General Assembly Meeting: November 3rd, 2013

Keywords: Chair/Vice Chair of Faculty, Chief Diversity Officer discussion, discussion on efficiency/productivity of GA, alcohol discussion (Alcohol Edu), Art Library discussion

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

1. Fight song and role call
2. Open Forum
   a. Jason Shatz: This week was great in terms of school spirit. It’s been great and I would like for that to continue. We’ve been rising in sports, but don’t worry, we’re not Penn State.
3. Chair and Vice Chair of the Faculty
   a. Chair of the Faculty, Andrew Szegedy-Maszak (referred to as “Chair”) from the Classics Department, and Vice Chair of the Faculty, Laura Grabel (referred to as “Vice Chair”) from the Biology Department, join us for this part of GA.
   b. Professor Szegedy-Maszak: I’m here to hear your thoughts. We want to talk with you about what you think faculty should be talking about. What makes a residential college special? And how do we orient ourselves with MOOCs? What is it about Wesleyan we have to develop and what direction should we go? There are certain things that we have to think about when we’re discussing a residential college and what’s happening you all when you’re outside of class. The faculty and administration is increasingly concerned with student life.
   c. Grant Tanenbaum: We’ve talked about this before, but I’m curious about your ideas for how students can enhance their relationship with professors outside of the classroom?
   d. Chair: There was more interaction partly because the student body was much smaller. Social situation was different with faculty and student body. There is talk of having living quarters for faculty in dorms. We have hope there is more informal way of having conversations with students. Do you all have ideas for more informal student and faculty interaction? What about the DFC vouchers program where faculty meet with students and dine with them?
   e. Grant Tanenbaum: I think that type of academic cohort building seen in CSS, COE, and COL has been very effective at enhancing student-to-student and professor-to-student relationships.
f. Andrew Trexler: Take of advantage of the opportunity you have to speak directly to the Chair and Vice Chair.

g. Nicole Updegrove: It would be helpful if you could explain your responsibilities as Chair and Vice Chair of the Faculty.

h. Chair: We are in charge of managing the flow of faculty governance, making sure we stay in touch with and get reports from all of the major committees. We’re trying to figure out how to assess faculty and their actions. We’re in constant communication with the provost and the Faculty Executive Committee.

i. Kate Cullen: Last year I took a class with professor Miller. At the end of the semester she invited us over to her apartment for a potluck. It was a great experience to see that a faculty was interested in my academics.

j. Chair: I think it’s a really interesting idea, and though transportation might be an issue, I think we could definitely work on that. Wesleyan used to have a fund for professors to spend money on out-of-classroom activities with their students, and we can see if we can bring that back in some form in the future.

k. Jason Shatz: I was in a first year seminar. The first year seminar could be expanded. Students should understand that faculty are here to encourage scholarship.

l. Nicki Softness: I would be really interested in exploring the idea of student-teacher forums. In my high school, we’d take courses during a “short term” where we’d take course offerings not offered by the school. I think this is definitely an idea to think about. It’s important to remember that professors are people outside of class, and it’s great to find similar interests not just inside of the classroom. I think forums are an interesting way to start, and there’s a lot of potential there.

m. Chair: Faculty do have serious interests outside the classroom. Do you think this would be popular with students? We have to keep in mind that students and professors are crunched for time.

n. Key Session: I think knowing that my advisor is also one of my professor makes knowing her both in and out of the classroom is important and different, and it’s really meaningful.

o. Chair: A lot of what I’m hearing is students want a more informal relationship with professors.

p. Lily Herman: Have different professors who have similar interests connect with different students to foster valuable relationships.

q. Lizzie Shackney: As a first year student, I was expecting my faculty advisor to have a bigger role in my life here, and personally, I’d like to have seen an expansion in the faculty advisor role. Just having that constant person when needed would be nice.

r. Chair: We don’t want to intrude and make you feel like we’re monitoring your behavior. You have to forge your own identity and we don’t want to intrude. There has to be a balance for faculty where we can check in and not be too intrusive. Personally I like to
check in by email.
s. Vice Chair: Some people vary a ton in terms of what they want from a first year advisor. Some people want a total hands on experience, and others just want a signature. There can be some sort of balance that we have to find.
t. Justin Gitlin: I just wanted to talk about the lunch system in place. The issue I had with that vouchers program is that some of my professors didn’t seem that genuinely interested, but the problem is that it’s not really the professors’ fault when that happens.
u. Chair: We don’t want to intrude and you feel that we’re too distant. I don’t know what to do so one can eliminate that.
v. Ellen Paik: Just a cool anecdote about faculty advisor and student relations. My dad went to Wesleyan and he’s still really close with this advisor. Two experiences I had that I really enjoyed were the Sociology and Economics Open Houses. I just think it was really cool to have those departmental meetings. And as we all know, students love free food, so that might be more conducive to more conversation. So I definitely think working within department could be really, really helpful.
w. Chair: We had about 40 students at Classics open house—we provided Typhoon.
x. Sadasia McCutchen: I was just going to say that I’ve been to the DFC with some of my professors, but I think just the idea of going to a place where all of the faculty and deans eat is somewhat intimidating. Also, when professors have their office hours, I prefer when my professors say, “Email me when you want to meet,” because it can be so hard to meet during open office hours. I personally love meeting deans and love meeting professors.
y. Vice Chair: We’re hoping to focus more on post-college relationships with alumni and other resources. Specifically, we’re looking at teleconferences. Do you have any topics that you’d be interested in besides banking, acting, or finance. What else do you guys want? (Answers from various WSA members: Start ups, government, non-profit work, banking, law, etc.).
z. Chair: One of the things you do get from a residential college is the networking.
aa. Grant Tanenbaum: You’ve heard us talking about student-faculty interaction, and I think there has been some strong consensus on the student side, but I was wondering what the general mood has been from faculty on this issue?
bb. Vice Chair: Some faculty are stressed, some are fine with it. I think we can expect it from many faculty but not from all.
cc. Aidan Martinez: I have a suggestion for the advisor situation, where we give students an option to voice what kind of relationship they want with their advisors.
dd. Izzy Linzer: I had a professor who overcame the miscommunication with professors and students by requiring us to come in and talk to him for fifteen minutes, and it was a lot less pressure than lunch. But this concept actually ended up having great results, and because it was enforced so early in the year, I was able to build a relationship with your
Richard Fessler: I didn’t have a great experience with first year advisor. Could we possibly add a rating system to first year advising system where it affects tenure?

Chair: We just talked about this with the provost, and we honestly have no idea what to do about that.

Vice Chair: It’s not a bad idea but it would be difficult to do.

Chair: What you’re not aware of is that for professors, the pressure to make their mark in their subdiscipline is so enormous now, and that takes the form of publication. We like to think of ourselves as embracing and enforcing the teacher-scholar model, but particularly for our junior colleagues, they feel under the gun to get scholarship out.

Jason Shatz: You actually raise some great points about what the faculty go through. One thing you mentioned is that students may be stressed because of other things. Where do you see the line being drawn? To what extent do you think it should be specialized?

Chair: I don’t think it should be that specialized. I have found that you guys get embarrassed when having some type of problem. Don’t hide and stay ashamed of yourself. We have many resources to provide assistance, but we can’t help if you don’t come to us.

Vice Chair: We do work very hard with class deans and other professors to try to keep track of how our students are doing. We don’t always have the expertise outside of that area. That’s just not consistent across the board between professors.

Victor Zhao: I think there can be more transparency as to how first year students get matched with their advisors, because plenty of people are paired with faculty members in a department that they have no interest in.

Vice Chair: The issue of matching an advisor in your area of interest is that some areas are more popular than others. We may have faculty who have less students interested in their field, but they still need to advise. Faculty are trained to know about various department so that they can at least point you in the right direction.

Chris Caines: I just want to go back to what Aidan said a couple minutes ago. I’m the RA for the Residential College hall this year, and I really feel like our faculty advisor has done a great job of having planned meetings with the students. The students who decided to do it self-selected. In terms of expanding that out to other faculty, you’d get more students who’d want that experience as well.

Kate Cullen: I’ve been involved in discussion regarding the retention of faculty of color. Some students have expressed they think this should be a factor when considering faculty for tenure.

Chair: This an issue that’s been talked about, but that’s doesn’t mean it’s been talked about enough.

Chair: The retention issue is created by places like Columbia and Harvard, and it’s
tough to retain a faculty member of color. We see the problem, and we’re constantly trying to address it.

rr. Victor Zhao: This year during Orientation, a faculty member led a group in community service project. I think this is an area we could expand.

ss. Amarachi Asonye: Going back to Sadasia’s comment about student-professor interaction. I have a suggestion: What about going off-campus? Last year, I went off-campus with a group of students and our professor, and it was really nice just to see him in a different light off campus. Everyone felt free enough to talk about life and not just academics.

tt. Nicole Updegrove: In terms of tenure, is it ever taken into account if students write letters on behalf of professors? Some students have very strong opinions on who should be here and it’s sometimes difficult to express that in a teaching evaluation.

uu. Chair: Laura (Vice Chair) and I are battle-hardened veterans of the tenure advisory committee, and they do consider those sorts of letters. The problem is what happens when some people write letters in favor of professors and others who don’t. One of the places they actually play a significant role is in other aspects of student life.

vv. Vice Chair: They are read very seriously and taken into account.

ww. Jason Shatz: I wanted to talk about the balance between online courses and the residential college model. If you go online, you lose the environment of a residential college. Furthermore, you lose access to some of the resources that you might need. Do you see digitalization of courses a significant trend?

xx. Vice Chair: Yes, there are digitization efforts. But there are other parts of campus that will always be residential, like the natural sciences.

yy. Chair: I think online courses and electronic resources can be quite useful in other respects. I don’t see it replacing actual colleges and real college courses.

zz. Mika Reyes: I signed up for the connections program. It was nice because I had an informal lunch with the person. I think this could be expanded with the faculty because it’s more personal and outside of the classroom.

aaa. Martin Malabanan: I just wanted to know if the financial situation of Wesleyan affected tenure and promotions?

bbb. Chair: Not at all. There has never been any pressure from the administration and Board of Trustees to change our policies or put a tenure cap.

4. Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) Discussion

   a. Christian Hosam ‘15 has joined the conversation to lead a discussion about the new Chief Diversity Officer and his roles as he starts his position tomorrow (Monday, November 4, 2013). Hosam served on the WSA for two years and chaired the first ever Committee for Inclusion and Diversity last year in addition to being the Dwight Greene Intern for Inclusion and Diversity.

   b. Christian: I wanted to talk with all of you about what you think the new CDO’s role
should be. His role has shifted and become narrowed. If you have any thoughts or perspectives, please let me know.

c. Jason Shatz: The response to the departure of the past CDO was skepticism and sadness. What were some of the positive and not so positive things that come with taking the position?

d. Christian Hosam: The positive things were that she was responsible for connecting people, like students and alumni. However, I think what was going on is that there were plenty of people who were leaving who didn’t want to do that work. However, that office seemed to be consistently shrinking.

e. Nicole Updegrove: I looked up the actual position description. I’ll read out a couple of those (some of these include tackling diversity issues, Title IX, etc.). The difficulty of these position is that they oversee so many things.

f. Christian Hosam: The first couple of weeks he will be attending meetings to get a feel of what Wesleyan is all about. John Meers said they were going to give him some time to figure out his goals. I think we need more people to fulfill this position.

g. Kate Cullen: I’m going to read off the list of questions I asked about the new CDO? What should Dean Farias know about Wesleyan students? He should know that we’re smart and have a lot of opinions. However, if you connect to people the right way, they all have something to say about these issues. As far as where student needs more support, identity months are definitely one of those.

h. Nicki Softness: I think an interesting thing to address is setting up a more supportive system for students. Expand the network between students and faculty from different departments.

i. Mary Diaz: First, I think that the CDO really gets to know the climate here and the students, whether that be hosting a panel or going to clubs or making himself available to students. I also think he needs to know how sexual assault is a huge problem here and that he needs to work on it. I think he also needs to help with recruiting faculty of color and providing support for first generation college students as well.

j. Justin Gitlin: Dean Farias needs to know that we are a very negative negative campus. Students will be vocal in their lack of support, but he should not let the culture affect him too much.

k. Jason Shatz: I think he should help the campus try to temper that culture into one of skepticism rather than tailoring down that culture. If we want to be a truly progressive institution, we should try to help him help us create a better environment and sustain it.

l. Christian Hosam: What do you think the office has been and what it should do?

m. Lily Herman: One thing that was lacking this year was that it was tapping into the same ten students. This is a chance to bring in the opinion of more students to change the culture of campus.

n. Ellen Paik: One of the suggestions I have is to have the new CDO come into a GA and
talk to us. I also think it’d be really cool to facilitate a conversation between student and their faculty advisors in terms of diversity/identity issues.

o. Jacob: Freshman, this is an opportunity to express what you think the person in this position should accomplish.

p. Grant Tanenbaum: I hope that the incoming dean prioritizes being a proactive administrator. Not just becoming active after an incident, but really embedding himself as a member of the community.

q. Kate Cullen: I think the office should oversee that the president’s cabinet is focusing and aware of diversity issues.

r. Sadasia McCutchen: I think he definitely needs to be aware of the fact that the school prides itself on social change and progressive change. But I think we are really far removed from that, and not everyone understands what diversity means and what the goal of diversity is. I think everyone needs to be on the same page about that, and we need to think about what changes need to be made to institute true diversity. I think the CDO has to realize that he has a lot of work to do, and he’ll become a lot of different things to other people.

s. Chris Caines: I think he needs to be aware that Wesleyan is a difficult place to figure out. His position will be different compared to his position at the Coast Guard Academy.

t. Christian Hosam: I wanted to talk about something Sadasia just said, which we need to address, and it’s that a lot of students will look up to this person. The CDO typically becomes a whole slew of other roles to students, especially students of color.

u. Patrick Keogh: He should know that Wesleyan students can get very polarized on various issues. Wesleyan students have very divergent opinions.

v. Nicole Updegrove: I was curious as to what you guys thought we could do as the WSA to make the transition go more smoothly?

w. Sadasia McCutchen: We should meet with him and talk to him as a student assembly. People at Wesleyan are very opinionated and problems arise when students aren’t receptive to other opinions. Dean Farias should know that he will encounter these people.

x. Aidan Martinez: I would definitely recommend that for maybe a couple weeks he sit back and try to listen to what students have to say so students can give him our ideas, like through office hours. He’s come from a very different place, so I feel like he needs to be immersed in our culture before he does anything so that he understands the implications of what he’ll do in the future. If he communicates that he wants to be a part of our lives, it will be extremely productive.

y. Christian Hosam: Dean Farias went to a liberal arts institution and worked at a liberal arts school prior to working at the Coast Guard Academy. He is very excited to return to a liberal arts school.
z. Ellen Paik: I think it’d be really cool for him to meet with all the identity groups on
campus and give them the opportunity to talk to him about the characteristics of that
identity group. Another thing that might be important for him to know is that there are a
lot of gender issues to know about at Wes. He might not know that coming from the
Coast Guard, where there are huge gender gaps.

aa. Andrew Trexler: I attended a conference where I was able to interview various
members of the service. The purpose of this conference was to show that members of
the service are not very different from each other. The fact that he was working at the
Coast Guard Academy is of no concern to me.

bb. Christian Hosam: I think Ellen’s point is still important. One thing I would also note that
in his work, Antonio had to deal with the end of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, which meant he
had to enact lots of policy surrounding that.

c. Chris Caines: He should be very visible during his first weeks here. I never heard much
of Sonia until she left. He should interact with students on a very personal level.

dd. Amarachi Asonye: I think he should read the student publications like Wesleying and the
Argus, and that’ll happen catch up on students news and student culture.

ee. Kate Cullen: Mary, to address your question, I met with him on his visit to Wesleyan.
He was very interested in learning more about students and getting to the roots of issues
with students.

5. Minutes: APPROVED.

6. Committee Reports
   a. Amarachi Asonye: I went to one of the forums, and I felt like the people who should be
there weren’t there, and it was just one group talking about their opinion and how
they're treated. What initiatives are we taking to be productive with this discussion?

   b. Nicole Updegrove: That’s something we always have trouble with at Wesleyan. I plan
to publish a report on these privilege talks. These talks are more specifically to talk
about problems than to think of solutions. If you have ideas on that, that’d be really
helpful.

   c. Kate Cullen: What is the timeline on the changes to SciLi?

   d. Grant Tanenbaum: We’re trying to accomplish all this by the end of the winter break.

   e. Lily Herman: Are you able to tell us the changes to admission to the American Studies
Major?

   f. Grant Tanenbaum: Yes, and I can tell you later.

   g. Mary Diaz: Why are you doing research on STI testing?

   h. Kate Cullen: We were just wondering what we could do to get free STI testing since
many of our peer institutions do.

   i. Kate Cullen: What’s going on with bathroom gendering signs?

   j. Justin Gitlin: It’s a huge burden for the Usdan workers, and there needs to be some sort
of action.
k. Scott: Wesleyan is hosting a forum on the gendering of bathrooms at the same day as the light tour.

7. GA Discussion
   a. MEETING CLOSED.
   b. MEETING RE-OPENED.

8. Alcohol Discussion/Alcohol Edu
   a. Kate Cullen: I sit on the Alcohol and Other Drugs Committee, and one of the things we talked about this past week was Alcohol Edu. I’m going to talk about what the administration wants to do. The administration wants to change the program since our contract with them is up. There’s a new platform called My Student Body that’s similar but also different in that there are fewer videos, it’s shorter, and it’s more straightforward. It’s more customized and personal. Furthermore, Elisa Cardona wants to make UCAB programs more productive and successful.
   b. Bruno Machiavelo: Would there be a quiz? Online things aren’t the best. People google answers and watch TV. It would be better to do an in person thing. I also wanted to ask what happened with Tour de Franzia?
   c. Kate Cullen: Administrators were all on campus writing up students for Tour de Franzia and are bringing judicial sanctions against them.
   d. Grant Tanenbaum: Administration should consider the programing that they support. University should look strongly at consolidating all the funding and examining what students really want to do.
   e. Mary Diaz: As far as UCAB stuff, a survey should be sent out to students to poll ideas and feelings in that area. As for the UCAB music thing, I just feel like not that many students would be interested in that.
   f. Kate Cullen: Elisa mentioned having student bands perform at the art library.
   g. Chris Caines: Right now on ResLife, RAs only have $120 to spend on programs, and I think giving some of UCAB’s money to ResLife or restructuring it, that’d be more efficient and productive.
   h. Andrew Trexler: Saturday nights are the ones that matter from an alcohol policy.
   i. Kate Cullen: Elisa said that Friday and Saturday nights were not very successful with programming.
   j. Patrick Keogh: I have some thoughts on Alcohol Edu. I think it would be productive if it focused more on reacting on certain scenarios. I think if it were more Wesleyan-specific, that’d be more productive.
   k. Jason Shatz: Thursday nights might be more attractive for UCAB, but it has a more organizational problem that needs to be addressed. Moving programming location could disperse alcoholic activity away from fountain.

9. Art Library Discussion
   a. Nicole Brenner: So the art library is being moved from the CFA, and I’m on the
committee to decide where the art library collection would fit best. The committee is really curious about student opinion, and I’m going to show you the three options we have right now. Currently, the committee believes best plan to push for is putting the art library collection in the Level 3/3A floors of Olin.

b. Kate Cullen: Some friends that work in the art library expressed concern with books that don’t have very appropriate material. Also, what is going to happen with common study space for the art library.

c. Nicole Brenner: All three of the proposed plans have a specified “closed stack” area for these materials. There will also be study spaces in all of these new spaces, including larger tables for oversized books and group work, as opposed to the smaller, more private single study carrels.

d. Chris Caines: What kind of noise level is there at the art library? Olin 3A is a totally quiet space, so I know students who student there wouldn’t want things to change were the art library to move there.

e. Nicole Brenner: I don’t personally know much about noise levels in the art library, but there would not be study spaces added to 3A. The tables and chairs would be added to the 3rd floor in Scenario A, or to the 2nd floor in Scenario B.

f. Ellen Paik: There are closed off study spaces on the third floor of Olin. Maybe students using art library can study there. It makes sense to keep all the material together, so the first plan works best.

g. Amarachi Asonye: Why are we moving the art library again?

h. Grant Tanenbaum: There are a bunch of reasons. The building is falling apart and there’s not enough suitable space for the works being housed there. In addition, not many students use it.

i. **Straw Poll: Which floor plan option are you in favor of?**
   
   i. **Option A:** 24 in favor.
   
   ii. **Option B:** 0 in favor.
   
   iii. **Option C:** 1 in favor.
   
   iv. **Option D:** 4 undecided on where art library should go.

j. Justin Gitlin: What are we working with in costs?

k. Nicole Brenner: We don’t exactly know what budget we’re working with.

10. New Business and Announcements

Meeting Adjourned: 9:50pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Lily Herman ’16 and Julio Angel ’16