarettes, which is why I support easing the barriers to entry into that system for them.

r. Christian Hosam: Motion to close stack and table the vote: Passed.

s. Christian Hosam: I am still on the fence on this resolution. We should not focus on the PR piece of this, but that the administration does not want to take the lead.

t. Jesse: What Jake said goes to show how confused ideologically this discussion is. We are not divesting from tobacco companies, we are also not profiting from them, in my opinion. This does not address our investment practices. That this is not about student health is sort of true and not true as well. The reasoning in the resolution isn’t ideologically consistent.

u. Scott: I keep using the word “exploitative” because Neon Deli is not here in this discussion. We have not engaged them. It is exploitative without them here.

v. Adam: One solution to the cigarette profits is also selling the property to Neon.

w. Andrew Trexler: The barrier to Neon Deli going onto Middletown Cash is that they do sell cigarettes. Pointing to the gun control debate, how the access to guns contribute to homicides.

x. Angus Mclean: On the matter to personal liberty, it only is walking a few more blocks, not affecting our rights. By indirectly making money, that is tacit consent.

y. Mansoor: An appropriate route I want to see this to take is to see how freshmen cope with stress. I’m interested in that.

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z. Jake: This resolution is not specifically not about Neon Deli. It is about all lease agreements. Think about the general principles we are supporting.

aa. Andrew Trexler: We have the right to do this, it is in our constitution.

bb. Charlie: I want to question that this is in line with the school’s ideology. Diversity of lifestyle choice is important. Personal choices are important. There are some benefits people have from cigarettes. The reasoning behind the water bottle ban is different from this. Second hand smoke is a different story.

cc. Nicole Updegrove: It isn’t that the university doesn’t want to take a lead, but they want to hear what the student body wants. There is a difference between permitting and promoting - we permit smoking, but I argue that we shouldn’t promote it by tacitly supporting it.

9. New Business and Announcements
   a. Straw Poll on 9.34 - Neon Deli Resolution:
      i. 11 Yeas
      ii. 15 Nays
      iii. 8 Abstentions

Meeting Adjourned: 10:10pm

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