

CFR Meeting Minutes
7 November 2025
Zoom & VDEN 129
9:15 – 10:45AM

Members attending: Bonamy, Dimitrov, Drapela, Fortin, Grigar (Chair), He, LoSavio, Olson, Reisz, Schimelpfenig, Spradlin

Senators in attendance: Phelps (TT), Solovitz (TT)

Guest: Damien Sinnott, Interim Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations

Recording Secretary: Paul Bonamy

The meeting began with some quick business prior to a campus lockdown drill at 9:30am, to allow Sinnott to discharge responsibilities related to the drill.

Minutes for the October 24th meeting were approved with one correction.

The Senate is recruiting five faculty members for the General Education Reform Committee. Applications are open online through the 14th of November. It does not appear that the Administration is specifically seeking representation from each campus, but it seems like campus representation would be beneficial.

Nanette Thrush has agreed to run for the CT Senate seat being vacated by Shiloh Green-Soto. The election is planned for the week of November 10th.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Food Service shared an update. They have been trying to get survey information from Jacob Winstead, President of the ASWSUV. Winstead has not yet been able to share information with us. Eric Scott (Senior Director for Engagement and Well-being) has reportedly been looking for quotes to get the campus kitchens back into a usable state. Additionally, LoSavio reports that she is unable to continue to serve on the committee at this time.

[Recorder's Note: At this point, Sinnott's attention was no longer being occupied by the lockdown, and he was able to join the discussion.]

Sinnott was then able to offer his perspective on food service on campus. He reports that he has also talked to Winstead, and that more generally a lot of people are working on food service from many angles, so it would make sense to bring all of the various working groups together into a single group.

The current food service vendor's contract has been getting renewed annually on a discretionary basis. It appears that VCFO Chambers-Taube was doing this. The current contract expires in June 2026.

From Sinnott's perspective, *the biggest hurdle to restoring food service is the question of how to run it, rather than an issue of kitchen readiness*. Facilities are certainly necessary, but staffing is costly and pricing is tricky. Food service needs ongoing funding in order to be sustainable. It may be possible to employ students as work study employees, potentially reducing the number of dedicated staff required. Students in Tri-Cities took over operation of their campus café after it was 'closed', but this approach has also proved to be difficult to sustain. Alternatively, we could potentially bring in a franchise to operate food service. That process would involve putting out a formal Request for Qualifications to bring in candidates. It is worth noting that this sort of arrangement often includes giving the vendor 'ownership' of catering on campus – as part of operating our food service, they also get to do all on-campus catering for events and the like.

Olsen will connect Spradlin to Scott, and cc Sinnott and Winstead on the communication, to hopefully start unifying our efforts.

Conversation then turned to the budget and related issues. Opening the topic was an overview of *how the WSUV budget interacts with the overall WSU budget*. The WSUV core fund comes from tuition and state funds, with an approximately 50/50 split. Tuition is generated locally, and we keep all of it except for an 11.5% portion, which goes to funding system-level expenses (the President, accounting services, cash management, etc.) There is an ongoing debate about whether this is the right number, and the percentage may come up as part of the President's redesign. This 11.5% is what the previous VCFO referred to as our 'franchise fee'.

The state allocation is paid to the university as a whole (not individual campuses) and then divided among the campuses at the system level in some unclear way. When the non-Pullman campuses were established 35 years ago, there was a formula for how the allocation got distributed. It has changed over time, but no one seems to know the rationale for how it is currently set.

WSUV gets to decide how to use our core funds, but they are university resources. In the past, reductions to campus allocations were only applied to the state allocation in Vancouver and Tri-Cities, but the most recent cut applied to all core funding, not just the state allocation. The campus budget also includes noncore funds, from things like Running Start revenue, and auxiliary revenue from sources like renting out space and parking permits.

Regarding parking fees: Tri-Cities doesn't have a fee associated with parking permits, but it also doesn't do a lot of maintenance on its parking lots. Their students passed a 'parking

and safety fee' that covers parking maintenance and public safety on campus, but it provides resources very slowly.

System-wide, the big challenge is cashflow. There is a large influx of funds at the start of fall semester, and a smaller but still substantial influx in the spring due to tuition collection. Universities like to keep enough cash on hand to cover 90 days of expenses. The WSU system stays above that threshold, but only looking at all funds. If we focus only on the more liquid funds, the numbers are less favorable. Cash is managed centrally for the WSU system (which Sinnott appreciates), but we haven't had any recent system-level harmonizing of budgets. Additionally, some units are regularly spending beyond their budgets, which has a strongly negative impact on cash flow and reserves. For example, a unit like CAS should always generate revenue, but CAS in Pullman is operating beyond its budget. CAS in Pullman, specifically, does not get to keep all of their generated revenue for their own budget, but this is necessary – and common across universities – to subsidize programs that typically operate in a deficit because of expensive facilities or other requirements. It was noted that Vancouver campus is solidly in the black and generating reserves.

Sinnott made clear on a number of occasions that we are not working with The rpk Group because the campus is in trouble. None of the necessary criteria for being 'in trouble' have been met. What we are facing are declines in revenue, state support, and enrollment, while higher ed in general is seeing increasing questions about the value and ROI of college education. Thus, our goal is not to fix problems but to take a close look at our resources so we don't end up in trouble moving forward. Sinnott also pointed out that, while we are not sending The rpk Groups's data to Pullman, it does all originate in sources available to Pullman. (It's data from Institutional Research, after all.)

A question was raised as to *how closing the Fine Arts program in Tri-Cities helped anything.* Per the faculty manual, faculty are being moved to other programs. Moving the faculty into other programs allow them to take over classes in those areas, which reduces the need for adjunct faculty and the like. So, not losing faculty doesn't mean that expenses do not go down.

Sinnott was asked to address the claim that deans' budgets cannot be used to support non-Pullman campuses. First, he notes that deans are deans for everyone in their colleges regardless of physical location. So yes, Tri-Cities and Vancouver typically fund their own campuses, but the deans should still be involved in supporting their faculty across campuses. Additionally, deans do have funds they can direct to the campuses, including F&A returns.

Finally, *Sinnott was asked about funding for the digital accessibility mandate from the Federal Government.* Faculty generally don't have the relevant software, reports from Pullman say that faculty are needing to handle their own captioning, and the Access Center and IT (Vancouver) report that there is no funding for adding captioning. Sinnott suggests

that, if this proves to be a big issue, faculty can work with their academic directors to pull together a proposal for Christine [Portfors, Interim VCAARGE]. While there isn't currently anything in the budget to support captioning and other digital accessibility, it might be possible to locate it.

After the conversation with Sinnott, a few other items were discussed:

- The College of Medicine approved continuing education course credit through the Society for Evidence-Based Gender Medicine (SEGM), which is considered an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Faculty Senate is investigating.
- Following an incident with a disruptive student in class, it has been discovered that Pullman now operates the AWARE network for the whole system. Additionally, WSUV's public safety has one set of policies related to student disruptions and the like, while Student Services has a different set.
- The Design+ group (involved in the system redesign) conducted discovery session focus groups during the first week of November. A combination of surveys, focus groups, and interviews is a normal method for triangulating data collection on what people are thinking, but communication and the messaging of the invitations could be improved.
- With The rpk Group, Design+, and Evolve all accessing campus at least in part, it prompts questions of how these groups are being picked and how much it's costing.