

# WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

## 30<sup>th</sup> Student Government Association

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Thirtieth Undergraduate Student Government Association

To be held in Foisie Innovation Studio, Room 105

6:00 p.m. – February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of the Minutes

III. Public Comments

- a. Emily Perlow, the Assistant Dean of Students, came to Senate to present some of the data gained from the Undergraduate Student Survey (sent out to students during the Spring Semester of 2019). Approximately 45% of undergraduates took the survey, which is a great response rate in terms of survey research and can lead one to conclude that the information gained can be related to the current student population. One factor that surprised administration and faculty was the amount of students working for a wage. Another find was that the overall satisfaction of students was high; a huge majority of students are really satisfied with WPI and would still choose to go to this school if they had the chance to re-do the college application process. A trend was seen, though, that as students become older they become slightly grumpier through their time at WPI. Overall, in terms of satisfaction, WPI is on par with schools such as MIT. When it comes to project work, students are overall satisfied. Perlow will be meeting with department heads to speak on department specific projects and finding ways to improve those according to student's needs and wants. Somethings that students are less satisfied with are the availability of study spaces, the registrar, and the availability of courses. Perlow ensured Senate that she has shared this information with the Deans, who are spending time with staff to improve the satisfaction of students. In terms of faculty engagement, most students are satisfied when it comes to faculty's availability and approachability. It is important to note that these attitudes are about the same across the surveyed demographics, which proves true for most questions presented in this survey. One thing that was interesting was the response to the question, "Is there at least one faculty member who has taken a personal interest in your success?" Thirty-six percent of students said no. From here she opened the room to discussion on the topic. Some of the thoughts and ideas shared are as follows: Students need to make the effort to reach out to faculty, which could be difficult; If a student does not go out of their way to introduce themselves to a professor, then that professor will not know the student's name; Something to consider is that there is a large disparity in how differing years of students respond to this question due to things such as MQP— i.e. seniors are more likely to make connections with faculty because there is more opportunity for them (on this note Perlow voiced her belief that by senior year, the number of students who racted negatively towards this question should be zero; She is challenging the academic departments to work on fixing this issue.). Another idea shared was for SGA to start an initiative to encourage these connections between advisors and students. Moving forward, satisfaction in terms

*The Mission of SGA is to improve the quality of undergraduate student life at the University both academically and socially by addressing student needs and concerns, providing financial structure of WPI's student clubs and organizations, and representing the student body in a professional manner.*

## WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

of campus life is generally high, excluding food and parking. Perlow has spoken with the Director of Dining, and he, along with others, wants to increase conversation on this subject. In terms of safety, students feel incredibly safe on campus, and feel a good sense of community on and off campus. Regarding health behavior at WPI students are pretty stressed out, especially when it comes to managing their workload, but they aren't as stressed when it comes to their ability to manage their workload. Additionally, a noticeable percent feel sad, depressed, and/or overwhelmed. Going into the open-ended comments, most were positive, but there were some noticeable themes on the more critical comments: The constraint of resources as the school grows, the helpfulness of faculty and staff, student voices being heard, and the transparency of WPI's costs and spending. At the end of her presentation she asked the room about how we can close this feedback loop of students—how can we engage students in this conversation? The following ideas and comments were shared: Having a WPI email or blog for administration to share their work, and having an administrative representative come in regularly to present their current work to Senate. Perlow also shared that they will be doing the survey again, either every 1 or 2 years, and it will most likely be shorter. The data from this survey has not yet been made public; it is currently in the process of being better organized and condensed for the public. Emily Perlow made it clear that she is always open to suggestions and feedback at any point, so definitely feel free to reach out.

- b. Two representatives from Ballroom Dance (the club of the week) came to Senate to share information about both their club and team (for which people can receive gym credit). Overall, their mission is to provide all members with the ability to experience the joy of dancing in a supportive community. Dance is both a competitive and social activity, so they love to invite as many people as they can to join their organization. Some of their major programs are their weekly lessons, their competitions (They attend 6-7 competitions a year, including the Worcester Classic hosted here at WPI on March 8<sup>th</sup> this year), their social events (hair and makeup socials, team brunches, etc.), and their dance mentor program. Ballroom Dance has been very successful, especially considering that 21 of the 24 team members placed in the most recent competition. They concluded in saying that they appreciate the support of SGA especially since their numbers have doubled in the last year and the Worcester Classic is increasing in size.

#### IV. Special Orders

#### V. President's Report

- a. Interim Vice President Tocci asked for the Senate's opinion on how we, as a student organization, can help to assist the student body connect with administration, and how we can help administration connect with the student body. The responses were as follows: There could be a student representative present at administrative meetings while decisions are being made; Administration and the appropriate channels to reach administration could be introduced to students early in the WPI experience, perhaps during NSO; WPI could find a way to make students more aware of who to specifically talk to for

*The Mission of SGA is to improve the quality of undergraduate student life at the University both academically and socially by addressing student needs and concerns, providing financial structure of WPI's student clubs and organizations, and representing the student body in a professional manner.*

## WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

specific questions, comments, and/or concerns, and, also, WPI could make faculty more available to students by ensuring that they have a stronger physical presence on campus and it is clearly made known what exactly certain parts of administration do for the school; A grievance hotline could be publicized to students; If faculty was more visible on campus, it would make them less intimidating to talk to them. After suggestions were made, Interim President Tocci shared how these suggestions mimic what Exec and Cabinet expressed prior to Senate. Additionally he explained how at the Provost Student Advisory Committee Meeting, students will meet with the Provost and one of the Deans, where, recently, there were a lot of suggestions made about making administration more transparent.

- VI. Vice President's Report
  - a. Vice President Serven had Senate practice debating skills, utilizing Robert's Rules, to determine if it would be better to fight 1 horse sized duck or 50 duck sized horses.
  - b. If a senator is interested in being either Interim Vice President or Community Outreach Chair in D term, please fill out the form in Slack. This is a great opportunity to be more involved in SGA!
  - c. Vice President Serven re-explained and clarified the rules of SGAssasins. The game is being re-started due to confusion about the game.
- VII. Secretary's Report
  - a. Secretary Gruner-Mitchell asked senators to make the effort to reach out to their mentor(s) or mentee(s) since they were assigned last week.
  - b. Additionally, she announced that SGA will be having a table sitting event on February 20<sup>th</sup> for students to ask senators any and all questions, make suggestions, and be entered in raffles for prizes!
- VIII. Treasurer's Report
  - a. Treasurer Nunez emphasized the fact that senators should have already met with their constituent clubs if they were reached out to by them, but if they have not been reached out to by their clubs, then it is okay to not have met with them. Note that if a club has not yet submitted their budget, please reach out to Treasurer Nunez. She also made it clear that **budgets are due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m** and that Financial Board is going to be stricter on the 2-week FR policy.
- IX. Parliamentarian's Report
  - a. Interim Parliamentarian Sanchez read an original poem to Senators in honor of Valentine's Day. She also shouted out Interim Chair Ali because it was her birthday.
- X. Cluster Reports
  - a. Student Services Cluster
    - i. No Report
  - b. Internal Services Cluster
    - i. Interim Chair Ali reviewed some of SGA's bylaws through Kahoot. Congratulations to Marc Rosenthal for winning!
  - c. Financials Cluster

*The Mission of SGA is to improve the quality of undergraduate student life at the University both academically and socially by addressing student needs and concerns, providing financial structure of WPI's student clubs and organizations, and representing the student body in a professional manner.*

## WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

- i. No Report
- XI. Faculty, Institute, and Special Committees
  - a. No Reports
- XII. Old Business
- XIII. New Business
  - a. Secretary Gruner-Mitchell had senators write haikus about SGA and present them to the rest of Senate in honor of Valentine's Day.
- XIV. Questions, Comments and Ideas
  - a. Chair Bradley made it clear that clubs and organizations need to register their events on TechSync for them to be on the weekly events email.
  - b. Chair Guerrero asked senators to direct message her on Instagram if their club has an upcoming event so that she can advertise it on the SGA Instagram.
- XV. Announcements
  - a. Chair Moreira brought candy to Senate.
  - b. Treasurer Nunez reminded Senate that budgets are due by Saturday at 11:59 p.m.
  - c. Alpha Phi is having a Chipotle Fundraiser next Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>.
  - d. On April 18<sup>th</sup> there will be a full day of volunteer work in Worcester volunteer. Make sure to sign up if you're interested!
  - e. Today is Trivia Tuesday at The Goat's Head!
  - f. Vice President Serven will send out Assassin Assignments later tonight on Slack.
  - g. The Rotaract Club is accepting nominations for Mr. WPI until February 13<sup>th</sup> in the Campus Center.
- XVI. Advisor's Remarks
  - a. Advisor Sharry echoed Dean Perlow, in saying that if you hear student concerns, feel free to reach out to either herself or the Dean of Students Office. Additionally, when administration comes to present during Senate, there is an opportunity to spread the information shared with fellow students via word of mouth (which is a powerful mode of information sharing).
- XVII. President's Remarks
  - a. To continue with the theme of administrative transparency, Interim President Tocci told Senate that we will be working hard as an exec, cabinet, and a whole Senate to improve transparency between faculty and students. He will be working for more representatives from administration to come in, and if a senator has any thoughts or ideas of who to reach out to, please inform him. Additionally, he informed Senate that if a senator objects to adjournment, there will need to be a discussion on the motion, according to Robert's Rule.
- XVIII. Adjournment

*The Mission of SGA is to improve the quality of undergraduate student life at the University both academically and socially by addressing student needs and concerns, providing financial structure of WPI's student clubs and organizations, and representing the student body in a professional manner.*