

FGLI Committee – Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2019

Attendance:

Bob Coughlin, Financial Aid
Michelle Jarvis, Financial Aid
Teshia Levy-Grant, Equity & Inclusion
Ryan Nelson '19
Melisa Olgun '20
Cameron Scharff '21
Dean Mike Whaley, Student Affairs
Jen Wood, Student Affairs

This meeting was an opportunity for each of the committee's sub-groups to provide updates to the full committee. Notes from each of these groups are below:

Group #1

First Gen Support and Mentoring

This group will review and recommend improvements to First Gen support and mentoring programs, including the First Things First (FTF) pre-orientation program, Connections mentoring program, etc.

Dean Mike reported that we were not successful in our proposal for additional funding to expand "First Things First", but that Equity & Inclusion and Student Affairs will continue to support the existing program. We will once again recruit up to 30 first gen students from the Class of 2023 to participate. Demetrius Colvin is taking over coordination of the program.

Dean Teshia reported that she has heard from some low-income students who have been unsuccessful in obtaining summer grants, and she suggests that this committee may want to investigate this issue using an equity and inclusion lens. She is aware of students who received grants from three different sources and also a low-income student who wasn't successful in securing any support. It seems that better coordination may be beneficial in this area.

Dean Teshia also thinks it is important for us to investigate support structures in place for low-income international students. This group faces additional challenges because of their inability to work.

Group #2

Financial Aid for Low Income Students

This group will work with Bob and Michelle in Financial Aid to understand the implications (costs, impact, equity, etc.) of some of the issues and ideas raised by the FGLI Committee and Fin Aid staff. The group may also help Bob and Michelle prioritize enhancements as well as discuss the balance/trade offs between more aid for enrolled students and admitting more students with need (i.e. how to allocate finite resources).

Bob Coughlin and Michelle Jarvis reported that the groups established (in no specific order) the following funding priorities at their recent meeting:

1. Funding student health insurance for low-income students. Many of our peer schools do this already. The cost of this initiative is estimated at \$650,000. Target is support for low-income students (from families with total incomes of \$60,000 or less).
2. Implementing a “cost of living” adjustment in financial aid packages to account for the differences in cost of living in various geographic areas. Parent contributions would be adjusted for students/families from areas where the cost of living is high. The cost of this initiative is estimated at \$500,000. Target is support for low- and middle-income students/families.

Bob discussed mechanisms for gathering more student feedback about potential changes (from WSA and other sources) to include more student participation in decision-making about financial aid enhancements. Bob suggested inviting Joyce Walter to our first meeting in the Fall 2019 semester to provide information about student health insurance options. In addition to the above priorities, Bob and Michelle are researching potential adjustments to travel allowance budgets within students’ financial aid packages. Bob and Michelle are also working on utilizing “Handshake” (Partnership with the Gordon Career Center) to manage student employment opportunities, collect job descriptions, etc.

Bob reported that the University has increased the financial aid budget by \$500,000 per year for four years in order to improve financial aid to students.

One of the students asked about the possibility of a laundry stipend. Dean Mike reported that the Finance Office is planning to make changes to the Residential Comprehensive Fee (RCF) for 2020-2021. He hopes that the current two-tiered structure will evolve to one rate for all students, and that use of laundry machines will be included in the fee – the committee believes that such a move would be well-received by FGLI (and all) students.

Dean Wood announced a workshop for graduating seniors. “Eat Pay, Work” will take place on 4/25 at 4pm in Usdan 108. The workshop will address life after Wes, from how to eat well (both in terms of nutrition and cost), how to put a budget together (thinking about rent, food, transportation, etc.) and how to enter into the working world (attire, proper email salutations, networking, etc.).

Bob and Michelle announced that Financial Aid is sponsoring a session on 5/1 at 6pm on establishing credit.

Group #3 Communications

This group will review and improve/enhance communications with all students (but especially FGLI students) about available resources and support mechanisms/programs.

After updating the FGLI website (<https://www.wesleyan.edu/fgli/>), this group turned attention to examining break services for students. Dean Mike coordinated a group to review services that students staying on campus during break periods may need and to recommend changes. The group produced a report with recommendations (appended to these minutes) that was previously circulated to the FGLI Committee. Dean Mike reports that he reviewed the report with President Roth and with Cabinet members – all of whom were supportive of the recommended changes. Dean Mike will work on implementing the changes for the 2019-2020 academic year.

A longer-term project that emerged from the group's work is requesting that the Dining Committee begin a process to design new meal plans that will better serve low-income students. We hope that an overhaul of the meal plans can be introduced for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Melisa pointed out that Ramadan will fall during the academic year, beginning this year. Bon Appetit has made arrangements for this, but must continue to do so in the coming years. (Ramadan begins on May 6th this year.)

Two issues related to food access during breaks were raised. First, students noted that the expansion of the grocery shuttle operated by P Safe/RIDE has been welcome, but that some students have difficulty taking advantage of it because of work schedules – perhaps an alternate schedule might alleviate this challenge. Students also noted that re-stocking of WEShop was an issue during breaks. Dean Mike will mention these issues to Scott Rohde and to Michelle Myers-Brown respectively.

The sub-groups will continue their work over the summer and Dean Mike will convene the full FGLI Committee again in September 2019 to provide updates and set the agenda for next year's work. **A big thanks to everyone who helped and supported this important work this year!**

Respectfully submitted,

Dean Mike Whaley
VP for Student Affairs

Report on Support and Services for Students During Break Periods **January 29, 2019**

Rick Culliton, Dean of Students
Fran Koerting, Director of Residential Life
Michelle Myers-Brown, Director of Usdan University Center
Scott Rohde, Director of Public Safety
Cameron Scharff '21
Joyce Walter, Director of Health Services
Janice Watson, Assistant Director of International Student Services
Mike Whaley, Vice President for Student Affairs

Introduction

Over the past 5-10 years, we have experienced growth in the number of students remaining on campus during break periods. While we have always had some athletic teams and international students who remain on campus during recess periods, the number of students needing or choosing to stay on campus has expanded. Wesleyan has launched winter session courses, the number of enrolled international students has doubled during this time frame, and the numbers of students who cannot leave campus for financial reasons and/or due to housing insecurity continues to increase. The increase in students remaining on campus during breaks presents challenges for systems and services that were predicated upon a model of being fully open when classes are in session and closed during recess periods. This paradigm is increasingly problematic for many of our students.

The number of students remaining on campus during recess periods is somewhat difficult to pinpoint given that the residences remain open during the Fall, Thanksgiving and Spring breaks. Residential Life has some sense of the number of students who remain on campus during the winter break because all but the senior residences close during this period. The number of students remaining on campus during the holiday weeks (when the University is closed) ranges from 72 in 2015-16 to 103 in 2017-18. The number of students on campus increases throughout the break period to more than 600 on campus before the residences officially open for the spring term. Again, these numbers do not include seniors who stay on campus (or return early) but do not register with Res Life.

Student Affairs and the Wesleyan Student Assembly have partnered with various offices across the University in recent years to develop and implement ad hoc programs addressing the most pressing issues, but these remedies are confusing for students as well as labor-intensive for staff. Instead of these “band aids”, the above group has been working with students to re-engineer our operating paradigm to better meet the needs of all students. Outlined below are the areas that we’ve discussed along with our proposals for adjustments or changes that we think will be more responsive to students’ needs during break periods.

Residence Life has developed an online request system for students who need housing during winter break. The group talked about expanding this system to encompass registration for all

recess periods so that we have a sense of which students – including seniors – remain on campus during these periods. We could also use this tool to gauge interest in campus dining and other support services during break periods as well as to promote communication about events available on campus and locally during recess periods.

Athletics

The Freeman Athletic Center is closed on most holidays and when the University is officially closed, but the facility is otherwise open during business hours during recess periods (expanded evening hours only when semester classes are in session). Our group feels that this level of service is appropriate at this time.

Counseling Services

Most of the CAPS team works in less than 1.0 FTE positions. They work full-time (and then some!) when classes are in session and take vacation time during scheduled recess periods. Our groups feels that limited services should be made available to students during all recess periods and that we should extend ProtoCall 24/7 coverage to these periods as well. One requirement of our crisis service is that a clinician at CAPS be available to follow up on evening calls and urgent issues the following business day. We anticipate low utilization of ProtoCall during break periods, and that our current budget will be sufficient to handle a small increase in calls. That said, we need to expand Associate Director Kidkarndee's FTE to 11-months so that he and Dr. D'Andrea (already 1.0 FTE) can provide ProtoCall follow-up and limited crisis appointments during recess periods and during the summer. **Cost is \$10,500.** Since CAPS' administrative assistant does not currently work during break periods, we also need to add 21 days to her schedule (she is paid hourly). **Cost is \$ 6,800.**

Total costs for CAPS are \$17,300.

Dining

One of the major stressors for students remaining on campus over break periods is dining, especially for low-income students. We offer a winter break meal plan (additional cost) for students enrolled in winter session courses, but the dining halls are closed during Thanksgiving, the first portion of winter break, and for spring recess. (Dining is closed during Fall Break too unless the break coincides with Homecoming/Family Weekend.) Athletics provides meal stipends for athletes who are on campus when the dining halls are closed, and various departments make arrangements to provide meals for students who return for training. If we offer dining services during these periods, we may be able to reallocate some of those funds to defray the costs of the increased service from Bon Appetit. Students who remain on campus during break periods often find themselves running out of meals/points prior to the end of a semester if they use points during break periods (when WesShop is open during a break, students may use points at that location).

Our group believes that Wesleyan should provide meal service during break periods, albeit reduced in scope from our normal "in semester" offerings. Several of our peer schools maintain dining operations during low-residency periods. Michael Strumpf from Bon Appetit recommends keeping Summerfields open on a weekend schedule during recess periods as an economical solution. There is a budgetary impact associated with this change so we will need to

partner with Finance on this solution. **Projected costs of Spring Break pilot at Summerfields is \$125,000.**

Currently, students with remaining point balances from the fall semester are not permitted to use them during the winter term plan. This simply doesn't not make sense since they can use those points during the spring term. We recommend a change in policy to permit students to use points that they have already paid for during the winter session.

In the longer term, we would encourage the University Dining Committee to engage in a fundamental re-thinking of the meal plan structure in place at Wesleyan. The current structure can be difficult for low-income students and we've therefore had to develop several "band aid" programs (e.g. points grants at the end of each semester, stipends during winter break, etc.) that are time- and labor-intensive for students and staff. A new meal plan that provides all students with more flexibility and has a greater level of sensitivity to low-income students would be desirable. Several peer institutions have made shifts in this direction so much could be learned from some benchmarking. Michelle Myers-Brown, Michael Strumpf, Cathy Lee Rizza and others would have helpful input given their various perspectives and as recipients of various concerns/complaints about the current program configuration. The students serving on the FGLI Committee would also be good resources for this longer-term project.

Health Services

Health Services is already open reduced hours during break periods (when the University is open). Current staff FTE is sufficient to provide limited coverage and the existing salaried staff can take vacation or catch up on other work during this period. Utilization data indicates approximately 50 student visits during winter break. Our group feels that this level of service is appropriate at this time.

Housing

Student housing closes only twice during the calendar year – for the ~5 weeks of semester break and for the summer. (Note that senior housing remains open during the semester break.) Residential Life has an on-line request system for students to request housing during winter break, and works closely with International Student Services, Athletics, and the class deans to make break housing arrangements for students who cannot leave campus or who need to return before the residences officially reopen in January. Students can sometimes stay in their assigned room or they may need to move to another location temporarily for safety reasons. The group discussed whether it was necessary to close the residences during this time or if we might just leave them open as we do for other breaks. The challenges associated with keeping the residences open during winter break include the difficulty in providing student staffing (especially during the period between the end of finals and January 2nd), potential behavioral issues that may arise when students are on campus but not engaged in rigorous academic work, and potential security issues if the residences are not alarmed during this low-residency period. In light of these concerns, we propose continuing the process of students submitting a request to remain on campus during the break, with the dates requested, and the reason. Residence Life will be more flexible in approving requests, as long as the student has a legitimate reason to remain on campus. This methodology gives Res Life the opportunity to verify requests if necessary, and limit the number of students here during the break.

Student and Local Programming

Students have asked if we can help develop communication among students who will be staying on campus during break periods. Such a tool might be used to promote campus and local activities available to students during the break periods. Hosting some sponsored group meals during breaks is an idea that Student Affairs will pilot next academic year. We could make improvements to utilization of the existing on-line calendar and/or create a listserv for those on campus during each break (using info gleaned from Res Life registration).

Transportation

Transportation Services continues to operate the RIDE safety shuttle service during recess periods, although the hours are reduced. The grocery shuttle service is expanded during recess periods, offering more opportunities for students remaining on campus to buy groceries at Price Chopper and Aldi on Washington Street. RIDE service does not operate during winter break when the University is closed for the holiday, but Public Safety offers escort service until the RIDE resumes on January 2nd. Our group feels that this level of service is appropriate at this time.