ASOSU Mediation Committee
January 30th, 2025 | 5:00pm
SEC 354
Zoom: https://oregonstate.zoom.us/j/93577674659?pwd=6scPXxEc9bAiQlYjLniQT5YoxLLZd4.1
Mediation Committee Chair
Zachary Kowash
SEC 288

I. **Roll Call/Quorum**
a. Senate (2) – Ryan Becquer, Eliza Eckman
b. Student Fee Committee (2) – Connor Chen, Madison Wusstig
c. Student Fee Committee Chair – Sophia Nowers
d. Student Advisory Board Chairs
    i. SEE Student Advisory Board Chair – Sarah Khan
e. **Gallery Comment**
    i. **Dawson Yang:** I didn't find any arguments suggesting that potential misappropriation of funds should prevent an increase toward student wages. Also, I should've clarified in my original comment that I wasn't talking about inflation, but the rising cost of living. Food prices are increasing by more than 3%, and my rent goes up by about 10% a year. I don't think a 5% increase reflects the inflationary situation accurately.
    ii. **Dylan Perfect:** I won't comment much on past decisions, but I think it's important for equity to extend the same regard to all student workers, especially with Rec Sports and SEE being the largest budgets. The issue of wages is just being raised now, even though we raised them to $15 in FY23. If a unit pockets funds, there are accountability measures in place, and the money could be reallocated if not used as intended. This is an allocation for student payroll, and it should help students.
    iii. **Narmeen Rashid:** I am speaking in my capacity as a club president, I encourage further discussion on SOA grants, as the conversation in SFC felt rushed. It's worth considering the balance between the first and second levels.
    iv. **Lillian Goodyear:** This wage could have been brought to SAB meetings in October. The sexism, racism, misogyny I have experienced could have been avoided.

II. **New Business**
    i. Mediation on SB 84.23 – "SEE Incidental Fee Allocation Bill" ~ **5:00pm**
        1 Vote: Ayes – 6, Nays – 10, Abstentions – 1

ii. **Connor Chen:** For SOA grant funding, the levels were $1.25 and $2.50, and in SFC it was voted for the $1.25. There was even talk in the Senate about potentially decreasing that $1.25 further, suggesting it should go down, not back up.

iii. **Eliza Eckman:** I do not remember the specific talk about reducing the grants, but if there is someone that remembers?

iv. **Sen. Becquer**: I do remember some arguments regarding that. There was some large amount of usage that was not accounted for

1 **Eric Beeler**: For SOA grants, there were several conversations, and the Student Advisory Board recommended moving to $2.50, which would allocate $7.50 per student per term. In the SFC, there was limited time for discussion, and some comments about fund utilization were made. I couldn't respond then, but most major events and awards happen in winter and spring, so that's when we see more funds used. I also agree with the valid point about fundraising. In the Senate, after presenting data, the decision was made for the $1.25. I'm grateful that more funding is being allocated to clubs, but we need better discussions on the decisions made by our unit and advisory board. Regarding the $1.25 or $2.50, I'll keep pushing for it. I plan to come back next year asking for $1.25, $2.50, or even $3.75 until we reach the $10 goal.

v. **Ryan Becquer**: What percentage is the increase in the funding with the $1.25?

1 **Eric Beeler**: That would be a 25% increase.

vi. **Madison Wusstig**: This is a theoretical as we have not had enough conversation. From my understanding they sent this back because they want an increase in wages. How would the money that was supposed to be meant for student wages be distributed?

1 **Eric Beeler**: Regarding student wages, our wage model is tied to the CPIU. Our base wage will be $1.25 above the state minimum wage, and we'll continue increasing it annually, as long as Oregon doesn't change how they calculate the minimum wage. Within that, different positions and returners earn more based on their roles. I believe it's your process to allocate or recommend fund allocation, but it's up to units to decide how they spend it. In past years, ASOSU recommended increasing wages to $15, and the Division of Student Affairs implemented a similar increase. Last year, we didn't increase our wages, but we continued with the CPIU increase. I'm not willing to commit to the proposed $17.10 wage increase without review. I'd want to ensure that the funds are allocated properly by university HR and reviewed by the Office of General Counsel to avoid legal complications.

vii. **Sophia Nowers**: We did a preliminary vote on the $2.50 package, and in our last meeting we did have limited discussion and saw those concerns about spending at a high rate. So, we walked that back to the $1.25 increase. I believe the vote was exactly.

viii. **Sarah Khan**: As SAB Chair we did have that conversation and there were 3 Decision Packages put forward. We agreed that anything over $2.50 would be too much, but at the rate that funding is being used, $1.25 may be too little. The #1 feedback we get at our meetings is for more club funding. The cultural events ate the end of the year are usually where the most of the funding goes towards. As an SAB recommendation, it was $2.50. We also decided on that before all the federal changes, so just keep that in mind.

ix. **Madison Wusstig:** How are SOA grants allocated? Would it be that more clubs have access to the pool of money? What exactly are the logistics?

1 **Eric Beeler**: The current caps are based on allowable expenses and maximizing impact for the most students. For example, we don't fund travel, preferring to support larger events. Increasing funding lets us reassess these caps. We also want more clubs to apply, but there's a low number of applications, and I'm unsure what the disconnect is with their marketing strategies.

2 **Madison Wusstig**: SOA money is essentially a pool of money that each club can essentially take up to $1200. Some clubs can go over sometimes, even if all clubs ask for $1200, it can leave the clubs to not have any money at the end of that. Would this increase keep the 1200 cap and allow more clubs to have access to it?

3 **Eric Beeler**: It would be keeping at $1200 as the current cap, to allow it to expand out. We would be trying to get more clubs to have the access to the funding. The goal with the $10 level is to allow more students to have access. There was a time where it was even more complicated to get SOA funding, and now we are getting more use, and we want to see it go to new clubs or signature events.

4 **Madison Wusstig**: So, do you know if there is an exact cap?

5 **Eric Beeler**: If a club overspends their SOA grant, they must pay back the balance. Fundraising opportunities, like baking sales, can. We're strict with grant caps, and if a club exceeds them, their account goes into a negative balance, requiring them to cover it elsewhere.

x. **Connor Chen**: We know at least our thoughts based on the wage increase. I wanted to ask for Eliza's opinion.

xi. **Eliza Eckman**: I think it would be beneficial to oversee the additional funding even if it would not be going towards the $17.10. I think any possibility is better than none.

xii. **Connor Chen**: Are we holding all new budgets to a different standard than the $17.10? If we give money for a wage increase and don't see it used for that, could it affect future funding? If the money goes toward adding hours instead, does that count? I just want to clarify if we're changing our benchmark for determining how we allocate money going forward.

xiii. **Sophia Nowers**: None of us can predict the future, and with elections coming up, we don't know who will be in charge next year. It won't be the same people or conversation. It seems like this has evolved from a "take it or leave it" situation.

xiv. ***Ryan Becquer*** *ceded 2 minutes to* ***Adison Rowe***

1 **Adison Rowe**: In the fiscal year before last, $45K was spent on clubs, and the following year, with double the funding, $62K was spent, a 30% increase. There should be leftover money for clubs this year. I'm unsure if $1.25 is enough, but it seems fair to start with. $2.50 might be too high, but a middle ground could work. I remember some gallery comments asking for more funding, though I don't know the numbers well enough to give a clear answer. As for wages, I think SEE's work is important, and it would be great if other units could pay workers as much as Rec Sports and Performing Arts will.

xv. **Ryan Becquer**: So, the issue is that usage numbers are reported in fall, but big events in spring aren't captured in those numbers?

1 **Eric Beeler**: Yes, the fall-to-fall comparison is a snapshot, while fiscal year-to-fiscal year gives a broader view. The 30% increase in fall-to-fall is impacted by most events happening later in spring. The number of clubs also may have increased from last fall.

xvi. **Sophia Nowers**: It is in the appendices of the SFC report. SOA grants running out of funding, Eric came up with the glide path for $10 per student per term. We saw an increase in 2022. We passed the $2.50 last year. Funding may be a bit slower in the past.

xvii. **Sarah Khan**: Are there any other concerns that people have with the budget?

xviii. **Sophia Nowers**: I think we might as well stick with the $1.25, just to be a little bit more conservative on our estimates. Find how much money we are allocating to clubs and how much is used, I would hate to shoot over.

xix. **Sarah Khan**: These are important conversations, especially for those who didn't know how the SFC process works. We were comfortable with $2.50, but it depended on what other units were increasing by. There was

concern in SAB about the precedent set if many units raised everything significantly and we went with $2.50. Given the wage increase and federal concerns, it's reasonable to say this has been a big focus for our SAB.

xx. **Eliza Eckman**: I also support the $1.25, I do not think it would be necessary to go through a vote on the $17.10 figure. Does anyone support a decision package to the $17.10? If not, then I would not motion for it.

xxi. **Sarah Khan**: There is a very specific way that SEE sets wages, it is something that people can rely on. There are also differences in pay across the different units. I personally have never heard concerns in cultural centers about wage increases.

1 **Eric Beeler**: I don't think it's an arbitrary number. I understand there's a CPI metric used, but the goal was to adopt a consistent approach for planning year after year, rather than leaving it up to the Senate Budget Committee to decide the increase each time.

xxii. **Eliza Eckman**: The issue I see with the Portland minimum wage is that the $1.25 becomes a smaller percentage as the base wage grows from the original minimum wage over the years. That's just my perspective.

xxiii. **Madison Wusstig**: It's hard because there were concerns about consistency, with some units passing and some not. The issue is we can't promise it'll go to $17.10 as stated in the last mediation. Personally, I haven't heard concerns about $17.10 in cultural centers, and I know everyone who works there. However, I think it hasn't been made clear to student workers that this comes out of their fees. My question is, if we allocate money for $17.10, will it go toward raising wages, or will it be used for more job positions?

1 **Eric Beeler**: I don't see it going to increase wages. It could go to more positions or more hours. We already have some issues with students working all the hours they are allotted. I think the 3.5% is what I had asked for. The conversation on the living wage is an important one to have. A living wage in Corvallis is $23.87 assuming you work 2,080 hours a year. The $23.87 would be a $10.50 per student per term increase to get for just SEE tonight. For some context on getting to the base living wage, that is something that you should consider.

xxiv. **Sophia Nowers**: I think the way SEE sets wages is equitable and provides clarity, adjusting each year to make life easier. However, we must acknowledge the high cost of living and college, especially as an out-of-state student. Raising the student fee to increase wages for some students feels a bit backward to me. While everyone deserves to be able to afford rent and food, the larger structural issues are at play. If we can avoid taking more money from students and contribute to not making college more expensive, we'll be helping. We can work toward a base minimum

wage across units and universities and collaborate on broader issues like affordable housing to reduce the cost of living.

xxv. ***Ryan Becquer*** *ceded 2 minutes to* ***Dylan Perfect***

1 **Dylan Perfect**: Kudos for acknowledging that the first funding recommendation isn't arbitrary; it's based on a CPI adjustment from the holding wage rate, and it was 92% of the MIT living wage figure for FY23. I'd like to remind everyone that this isn't a zero-sum game. A wage increase is better than none, and a little above minimum wage is better than sticking with it. The Budget Committee's recommendations, sent to the SFC chair and board, include a formula for yearly CPI adjustments. If applied last year, it would have been $16.65, and this year it's $17.10, ensuring consistency. I also want to share, not in my student government capacity but as a student, that I've been involved with the Student Workers Union campaign for undergraduates. Many students, including those in cultural centers, have signed union cards, often seeking better wages and working conditions. Around 90% of the students in the union support a wage increase, and I encourage your support for consistency with other units.

xxvi. **Madison Wusstig**: Working in SEE, especially in cultural centers, I've seen how raising student fees to fund wages can cause some students to drop out if they can't cover the hold on their account. Though it may seem like small amounts, for some, it's the barrier to continuing college, which is a tough reality.

xxvii. **Connor Chen**: SEE is very large and diverse, with various centers like the Craft Center, Community Engagement, Diversity and Cultural Engagement and others. If the $17 package passed, I know you said it likely wouldn't go to wages but might go toward increasing hours. Do you think it would be reasonable to have a plan by FY26 to allocate the extra funds, even if you don't have a plan right now?

1 **Eric Beeler**: We'd work with unit directors to allocate the funds effectively. Budget managers ensure the money is used to serve students, whether for more hours, positions, or other needs.

xxviii. **Sarah Khan**: Students often don't know where their paycheck comes from, and it's important to have conversations about the balance once they understand. In SAB, decisions are made by students who work in various positions and understand the process.

xxix. ***Madison Wusstig*** *motioned to enter into a vote to send the SB-84.23 in its current form back to the Senate, seconded by* ***Sarah Khan****.*

1 (Senate) Ryan Becquer – **Aye**

2 (Senate) Eliza Eckman – **Aye**

3 (SFC) Connor Chen – **Aye**

4. (SFC) Madison Wusstig – **Aye**
5. (SAB Chair) Sarah Khan – **Aye**
6. (SFC Chair) Sophia Nowers – **Aye**
    a. The motioned **passed unanimously with 6 ayes**.
    b. SB 84.23 – "SEE Incidental Fee Allocation Bill" will be sent back to the Senate with no changes made in mediation.

b. **Closing Comment**
    i. **Eric Beeler**: I just want to thank you all for the extremely thoughtful conversation about our decision package, I appreciate it.
    ii. **Sarah Khan**: I would like to see more involvement from SABs in the future. Sometimes I feel that after it passes in the SAB it feels as though we get cut from the process.

c. **Gallery Comment**
    i. **Dylan Perfect**: I want to clarify that this committee is acting within its authority, but it was somewhat arbitrarily chosen, with two-thirds not elected by the student body. This committee now has the final say on voting down a wage increase package that the elected student Senate supported. I think this backsliding is unfortunate, and I just wanted to state that for the record.

Adjournment ~ 5:46 pm