

# **Wesleyan Student Assembly Annual Mid-Year Report 2004-2005**

January 25, 2005

Dear Wesleyan Community,

The Wesleyan Student Assembly (WSA) strives to effectively communicate with our constituents, add student input to University decisions, and work to create policy that best represents student interest. While these have been the major goals of the Assembly for the past few years, we continuously undergo changes in order to be in a better position for hearing, responding to, and exercising student voice.

This report represents one of the concerted efforts the Assembly is putting forward to better communicate our work to the student body. By distributing our annual midyear report, the WSA seeks to increase transparency by informing students of projects and tasks we have completed and goals toward which we will continue to work toward. This past semester, the WSA sent out weekly emails on a consistent basis, printed agendas and meeting minutes in the Argus each week, and hosted themed conversation hours. All of these initiatives will continue, in addition to a semi-weekly WSA Argus column highlighting a specific issue on a regular basis. We welcome feedback and critique on how we can best represent students. Our weekly meetings are open to the whole campus and occur every Sunday night at 7 pm in PAC002, and our website ([www.wesleyan.edu/wsa](http://www.wesleyan.edu/wsa)) is updated on a regular basis.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Wesleyan Student Assembly  
2004-2005

### **WSA Structure and Initiatives**

The WSA's Coordinating Committee (CC) began to address issues of WSA transparency and accessibility for the student body this fall. A specific WSA liaison from the Argus helped to ensure that meeting agendas and minutes were published every week in the paper. The CC also advertised for the weekly WSA Conversations in the Campus Center with posters. The Coordinating Committee appointed two members of IPC, one member of COCo, and one member of SBC this fall in addition to appointing a WSA secretary.

The Coordinating Committee conducted a campus-wide poll on student opinion of gender-neutral housing at Wesleyan in October. This was the first opinion poll that the WSA has conducted, with a record turnout of 1,170 students. In addition to this poll, the Coordinating Committee also oversaw the winter SBC elections in December. Candidate interest and voter turnout increased this year.

The Coordinating Committee worked with the WSA webpage technician to make changes and update the WSA website with current information. Over the next semester, the Coordinating Committee will focus on more ways to inform the student body about WSA meetings, procedures, and updates. Some ideas to improve communication are class representative office hours, creating newsletters, and encouraging all students to attend WSA meetings.

### **Student Life Committee**

The Student Life Committee (SLC) is a joint committee of student representatives from the Wesleyan Student Assembly and administrators in Student Services, co-chaired by the Student Affairs Committee chair of the WSA and the Dean of the College. The committee is charged with overseeing the Undergraduate Residential Life Committee, the Queer Task Force, the Student of Color Perspectives and Actions Committee, as well as all offices pertaining to Student Life, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. Below are issues the SLC dealt with directly this semester, as well as progress reports from the sub-committees of the SLC.

#### *Hazing Policy revision*

The Student Life Committee reviewed Wesleyan's existing policy on hazing and updated it in order to better clarify the definition of hazing for the Wesleyan Community. The WSA sponsored two forums on the proposed policy and directly collected feedback via email from all students on campus on the final draft of the policy before the SLC recommended the new policy to President Bennet. Many helpful suggestions came out of the forums and email discussions and were incorporated into the final document, which went into effect on the first day of the Spring 2005 semester.

#### *Gender Neutral Housing*

The Wesleyan Student Assembly passed a resolution affirming our commitment to the Gender Neutral Housing proposal passed by the SLC in the Spring of 2004 and polled students on their opinion on gender neutral housing. In October, 92% of the student body voting population showed their support for the implementation of a universal gender-neutral housing policy. The poll's results were compiled into a document and presented

to the administration and Board of Trustees, along with being posted on our website. The Student Life Committee reviewed the events of the summer leading to the Dean of the College's decision and convened a joint meeting of the Queer Task Force and the Undergraduate Residential Life Committee, which concluded that recommendations for further action must come from the Queer Task Force.

#### *Harassment Policy*

The Office of Affirmative Action updated Wesleyan's current harassment policy language to better reflect all forms of harassment, not just sexual harassment. The Student Life Committee and the WSA offered recommendations on the proposal, as did the faculty; the Office of Affirmative Action has taken these recommendations into consideration in revising the proposal.

#### **Undergraduate Residential Life Committee**

The Undergraduate Residential Life Committee is chaired by the WSA's Student Affairs Committee (SAC) chair and the director of Residential Life, and composed of one additional member of the SAC committee, the chair of the Finance and Facilities Committee (FiFac) of the WSA, an additional student representative from FiFac, student staff members of Residential Life appointed by the director of Residential Life, the Dean of Student Services, the Director of Student Life Facilities, and Residential Life Professional Staff. The URLC is a standing subcommittee of the Student Life Committee.

Most decisions involving Residential Life come through the URLC; in some cases the URLC makes recommendations directly to the Office of Residential Life and in other cases to the Student Life Committee. According to the WSA constitution, "The URLC is responsible for advising the Office of Residential Life on all issues pertaining to residential life on campus, including program housing applications and evaluation, and room selection."

#### *Program housing applications*

The URLC considered eight program house proposals this semester. It is unlikely that new program houses will be created for the 2005-2006 academic year due to facility and budget constraints, however the Office of Residential Life and the Office of Student Life Facilities are reviewing available budget and housing options. No new program house will be approved unless an appropriate location can be found. Delta Kappa Epsilon applied for re-entry into program housing and the URLC found their proposal for co-education of the house satisfactory enough to recommend that their program housing status be re-instated for the following academic school year.

#### *Smoking Ban*

The URLC reviewed the existing smoking ban, which excepted senior woodframe houses, and proposed that the ban be extended to all residential units. The WSA agreed with the proposal because of the fire hazard risks for students living and gathering in these houses and because of the long-term physical damage smoking causes to Wesleyan's aging woodframes. The revised policy will go into effect for the fall of the 2005-2006 academic school years.

### *Room Distribution*

As a result of new residences, notably the Fauver Dorms, coming online for Fall 2005, fewer first-year students will live in the Foss Hill and Butterfield dormitories. The Office of Residential Life has reported preliminary numbers back to the URLC, which will review options for distributing first-year students on halls in Butterfield and Foss next academic school year as part of this semester's agenda.

### *Student Space Initiative, Review and Renovation*

The WSA identified student space as an area of immense concern that is not being addressed by the administration. The Independent Projects Committee of the WSA has compiled data from all registered parties from the previous few years as evidence to bolster our efforts. The WSA has focused efforts on smaller segments of the problem. Thus far, we have worked with Physical Plant to renovate dorm lounges as well as communicating to AWARE the impact of this problem on Middletown residents. The keystone for our efforts, however, lies in incorporating a solution to this problem into the strategic plan.

After being presented with a proposal for better student lounge spaces by the WSA's Independent Projects Committee, the URLC launched a review of student lounge spaces as a continuation of discussions with the WSA last year. The URLC discussed different approaches for lounge space design, and while the lounge spaces in Clark Hall were generally seen as the best model to work from, the URLC proposed that the Student Life Facilities' office speak with the students in individual halls about their lounge spaces and seek recommendations locally on facilities renovation.

### **Student of Color Perspectives and Action Committee**

The Student of Color Perspectives and Action Committee were created to help identify and address campus life issues from the perspectives of students of color. The goal of the committee is to gather information and feedback from students of color about their experiences and to make recommendations for improvement based on that information. Committee membership is open to the entire student body, and the WSA appoints at least one representative liaison every year.

SoCPAC had its first forum on December 1, 2004. During the forum, students broke up into groups facilitated by both a faculty member of color and a student member of SoCPAC. In these groups, students were asked to talk about their experiences on campus as a person of color. These experiences dealt with academics, social life, and campus resources. The smaller groups once again convened and all lists were shared with the larger group. Students at the meeting expressed, among other things, discomfort communicating with the financial aid office, a concern for first-year student of color retention, a concern that the SBC, in general, isn't sensitive to certain issues and groups on campus, and a desire for better accountability from tenured faculty for their conduct in the classroom, and a desire to see safe spaces for students of color, and the institution of a multicultural dean. A full report from the committee is pending publication.

### **Queer Task Force**

The Queer Task Force is a committee of students, faculty and administrators that works to identify issues and needs in Wesleyan's Queer Community and strategies for addressing those needs. Membership on the committee is open to the entire Wesleyan community, and the WSA appoints at least one representative liaison to the QTF each year.

The Queer Task Force sponsored a forum and dinner for LGBTQQ... students in 200 Church at the end of last semester. After discussing the general purpose of the forum with the group at large, those attending were divided into six smaller groups, each with several student participants and student and faculty facilitators. Students discussed their concerns and frustrations with Queer life at Wesleyan and shared experiences from classrooms, social life, and frustrations with the school's administration. Gender Neutral Housing and safety concerns were key topics. A full report from the committee is pending publication.

### **Student Advisory Board to the Office of Behavioral Health Services**

The Student Advisory Board to the Office of Behavioral Health Services is composed of student volunteers solicited by the Office of Behavioral Health Services for the purpose of identifying student behavioral health needs and developing strategies to address those needs. The Wesleyan Student Assembly sends a representative to OBHS Student Advisory Board meetings. Projects identified by the committee for the upcoming semester include engaging students in dialogues about alcohol use and providing more group therapy options.

### **Alumni Relations**

The goal of Alumni relations is twofold: to increase communication between current students and alumni as well as heighten current students' awareness of life after Wesleyan. To accomplish both these goals, the WSA is starting a pilot program of specialized list serves that will be contributed to jointly by students and alumni. This will be operational shortly.

### **Career Resource Center**

The WSA and the Career Resource Center have formed the Career Resource Center Advisory Committee. This Committee aims to improve the functionality of the CRC through positive student feedback. This year's endeavors will have a particular focus on strengthening communications between the CRC and students of all class years.

### **Dining Advisory Committee**

The Dining Advisory Committee is a joint committee of students, administrators, and faculty. The WSA's SAC chair co-chairs the committee along with the Dean of Student Services. Members of the WSA's Student Affairs Committee and Finance and Facilities Committee are appointed to the Dining Advisory Committee and representatives from the Environmental Organizer's Network and the United Student Labor Action Coalition are solicited. Union representatives, ARAMARK representatives, Auxiliary Services

representatives, and Student Services representatives all sit on the committee and make recommendations to the University on dining options.

### **Review of facilities**

The Dining Advisory Committee began the school year with a tour of each campus dining facility so that committee members could stay informed about new facilities. It is the WSA's goal to publish a summary of these tours for posterity and informational reasons.

### **Late-Night Options**

At the beginning of the academic school year, the shift of the late-dining facility from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the campus center to Summerfields resulted in complaints from students about a lack of good late-night to-go options, social spaces, and no coffee on campus after 9pm. Discussions with the dining advisory committee resulted in the short-term fix of Weshop once again offering coffee and a long-term proposal for a coffee vending machine in Olin, which was deferred to the Library Committee. WSA representatives have requested more to-go options at Summerfields, and will follow up with Aramark this semester on the feasibility of such options. WSA representatives are also working on identifying other spaces that may be used for late night student performances and dining. This is a project that will continue into this spring.

### **Financial Aid Students' Meal plan**

The WSA, in response to student concerns over the level of meal plan buy-in for financial aid students, has petitioned the Dining Advisory Committee to allow financial aid students the option of higher buy-in levels to the meal plan, and will continue to do so.

### **Master Plan Workshop**

The Dining Advisory Committee held a master-planning workshop on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005, to review, update and revise the master plan from two years prior. Sub-committees are meeting this week to work on language for the new master plan and a completed draft will be presented to the Committee at its first meeting. The committee will then solicit community feedback on the draft prior to recommending a final version to the Board of Trustees in March.

### **RIDE Program**

In its newly imagined form, the RIDE program opened to mixed reviews. At this point, data also show that the program's usage has dropped compared to past years'. The actual implementation of the program was not ideal, and there are changes that still need to occur as we move to evaluate the system this spring semester.

However, the WSA has worked with members of the administration to correct some of the problems. We have been able to implement some change within the program, such as adding a map to the back of each stop, having the RIDE number on each blue light, as well as adding a few more stops, such as one at the intersection of High and Williams. We will continue weighing the pros and cons of a time schedule, as well as push for a

blue light phone to be present at each stop. We continue to wait for the third van that the administration has promised, which would accommodate special services.

The WSA's Finance and Facilities Committee (FiFac) will engage in a thorough evaluation of the current RIDE program this spring. The former Escort and Shuttle program acted as a safety mechanism. The RIDE, in its current function, acts as a convenience program. Trying to compare these two programs is hard, and thus FiFac would like to focus on what can be done to make this current program better.

### **One Card**

Currently, the laundry system and the Middletown Cash program are part of the One Card system. These programs are accessible through both the office located in North College on the first floor, as well as online. If students run out of dining points, these multipurpose points can also be applied to on campus dining services. The next phase of the one card program will incorporate vending/copying machines, access to residential facilities, and all campus laundry onto this new system as well as evaluate the incentive for students to participate in the program.

### **Laundry**

The new laundry systems are more efficient in energy usage. These new front-loading machines will save gallons of water in the future years. There is also an idea to implement an online system where students can see the availability of laundry machines. Recognizing there are currently places where laundry is not sufficient, FiFac will be investigating locations for more laundry systems, including a location on Pine Street.

### **Public Safety Advisory Committee**

Three Community Outreach Committee (COCO) members sit on the Public Safety Advisory Committee. Goals set at the beginning of the semester included: assessing and making recommendations for blue light phones; holding two lighting tours to assess how campus lighting can be improved to make the campus safer; assessing the protocol for the reporting of harassment and abuse; and brainstorming creative ways to encourage students to report all crimes and incidents to Public Safety. To this end, two new posters will be designed for first year areas and ads will be placed in the Argus in the coming semester.

With this in mind, we have succeeded in accomplishing many of our goals. We have gotten two new blue light phones on campus, one in the firehouse parking lot and one on Long Lane.

PSAC organized a well-attended lighting tour in November. A Safety Forum was held in December where all students could voice their concerns regarding safety on campus. Also, Public Safety officers have pledged to attend the Sustained Dialogue trainings for all University staff.

### **Facilities: New Construction Around Campus**

The WSA's Finance and Facilities Committee evaluates current plans for new buildings. The Usdan University Center is in its final planning stages, reaching these stages with large amounts of student input. Ground breaking is planned sometime in spring. With the opening of the addition to Freeman, almost all activity has moved from Fayerweather and the Cage.

The new Fauver Field Dorm Project has been the result of continued student input. Furniture and Fixture design is almost complete, and will be reported on at a future WSA meeting. The new Senior Housing is also in late planning stages. These units come online next semester with the new Fauver Field Dorms. The WSA will be hosting a campus-wide forum on these two construction projects to collect student opinion and concerns.

The Campus Facilities and Services Advisory Committee (CaFSAC) did not meet as frequently as hoped for; however, a goal of FiFac is to set all dates for the semester within the next two weeks. CaFSAC holds a lot of potential, and aims to create an environmental subcommittee, as well as specifically examine the master plan for senior housing.

### **Masterplan Housing Plans**

At one of the last WSA meetings of the semester, FiFac presented the University's Masterplan for housing. Recognizing that there is a University presentation on this issue, FiFac is looking to generate a student response. Although forums are an effective way to collect feedback, FiFac is choosing a more personal approach of informal surveys and conversations. This document will hopefully have many students' perspectives on a variety of issues.

### **Major Maintenance**

This committee is comprised of many upper level administrators and one WSA student. Within this committee, the chair of FiFac was able to make sure student concerns were evident, such as the inequalities of first year housing. This year was the first attempt at making a five-year plan for Major Maintenance fund. A major absorption of funds dealt with sprinkling the entire campus community. There was a comprehensive report released about the housing issues on campus.

### **Student Groups and Funding**

#### **Group Recognition**

Each Friday, two COCo members hold recognition hearings for new student groups. This semester, COCo has focused on encouraging groups to reach out to the Middletown community, and making suggestions to that end. Also, the chair is regularly revising a new document intended to make the recognition process more consistent and to minimize the misplacement of documents. In line with group recognition, COCo has the long-term goal of overhauling the student packet to improve the format and to make all of the information more accessible. COCo worked with Leilani Kupo to ensure that the entire packet's information is accurate. For the coming semester, COCo will reformat the packet and begin distributing it at every group recognition hearing.

## **Funding**

The Student Budget Committee (SBC) is in charge of allocating the Student Activities Fund, ensuring that the fund is utilized to its maximum potential for providing programs and activities for all students on campus. During the past semester several of the SBC's decisions regarding group funding have been questioned. While the SBC's allocations are not always exactly what a student group is hoping for, the SBC makes its decisions based on its stated criteria (posted at the WSA building and on the WSA website).

Additionally, the committee considers whether the funding can potentially come from another source on campus as well as considering whether the event/project could still occur given less funding than requested. This past semester, the SBC produced a rough draft of a document describing alternative funding sources on campus.

Currently, the SBC funds a wide array of student programs, including the Film Series and the Crowell Concert Series. In regards to the Film Series and the Crowell Concert Series, the SBC funds these programs in order to ensure that students can attend these shows without having to pay high ticket prices. SBC funding ensures that Crowell Concert Series tickets do not exceed a certain amount.

## **Queer Resource Center**

The QRC has traditionally been funded by both the Dean's office as well as the SBC. This year is no different. The SBC has and will continue to fund the Center in order to provide for all members of the Wesleyan community.

## **University Organizing Center**

Last year, students created a proposal for a University Organizing Center. While the WSA was eager to see the administration create such a center, the WSA believed the University should fund it. However in November, funding was requested from the SBC for the newly created University Organizing Center. The WSA, and the SBC specifically, believe that the University must be responsible for funding the UOC, as it is an essential service and program for the campus community. This opinion was voiced during the creation process of the UOC as well as at the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year. The SBC was not in a position to fund such a large request mid-way through the year and explicitly stated that it was a necessary expense the University should absorb. Members of the WSA have continued to help students in their effort to attain funding from the University for the Center.

## **The WSA Building**

The WSA Building at 190 High Street has undergone major interior changes over the last semester in order to provide improved resources for students. The WSA building has been re-organized in order to provide more space for student groups to meet, work and store their equipment and papers. Throughout the spring semester, the SBC will continue overseeing the enhancement of the filing systems in order to aid groups in archiving so that they can establish group institutional histories. The enhanced office will also help to provide easier access to information on how to obtain funding, and allow students to keep track of their own group budgets. Additionally, the SBC has established contacts within

the committee for each student group category and has improved relations between group representatives and SBC members.

With the creation of the new Usdan University Center, the WSA's chronic space shortages will be alleviated, contingent upon the WSA's occupation of the current building at 190 High Street.

### **Educational Policy**

The Educational Policy Committee consists of four WSA students. The committee chair and voting member sit on the faculty EPC with both voice and vote and attend full faculty meetings. Non-voting members may attend faculty EPC meetings as ex-officio members if they are working on a project that is pertinent to the work of the committee- this is determined by the chair with the consent of the committee.

The EPC tackles issues in many areas of the university, including but not limited to course access, majors and departmental requirements as well as certificates and programs, academic advising, the library, admissions, registration and drop/add, academic regulations, and pedagogical concerns.

At the beginning of the year, our goals as the student EPC included the amelioration of course access, in which our roles revolve largely around the faculty EPC, the improvement of academic advising, the continued success of our libraries, and other initiatives.

The faculty EPC has closely examined the issue of course access. We determined that one aspect of the course access crunch, though by no means the only factor, was the overlapping of many courses at particularly popular times. As a committee, we proposed a set of guidelines by which departments could situate their classes within the week, which the faculty adopted. As a result, the 2005 curriculum should reflect a set of minor shifts in course times that will substantially expand student choice.

The EPC expects to advocate strategic hiring in particularly understaffed departments, in response to student surveys conducted last year that showed that many students have trouble getting into classes in government, sociology, NSM's for non-majors, romance languages, and others.

Our attention to academic advising is also informed by the survey we conducted; students' experiences with their advisors varied drastically in quality, particularly during the year(s) before declaring majors. We are continuing to pursue the idea of evaluations for advisors, and are investigating the training that advisors receive at the beginning of each academic year. We will prepare a statement to be distributed to all advisors stating students' expectations, and possibly a document to be distributed at first-year orientation that offers advice on how to best utilize one's advisor, as well as where other resources lie.

The student library advisory committee had one meeting this semester, and should be more active next semester. We have deigned to deal mostly with library hours, the distribution of carrels, issues of maintenance, book and journal cost, and issues of space usage. This semester, we will continue to solicit input from many different areas of interest, class years, and campus communities.

WesClassifieds, a website where students (and faculty) may advertise items for sale, will soon be available in e-portfolios. E-Squid, the website where students can provide unofficial evaluations of their professors and classes to be read by other students, is also back up. This will be better advertised early in the semester so that it can become the valuable tool for choosing classes that it once was.

The student EPC has added goals for the spring semester. First, the EPC will address issues of pedagogy more tenaciously, with special attention to the maintenance of classroom environments that are safe for all students. This may include increased training for all professors, a clearer process for reporting incidents or conditions that any student deems inappropriate, and increased opportunities for each student to increase hir awareness. Second, the EPC will work with the Office of Admissions, which reports annually to the faculty EPC, to increase its transparency to students and establish more channels through which students can give input to the work of the Admissions Office. As we move toward the adoption of an enhanced and expanded set of “Key Capabilities,” we will ensure that the university has a cogent and comprehensive plan for implementing them. These should not be merely labels for courses, but rather central to the planning of courses and central in students’ navigation of Wesleyan’s curriculum.

### **The WSA and the Middletown Community**

There was one AWARE meeting this semester, in early September. COCo will continue working with AWARE as issues arise in order to encourage Wesleyan students to be respectful and considerate neighbors. This semester, COCo arranged two discount nights for Wesleyan students at Javapalooza. We plan to continue having discount nights, and we’re looking to possibly extend this type of arrangement to other local businesses.

In our effort to help student groups reach out to the Middletown community, we’ve been exploring ways to extend group advertising beyond campus. COCo has been in communication with the Office of Community Service and the Center for Community Partnerships about posting announcements in local high schools. We will continue to collaborate with both of these offices.

Members of COCo have met with the Office of Residential life to advocate that community standards workshops be extended to all students living in neighborhoods (program housing, Lo/Hi Rise, etc.). This is an ongoing effort.