



Student Government Association
General Meeting
Tuesday, October 15th, 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: Joseph Bonilla, Justin Wald, Sarah Harrington, Austin Morgan, Jacob Constant, Lorraine Fernandez, Elizabeth Mercer, Daniel Currier, Ethan Haynes, Nicholas Palumbo, Isabella Moniz, Anderson Dallaire, William Connor, Travis McLoughlin, Rachel Luo, Stella Greenberg, Aiden Luciano, Ben Janes, Jakob Traynor, Thomas McLaughlin, Cody Hoisington, Sophia Rebenciuc, Melissa Kuzmeski, Ethan Mallinson, Irini Mahida, Dominic Zajko, Ezekiel Tamarkin, Akile Phakos, Puru Sharma, Christopher Lannan, Troyelle Nosal, Laura Terry, Benny Rosas, Mariza Monterio

Members Excused: Emma Bowes, Sicilia Campbell, Brenna Guiliani

Members Absent:

Also, present and participating was SGA Advisor Ryan Meersman.

President Joseph Bonilla 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: President Joseph Bonilla asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 8th, 2024, general meeting. There was no discussion, **VOICE VOTE** passed unanimously.

President's Report: **Joseph Bonilla**

MOTION made by Joseph Bonilla, seconded by Christopher Lannan, to appoint Mariza Monteiro as a New Hall Representative.

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

MOTION made by Joseph Bonilla, seconded by Daniel Currier, to appoint Laura Terry as a University Hall Representative.

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

MOTION made by Joseph Bonilla, seconded by Daniel Currier, to appoint Benny Rosas as a Davis Hall Representative.

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

Then finally, Joseph Bonilla appointed Sicilia Campbell, Isabella Moniz, Irini Mahida, and Nicholas Palumbo as representatives on the Special Committee on Publicity and External Relations. Joseph then went on to encourage everyone to go to the tailgate that is happening this Saturday from 10-4 and stop by the SGA tent! Next Joseph encouraged all senators to sign-up for the voter registration events happening next week!

A. University President: ***Dr. Linda Thompson***

Dr. Linda Thompson started by hoping that everyone is ready for the next few days and into the weekend as the University celebrates its 185 year of existence. Then Dr. Linda Thompson talked about the opening week events and explained that she was very happy with how everything turned out and congratulated everyone for helping make the day fun and memorable. Then congratulated and thanked Joseph Bonilla for a great speech at convocation. Dr. Linda Thompson also mentioned that new student enrollment is up by 20%. Adding to that she is very thankful to the students that shared their story with the new students and families and with her as she was incredibly moved by all of them. Dr. Linda Thompson also talked about the Strategic Plan and there should be something for her to share next time she comes down to speak with us next semester. Dr. Linda Thompson then explained how proud she is that the school was accredited by NECHE. She later explained that she needs us to find ways to bring elected officials to our campus and help her tell the story of us students about the campus.

- I. Ezekiel Tamarkin started by thanking the President for coming down to speak with us and asked if she could repeat the statistics from her speech about the enrollment rates.
 - a. Dr. Linda Thompson explained that it was a 20% increase. Then it explained that the birth rate in the country has really declined, and because of that we are trying to do more and more to want more people to come back to get an education.
- II. Christopher Lannan thanked the President and explained that this is his third year on SGA as a Representative at Large and asked about NECHE student surveys that happened freshman year and asked about the weakness that were brought up during the surveys.
 - a. Dr. Linda Thompson one of things that NECHE explained was about working on our general education program and that it has been worked on with our new curriculum for freshman this year the WISE program. Then explained the achievement gap for students of color not graduating on time with everyone else and that they are trying to close that achievement gap.
- III. Ethan Haynes asked if the 20% increase rate was just for undergraduate students or if it includes graduate students.
 - a. Dr. Linda Thompson explains that it only includes undergraduate students.
- IV. Isabella Moniz asked about the achievement gap and asked what steps they are taking to close that gap.
 - a. Dr. Linda Thompson explains that we have the CARE program and paying much more attention to students to be able to identify the problems as they come up over when it's too late. Adding that the governor is giving out \$14 million to help

with student success, then explains that our portion of the money is about \$1.4 million dollars. Adding to make sure if we are seeing something to make sure we speak up. Ending, by explaining to make sure everyone read the syllabus because it explains what is going on in the class.

- b. Isbella Moniz asked about the early detection piece and if there is if there is going to be something put in place so that the process is streamlined to make sure that they are directly connected to student support services.
 - c. Maggie Roberts explains that we do, and it is WSU360.
- V. Jason Brewster asked about if the campus' numbers are up by 20% what are they doing about students that might not have traditional views such a student that are Liberian or Conservative that might not agree with the administration, and asked how it is being worked into the upcoming strategic plan.
- a. Dr. Linda Thompson explains that because we are on a public campus it is not just because of diversity of race and ethnicity but also of thought and explains that our campus encourages diversity.
- VI. Ezekiel Tamarkin added a question about the 20% increase to enrollment and yes that is good but what is the school doing about retention and what the retention rate is.
- a. Dr. Linda Thompson explains that they are in the middle of collecting the data and will be able to provide that information next time she is down to speak with us.
- VII. Troyelle Nosal asked about the \$1.4 million in the allocated funds that we are set to receive from the government and what we are planning on using those funds to do.
- a. Dr. Linda Thompson explains that we have not received the funds yet, however it is for student success specifically and we are looking at a way to focus on the coaching and the mentoring and the best practices as well as evidence based strategies that have worked in the past to help people be successful and retain them.
- VIII. Brendan Major started by thanking the President for her time and asked about adding more graduate programs
- a. Dr. Linda Thompson explains that they are looking to add more graduate programs, some including Business, Medical related, and pre-law related.

B. Student Advisory Council: ***Daniel Currier***

Daniel Currier announced that the Student Advisory Council to the Board of Higher Education will meet on Thursday, October 17th, from 4:30pm-6:30pm via Zoom. He explained that both he, as Student Trustee, and Joseph, as SGA President, represent Westfield on this council, which includes all SGA presidents and student trustees from public institutions across the Commonwealth. The council discusses issues affecting campuses, and three members serve on the Board of Higher Education, with one being a voting member. Daniel hopes to address the issue of deferred maintenance on campuses during the meeting and aims to convey the seriousness of the situation to the Commonwealth. He will provide updates on any progress made after the meeting. He invited any questions from fellow senators.

Student Trustee Report: ***Daniel Currier***

Daniel Currier reported that he and Joseph had their monthly meeting with Dr. Thompson, joined by Melinda Phelps, the new General Counsel and Vice President for Government and Community Relations, where they discussed prioritizing deferred maintenance through a legislative breakfast aimed at showing lawmakers the need for investment in campus facilities. He mentioned that deferred maintenance would

likely be a topic in upcoming Board of Trustees meetings, which are resuming after a two-month break, with several meetings scheduled in the coming weeks. The Investments Subcommittee will meet on October 18th to review third-quarter investment returns, followed by the Audit Committee on October 21st to discuss the external financial audit. The full Board will meet on October 23rd, and Daniel encouraged senators to attend in person or watch via livestream. He also invited anyone interested in his Student Trustee position to reach out, as he is graduating soon. Daniel concluded by promoting Homecoming activities and the University's online auction, humorously mentioning that he is the highest bidder for the wine tasting experience and hoped to see everyone at Saturday's football game and tailgate.

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

Justin Wald provided a few updates. He met with Facilities and Residential Life to discuss educating students on handling urgent accessibility issues and ensuring proper report submissions through Residential Life. He also shared several upcoming events: the State of the University Address will take place tomorrow at 10 a.m. in Dever Auditorium, Parenzo. On Thursday, October 17th, Athletics is hosting a Breast Cancer Awareness Walk-a-Thon from 12-2 p.m., with free entry and raffle prizes for participants. That evening, there will be a free performance by pianist Steven Drury at 7:30 p.m. in Dever Auditorium. Friday's events include the Blue Diamond Ball at 6 p.m. at MGM Springfield and Blue Diamond Bingo at 9 p.m. in Scanlon's Loughman Livingroom with a \$5 registration fee. Saturday features several Homecoming activities, including a breakfast from 9:30-11 a.m. in the DC, Tent Tailgating from 12-5 p.m., and various events at Alumni Field, including the Sullivan Field Dedication at 12:15 p.m., Women's Soccer at 11 a.m., the Vendor Fair and Food Trucks from 12-4 p.m., and Football vs. Framingham at 2 p.m.

A. Dining Services Report: *Christopher Lannan*

Chris Lannan introduced himself as a second-semester junior studying history secondary education with a minor in political science, serving as a rep-at-large to SGA and the class of 2026 treasurer. Reporting on the Dining Services Committee, which meets bi-weekly on Fridays, he discussed the GET app issue from October 11th that prevented students from ordering at dining locations, explaining that it was a server issue affecting only students, which has since been resolved. The committee also addressed adding late-night dining to the GET app, although server problems are delaying the rollout. Chris mentioned that there will be a designated seating area before the DC register for students who order on the app but don't want to use a meal swipe to eat inside. Additional updates included omelets and stir fry being available for lunch once a week (announced via Instagram), the upcoming Apple Week, and a pumpkin smoothie at the Owl Cafe in late October. Chris also brought up concerns about long wait times at Ely Harvest, meal swipe issues with the GET app, and orders being stolen, which dining services acknowledged happens at all locations. New ideas from committee members Rachel and Cody included offering different meats like tofu or ground beef for rice bowls. Chris concluded by inviting suggestions for seasonal drinks or foods and encouraged following @westfieldstatedining on Instagram for updates.

- I. Ezekiel Tamarkin asked if there was a date for when meal swipes will be available at Owl Cafe.
 - a. Jacob Constant gave a Point of Information about that it is an issue with CBORD about how the program doesn't like the new meal plans and that Morgan has already reached out to CBORD to fix the issue however there isn't a time frame.
 - b. Ezekiel Tamarkin was readdressed and asked what CBORD is.

- c. Jacob Constant explains that is the system that our ID's use.

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

Sarah Harrington shared updates from her monthly meeting with the Provost. She discussed her draft for the Provost Advisory Board, which she hopes to pass at the next Senate meeting and mentioned working with Liz to create flyers to engage more students. The board has six open seats for undergrads, three from each school. Sarah also brought up a conversation with Joseph about professors accommodating students with learning disabilities, and the Provost plans to send an email to faculty reinforcing the importance of equal opportunities. They also discussed the need for professors to create inclusive classrooms by calling BIPOC students "in" rather than "out" during conversations about ethnic backgrounds. Sarah mentioned a per-credit student activities fee, an idea that came from Austin's discussion with VP Taksar, aimed at ensuring students taking fewer than 12 credits can participate in activities. Lastly, she provided an update on the ongoing conversation about reimagining the course schedule, including changes to common hour and break periods, with proposals still under review. Sarah ended with her song of the day, "Too Sweet" by Hozier, dedicated to President Thompson, and reminded everyone of her office hours and contact information.

Vice President's Report-Student Equity: ***Lorraine Fernandez***

Lorraine Fernandez, shared updates on her outreach efforts to various departments under the Center for Student Success and Engagement (CSSE) to better serve the diverse student body. In a meeting with Maryanisa Del Rio, Assistant Director of the LEAD Scholars Program, on October 9th, they discussed improving campus facilities, event inclusivity, and encouraging LEAD student participation in SGA through workshops. Lorraine also met with Nicole West, Director of the CARE Center, on October 15th, where they emphasized the need for better faculty training on cultural sensitivity and raising awareness about SGA activities. Tomorrow, she will meet with Justin Marques from Veterans Affairs to discuss supporting veteran students. Lorraine also mentioned her involvement with several committees, including the Interfaith Chaplains Council, Student Affairs Committee, and Campus Pride Committee, to gain deeper insights into student needs and enhance equity initiatives. She concluded by noting that she will be unavailable for office hours on October 17th due to a personal issue but can be reached via email at vpequity@westfield.ma.edu.

- I. Christopher Lannan asked about the issue of using preferred named in different areas around campus.
 - a. Joseph Bonilla gave a Point of Information and explained what Banner is to everyone. Then explained that getting your name changed in different areas that is you need to reach out to dining to get their name changed on their card, and go to the specific places that manage the different areas around campus to get their name changed in those areas.

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

No Report

- I. Joseph Bonilla asked that he knew that Austin would be out of office this week and he was asking what day it would be
 - a. Austin Morgan explains that he will be going home for a doctor's appointment. Ended with Go Birds.

Vice President's Report-Publicity: ***Elizabeth Mercer***

Elizabeth Mercer reminded everyone about Homecoming this weekend, encouraging attendance and

looking forward to taking pictures with everyone for the SGA Instagram. She closed by offering her support and complimenting everyone on their outfits.

Executive Secretary Report: **Jacob Constant**

Jacob Constant welcomed newly appointed senators and reminded them to schedule a 15-minute onboarding meeting if one has not already been set. He also shared updates on office hours, announcing that participating in the voter registration event next week for 30 minutes will count as a full office hour for the week. He mentioned that there are more initiatives in the works and encouraged senators to stay tuned. Jacob closed by inviting anyone with questions to reach out to him.

Parliamentarian Report:

A. Rules and Regulations Committee: **Ethan Haynes**

Ethan Haynes reported that the Rules and Regulations Committee met to review four club constitutions. Of these, the committee recommends passing the constitutions for the Research, Innovation, Design, and Entrepreneurial (RIDE) Club, with an 8-0-1 vote, and the Fitness Club, with a 6-0-3 vote, both pending minor edits. The constitutions for the Tennis Club and Book Club were tabled for further discussion with a unanimous 9-0-0 vote. Ethan moved to accept both the RIDE and Fitness Club constitutions, pending the suggested edits. The next Rules and Regulations Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 22nd, with the location to be determined.

- I. Joseph Bonilla asked for the next meeting if the senate could be provided with the edits.

MOTION made by Ethan Haynes seconded by Ezekiel Tamarkin, to recommend the approval of the RIDE club constitution pending minor edits.

- I. Justin Wald asked about what the I's, Nay's and Abstentions are.
- a. Ethan Haynes explained it was 8 for, 0 against, and 1 abstention for the RIDE club constitution, 6 for, 0 against, and 3 abstentions for the Fitness club.
 - b. Daniel Currier gave a Point of Information about the new amendments and wanted to make sure that the senate has a voice in the decision.

VOICE VOTE passed unanimously.

MOTION made by Ethan Haynes seconded by William Connor, recommend the approval of the Fitness club.

- I. Travis McLoughlin asked to describe the minor edits
- a. Ethan Haynes explained it was some section numbers were missing.
- There being no discussion, **VOICE VOTE** passed unanimously.

Commuter Council and Class Council Reports:

A. Commuter Council: **Sophia Rebenciuc**

Sophia Rebenciuc gave a brief introduction that she is the President of the Commuter Council.

B. Senior Class: **Nicholas Palumbo**

Nick Palumbo introduced himself to the new members, sharing that he's a Movement Science major with a concentration in Physical Education and a minor in Coaching, in addition to being a campus tour guide. He provided several updates, starting with the "100 Days" event scheduled for

February 6th from 7-9 p.m. at Westfield River Brewing Company, featuring a tropical theme, food trucks, Nestor, senior video recordings, and a signature drink. Regarding Senior Weekend, Nick mentioned that they are collecting feedback from commuters and running numbers to ensure maximum participation, with ticket sales expected to open by Thanksgiving. He also discussed a fundraiser for Class of 2025 lawn signs, which will be available by Thanksgiving, with proceeds going toward Senior Weekend expenses. Lastly, Nick invited seniors to stop by the Class of 2025 tent at Homecoming for a good time. He encouraged everyone to reach out with any questions or for more details.

- I. Sarah Harrington asked about the date and time for the 100 days.
 - a. Nicholas Palumbo explained it will be February 6th from 7-9 PM. Then explaining that there will be transportation provided.
- II. Ezekiel Tamarkin asked if there would be an email sent out with all the information.
 - a. Nicholas Palumbo explained as the date gets closer there will be emails sent out to all the seniors about the event. Also, that it will be on their Instagram.
- III. Austin Morgan asked about the seniors that will be graduating in the fall how they will know about the event.
 - a. Nicholas Palumbo explained that it will be on their Instagram, as well as editing the email list.
- IV. Joseph Bonilla asked about the seniors that are not 21 years old yet.
 - a. Nicholas Palumbo explained that they will not be able to go if they are not 21 years old yet because it is off campus and at a brewery.
- V. Christopher Lannan asked if the students that are graduating next fall be able to go?
 - a. Matt Dellea the event is for anyone that is eligible to walk at graduation as per the registrar's office.
 - b. Joseph Bonilla gave a point of information that he believes that the number is 114 credits.
 - c. Austin Morgan gave a point of information that you can petition to walk at graduation if you are under.

C. Junior Class: ***Travis McLoughlin***

Travis McLoughlin reported that the Junior Class Council met on Tuesday, October 8th, and was joined by Ryan Meersman to discuss collaboration between the Junior Class Council and Alumni Relations, as well as details regarding Homecoming and funding for senior year. The council expressed gratitude to Ryan and hopes to continue working with him. They also discussed their tailgate event, now called "The Treat Tent," which will take place during Saturday's Homecoming tailgate from 10-2, offering free brownies and chocolate chip cookies. Initially planned as a fundraiser, they decided to give away free food instead. Lastly, the council filled their second advisor position by voting to ask Maria from dining, who accepted the role.

- I. Justin Wald asked if they are making the treats or buying them.
 - a. Travis McLoughlin explained that they are buying the dough and the brownie batter from dining, but they are making the treats themselves.
- D. Freshman Class: ***Aiden Luciano***
- Aiden Luciano gave a brief introduction into himself and his role.
- I. Sarah Harrington congratulated Aiden on his first non-report report!

New Business:

Announcements:

- I. Justin Wald explained that he will be touring Lammers later this week looking at the new Furniture and the new Face Lift.
- II. Ethan Haynes explained that the mailroom still has the information packets for voter registration.
- III. Daniel Currier gave his weekly accounting and finance announcement talking about the event this Thursday. Then to go to the State of the University address tomorrow morning at 10 AM.
- IV. Sarah Harrington said that if people want to throw pie in her face go to the fall fest!
- V. Austin Morgan explained that senators should be checking their emails and responding to them in a reasonable timely manner.
- VI. Anderson Dallaire tomorrow in Courtney Hall is doing Pinktober which is a breast cancer awareness event.
- VII. Christopher Lannan election day is 3 weeks away and please make a plan to vote.
- VIII. Elizabeth Mercer asked if the members of the Special Committee on Publicity and External Relations can come to see her after the meeting.
- IX. Daniel Currier encourages all class councils to post their events on the Network.
- X. William Connor 221 days to commencement.
- XI. Mariza Monteiro mentioned that the law club is meeting tomorrow.
- XII. Benny Rosas explained that next Wednesday he is hosting an origami night in Davis Hall!

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 October 15th, 2024.

Executive Secretary Jacob Constant

Signed: _____

Date: _____