

## **Principles of Restructuring**

Written and Delivered by Jeff Nelson

Thank you Frank and thank you Treasury for the opportunity to come before you again to talk about Executive Committee Restructuring. My goal with this presentation is to provide an update and the latest snapshot of the direction we are looking to go. I am not submitting any proposal for approval, so I do not expect a vote to be taken tonight. I only wish to discuss broad principles. I hope that we can come before you again in two weeks with a concrete plan for consideration. In the interim, I plan to continually communicate plans to you and the Executive Committees so that we can find common ground and work together to develop a proposal that works for everyone.

As you now, we currently have 10 executive committees. They have attained this status for a diversity of reasons. Some were groups started by the SU Execs. Some were denied block funding and subsequently funded by the SU Execs. Some were former committees of Student Union that branched out and others were arbitrarily added.

This information is important because it shows how difficult it is to restructure this category of groups. It is hard to fairly apply a definition to the term "Executive Committee" because there is not one characteristic that each of these groups share.

This process has gone on for the past two years. It started with Jason Lewis and Bobby Jones. Last year, Yewande built upon their work and I have been given the opportunity to finish the job this year. I have been working with various members of Student Union to come up with a solution. To date, I have met with the Executive Committees on two different occasions. I have presented to both Senate and Treasury. I have met with Executive Committee advisors. And I have talked to individual members of Student Union in formal and informal sessions.

A lot of ideas have been thrown around, and I have locked myself in a study room each week to think about ways to find some consensus among the competing viewpoints. Nevertheless, this process has taught me a lot about Student Union and I am grateful for the opportunity.

The trend so far has been to point out groups that seem to be exceptions to certain rules and to set them apart. I think we need to try something different. Instead of first making exceptions to a rule, we should first rethink the rule and see if it makes sense. Maybe if we change the rule, we can benefit the group that seems to be the exception as well as a number of other groups, enabling us to improve the services we provide in a more broad sense.

This principle most clearly applies to the media groups. They are regarded as exceptions to the Budget Committee process, and rightfully so, because they buy a lot of equipment on a yearly basis. Instead of making these groups the exception, lets rethink our policy on funding equipment for all student groups.

To that end, the idea to create an Equipment Committee has come up. This committee would sit on Treasury and would have the job of accounting for all Student Union purchased equipment. A few days ago, I learned that Student Union purchases a lot of equipment for groups and it is often

lost. Since many groups don't have storage space, group members may keep the equipment in their dorm rooms. Imagine what happens when a senior has a piece of equipment they have been keeping for a group for four years. Once they graduate, that equipment is likely to leave with them, and Student Union ends up buying the equipment again. Keeping track of the equipment we already have is a pressing need. Additionally, the committee will work with Budget Committee and equipment purchasing groups to strategically plan equipment purchases, equipment repairs and equipment upgrades.

The most important aspect of this committee is that it will ensure that equipment allocations are done in full and no fundraising expectation is associated with it. This is important because equipment is a resource that belongs to the campus community and the entire student body. If we want everyone to use it, we should not place the burden of fundraising on a single group, but we should fund it in full.

This idea has received support from Treasury Leadership. I will be meeting with media groups and other Executive Committees who are likely to become Category I student groups as a result of the restructuring to outline how this new idea will affect them. I want to make sure that they are comfortable and can continue to operate as normal.

While the Equipment Committee addresses a pressing need, there are still unanswered questions that must be resolved before we can move forward with implementation. For example, not all groups can readily lend out the equipment they use. How does the committee deal with this? Where will equipment be stored for groups that don't have office space? How many new student workers will SU need to hire in order to make equipment leasing a logistical possibility? Should groups that maintain equipment be able to charge a nominal fee for leasing? I hope we can answer these and other questions in the coming weeks.

Even when we rethink policies, we still find that there are some groups who present challenges to rules that generally work. In these cases, it is appropriate to give groups some special consideration. It is important that this special consideration is done categorically and is defined in a manner that is clear and consistent. Also, we must be diligent in our commitment to the relationship between special consideration and great responsibility.

We want to move away from earmarking individual groups as exceptions to the Budget Committee process. Instead, we want to create a system of boards to organize groups that don't fit into the category system. This way, we can be fair and give all groups the opportunity to explore an alternate path if they feel they don't work as a category student group. The first board we want to create is the Sports Board.

The Sports Board is intended to govern all sports clubs on campus. This board would work similarly to the way that the Sports Club Federation currently works.

There are still questions to think about. Who approves new club sports? Should SGAC do it? Should the Executives do it? Should the board, itself, do it? There are also club sports that are not currently members of the Sports Club Federation. Should they be added to the Sports Board?

The next board is The Social Programming Board. It is designed to enable the Vice President of Programming to create a strategic vision for large-scale campus programming. We want to restructure the current SPB to make member committees more accountable. We also want to use this as an opportunity for Student Union to re-assert itself in the conversation about how programming happens on campus.

We are a very over-programmed institution. On a given night, there can be up to 4 great programs happening. We would love students to attend all of them. However, many of them overlap and students have to make tough choices. Sometimes, students are so overwhelmed by a full class schedule and so many events happening at once that they tune out and don't participate in anything. This board, if implemented correctly, can really help us cut down on over-programming, spend money more wisely and create a better experience for students.

This project does not come without deep challenges. In an ideal world, we could have one fund dedicated to social programming and have the groups that makeup the board come together to collaborate. However, we have a culture where groups are self-interested. This self-interested is not necessarily a bad thing. We have cultivated an environment where we encourage groups to think about how they alone can put on the best programming so they can justify asking for more money. These groups have never been expected to program for the greater good.

It is difficult to alter the culture that we created in one year, but we must lay the seeds for change nonetheless. We want these groups to collaborate, but we are not in a position to give them one budget and expect them to do events together. We can, however, create a board that will bring these groups together to plan their own events strategically. To plan events in a manner that balances a year of great programming. To plan events in a manner that builds tradition, that builds school spirit and that builds an experience that every Wash. U. student will want to take part in.

This is no easy task. If we continue to give social programming groups separate budgets, how can we create a structure that holds them accountable and is a check on the programming they do? How can we get other students involved in the brainstorming process so that we make sure that events will actually attract students in the numbers we want.

There are some who have an idea of how they want Executive Committees to function. To them, I plead caution. We must be careful not to impose any changes on Executive Committees without their consultation throughout the process. We must also be realistic in the change we make. I would love to correct every inefficient process within Student Union right now; however, I know that we must gradually get to the place we want to be. We must be open to compromise and always look to find common ground. I don't think its possible for all of us to agree on every aspect of how we should proceed. Nevertheless, we must trust each other's intentions and be ready to give as much as we ask others to. I look forward to communicating plans with you all over the next two weeks. Please feel free to share any feedback you have.

Thank You.