**STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION MINUTES**

**March 19, 2019**

I. ROLL CALL: Owen Azevedo, Erin coulter and Emily Waldern were absent

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM March 5, 2019: Minutes were approved.

III. PUBLIC REMARKS: No Remarks

1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT: **Marcus DiBacco**
   1. Tonight I have the distinct honor of welcoming Representative John Velis to the SGA. Representative Velis is not only a member of the Massachusetts Legislature but is a Major in the United States Army JAG Corps, and his unit was recently deployed to Afghanistan. Not only are we happy for his safe return but we are grateful for your service to the Commonwealth and the Nation. At home, he currently serves on the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, and the Joint Committee on Marijuana Policy. I am sure, Representative Velis has a lot of information for us and I am sure we all have a lot of questions for him. So please welcome Representative John Velis.
2. **Representative John Velis**: Hi guys, I just want to hear from you guys today. I want any questions you have. This is about you guys and your role in government. I wear a lot of different hats, so please ask me about Afghanistan, State Legislature, or Law. In the government, right now the only people losing is us. I wish I had better news about change, but it hasn’t changed. Like I said I was over in Afghanistan, and if the Taliban are more willing to compromise and change their views, than our government we have a problem.
3. A little bit about me, I am all about problem solving. I am a Democrat, but I am not afraid to cross the line and vote Republican on certain issues. If someone has a better idea and sits down with me and I agree, I will change my views. I am also a member of the Ways and Means Committee, we met today. Does anyone have questions?
4. **Joseph Newlin**: How do you balance your time between being a State Representative and the military?
5. **John Velis**: That is a great question, so my legislative aid was me when I was in Afghanistan. It is a challenge, but I love it. I love this job, but if I were ever forced to choose, I love serving my country.
6. **Dave Youngerman**: Do you see the US government ever coming out of these foreign countries?
7. **John Velis**: I think that in regards to the future of America and the adversaries that we face in the world, there is a lot of talk about fighting, but there is a need for focus on the world-wide war on terrorism. As for pulling out of Afghanistan, as a civilian, I think if we weren’t there they wouldn’t be targeting us. One day in Afghanistan I woke up to a loud explosion an ISISK member walked into a school of young women in an SAT prep school and killed every one of them. And that is the type of attack we should be focusing on.
8. **Tommy Howard**: I have heard of Representatives crossing, where they identify as one party, but feel strongly about one issue in another party. Do you think you represent your constituents in regards to issues like that?
9. **John Velis**: That’s a great question, when it comes to voting, there is no gray button, even though there is a lot of gray area. I do cross over parties in favor of my constituents. Issues that I often cross over and vote Republican on are local aid. For example, one that hits home is potholes, and increasing funds to do so. I think there is too big of a gap between the parties.
10. **Audrey Theriault**: What do you think of the federal military budget? Should they change it in anyway?
11. **John Velis**: I think we need to be smarter about how we spend our money. Congress protects things for their district, but that are not always best. You could trim fat from the defense budget if you get rid of antiquated weapons. We could reduce it by spending smarter.
12. **Matt Michalik**: You said we need more leaders and that we are future leaders. What advice do you have for us?
13. **John Velis**: Follow your gut and follow your passion. In Boston, I see a lot of group think going on. A leader says something and people flock behind them. Be that leader. You be the trendsetter. This is clique but my mom told me this and I took it to heart: do something scary every single day.
14. **Sam Tsongalis**: Last week, New Zealand had their first mass shooting in 20 years. In the US, we have shootings all the time, what do you see coming in the US for gun reform?
15. **John Velis**: In 2012, I was in Afghanistan when Sandyhook happened. How many kids died there and nothing was done. It perplexes me. Why do we humans kill each other? The short answer is no, not if you look at our politics today and the culture of our politics. This relates to a whole other conversation about money and politics. The NRA, with money and views aside, we can learn something from them, they know how to lobby and how to get their members to lobby. I saw somewhere between 80-90% of Americans favor stricter governmental regulation when it comes to gun control, but yet there is no foreseen movement.
16. **Kaytlyn Mekal**: Is there talk of additional funding to towns like Lawrence and Southbridge school systems that are underfunded?
17. **John Velis**: There are two focuses. Cherish is for Higher Ed and Promise is for K-12. There are three bills, we have heard it loud and clear. In politics, you can’t just assume that the difference is between Democrats and Republicans there is often intergroup conflict. Funding for education is talked about a lot, but they are mostly reporting on interest groups, they should take a page out of the NRAs book.
18. **Cam Swan**: I know that the FY19 budget was about 50% to Health Care. What does it look like for next year?
19. **John Velis**: It is probably the same. It is such a big part of what we do as State legislatures.
20. **Cam Swan**: What is your take on the media, the things they report, are things really that bad?
21. **John Velis**: The media seems to be entertainment now. I think it’s awful, it’s disgusting. The things they are reporting on, is a disservice because they are missing so many things that are missed and not reported. For example, that things in Afghanistan are the closest to peace than ever. People like to be verified in their thoughts. Democrats watch some news platform, Republicans watch others, I think it is fraudulent. Things are being driven by demand, the more people watch, the more things are printed. I think you need to read the news to get the real story.
22. **Lorenze Beltran**: People tend to stay in the herd mentality, so if you are indecisive in your own opinion, how do you stay true to your morals whether or not you agree with others.
23. **John Velis**: You need to make a decision and stick with it. Don’t let people sway you, hear the other side out, but if you are still firm in your beliefs then stick with your convictions.
24. **Maddy Scott**: What do you have to say about transgender people serving in the military, from a military and law point of view?
25. **John Velis**: I think it is stupid. If politics start to infiltrate our military we have a problem. It is about completing the mission and if someone can do that that is all that matters. We all bleed the same color. It is not a small issue for those affected by it. But if you ask the military all they want is to serve.
26. **Lindsay McNulty**: What is your stance on climate change?
27. **John Velis**: Climate change there is an understanding that we are effected by our environment. We have to deal with it. It is a hot button topic. In life, people see what is in front of them they don’t always look into the future. One of the biggest problems for environmentalists is not getting people to see since it isn’t right in front of them.
28. **Massara Almafrachi**: What did we learn about passing a bill that is not true?
29. **John Valis**: A bill gets filed, goes to committee. But it has a lot to do with personality, who is filing the bill, and how they act in office.
30. **Dave Youngerman**: Do you see a possibility of a Centrist party coming up?
31. **John Velis**: It is a desire, but is difficult for them to get elected to higher office because the parties weigh in, then the money comes in for campaigning. People want it, a small portion of the population are far left or far right, but they are the most vocal. People need to participate in their democracy in early stages. We can break down who votes and when. The activists are the most likely to vote in their primary. But yes, there is an appetite for a more moderate. But it is difficult for patrician offices.
32. If I can be of assistance to anyone, or if anyone wants to see how our government works, our office is right down the road. Please reach out and participate.
    1. Many of you are aware that on Friday, March 8, the Faculty concluded their Vote of No Confidence. Two Hundred eleven faculty members voted saying that they have no confidence in President Torrecilha’s “leadership skills and fiscal stewardship of the institution”, six maintain their confidence, and two abstained. This vote comes at a time of particular turmoil for State Universities as the contractual dispute recently heated up. However, and let me be clear, the faculty state that although the contract has raised some issues and increased frustration it is not the sole reason for the vote. Of course the contract issue raises tensions across campus, but the reasons why there was a Vote of No Confidence are independent of it. The faculty have cited many reasons for having no confidence, which can be summed up to poor communication and a lack of transparency from administration. It is crucial that we all understand that the Vote of No Confidence is purely symbolic. The Board of Trustees has final say on whether or not the President holds his position. And in response to the vote, Chair Kevin Queenin spoke on behalf of the Board in saying that President Torrecilha has their full support.
    2. In regard to the contract, I am sure that you are all aware that negotiations have been carrying on for nearly two full years. The negotiations are between the State and the MSCA Union, President Torrecilha supports our faculty in this endeavor but it is out of his control. I believe that a majority of the faculty understand his position hence the independence of the two issues at hand.
    3. The information that I have now provided you with is a basic summary of what has happened thus far. Before I discuss our stance with you all, I must first apologize. I should have been more proactive in providing you all with this information. Obviously, this is the first time that we have met since the Vote of No Confidence, but the contract dispute is not new. Again, I sincerely apologize.
    4. To our position on the contract. We support our faculty and we hope that the contract can be decided on soon. However, this fight is not our own. The only players who should take part in this game are MSCA Union and the State. We may watch, we may cheer, or we may jeer from the bleachers but any pass to us is way out of bounds. Additionally, I do not believe that we can say, in full confidence, that the decisions made over the contract would benefit the students, at least and in particular not directly.
    5. We have heard rumors, and I am sure some of you have as well, that a handful of students would like to hold our own Vote of No Confidence in the President. Naturally, we would expect that this sort of vote, being of great importance and requiring not only support but organization, would come from the SGA. I say to you now that unless there is expansive debate and a high demand for this vote to take place, it will not. President Torrecilha was appointed in January of my first year here at Westfield State. Throughout my tenure, as well as his, we have had issues in communication and transparency. This is commonplace with any new relationship no matter the venue. Overtime, we have worked on these issues. We have made steps to improve them and we have come a long way. To now declare that we have no confidence, would be to throw away all that we have worked for and, looking forward, hope to build. I will not have us give up simply because there are still issues. With that in mind, no effort will be made to stop or prevent students from holding a grassroots movement or vote. Students are guaranteed the right to do so by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Instead, I ask that if you know the students leading this effort that you urge them to speak with me so that we may reach a level of understanding. Again, such an effort will not be prevented.
    6. Right before the meeting, we sent out an email to all students saying what I have said to you now. Towards the end of the email, we noted that the next SGA Executive Council Town Hall Meeting will be held on Monday, April 1, at 4:45 pm right here in SGA. I aim to discuss these issues and any other at this open forum so bring your friends. Finally, never forget that we serve at the pleasure of the student body, thank you.
       1. **Mitchell MiKittirck**: So, you are saying that SGA won’t be doing a vote of No Confidence?
       2. **Marcus DiBacco**: Yes.
       3. **Mitchell MiKittrick**: Are you saying you don’t want SGA people to get involved with a student vote of No Confidence?
       4. **Marcus DiBacco**: You have two roles here on campus, as a student and as an SGA member. As a student, you can do whatever you want under the first amendment. As an SGA we are not holding a vote unless there is a high demand for it.
       5. **Drew Dalton**: What would a vote of No Confidence from the students mean?
       6. **Marcus DiBacco**: Like the faculty’s vote, it is purely symbolic.
       7. **Sam Tsongalis**: Can you explain what the vote of No Confidence is and what it means so it can be reflected in the minutes?
       8. **Marcus DiBacco**: In this case, it means the faculty are saying that they don’t have confidence in the communication from or the transparency of President Torrecilha. That being said, the trustees’ response is essentially saying, we hear you, but we have confidence. And it has happened twice in the past with President Woodward and President Applbaum, and nothing really happened from them.
       9. **ScottY Howe**: Are the trustees swayed at all by the vote of No Confidence, or are they sticking with their same view?
       10. **Cam Swan**: Those are the official views of the board.
       11. **Joey Joyal**: There is talk of a grassroots vote from the students, and since a lot of the students on campus don’t really care about this, and we represent them, shouldn’t we talk about it more?
       12. **Marcus DiBacco**: We are not taking a stance on the contracts, because it is not a student issue; it is between Faculty and Administration. As for the vote of No Confidence we can have a dialogue.
       13. **Audrey Theriault**: Are there any different way of activism other than a vote of No Confidence that we can use as students?
       14. **Marcus DiBacco**: We can always have more meetings. There is 60 minutes with the president, but one common problem is that people have problems with giving truth to power, it can be intimating.
       15. **Scotty Howe**: I do think we should have some kind of discussion about this.
       16. **Marcus DiBacco**: We are holding a Town Hall on Monday, April 1 at 4:45 pm down here in SGA where we can have an unofficial discussion, and have a more official one during the SGA meeting on Tuesday, April 2.
       17. **Olivia Gwynn**: What can we do to show our support for our faculty?
       18. **Marcus DiBacco**: It is easy to see them as a group, but they are individuals. There are some faculty that use students as pons. We can support them as people and as students, but we have to be careful because when an agreement is reached, we are the ones paying for it.
       19. **Audrey Theriault**: Point of information, there is an impact on students because internships and other extra requirements for majors are not being done because of the faculty’s work to rule. So, I think it is something that is becoming a student issue.
       20. **Marcus DiBacco**: I hear you, but it is still individual, some faculty will refuse to do those things, but also look at who that is coming from.
       21. **Joey Newlin**: Is it possible to list somewhere to meet with the president or the leaders of the union so students get that info for themselves?
       22. **Marcus DiBacco**: There is 60 minutes with the president, but it can be difficult to get that set up, but we will try to.
       23. **Joey Newlin**: Are the president or the leader of the union coming down to SGA?
       24. **Marcus DiBacco**: The president is coming down April 2 and Margo Hennessey is the leader of the MSCA chapter, and she has not requested to come down, and we have a full schedule for the semester.
       25. **Sam Tsongalis**: We can always write to our State Representatives and government, don’t go just go swinging at the president.
       26. **Marcus DiBacco**: Yes, don’t forget about the state, local, and federal levels.
       27. **Cameron Kelleher**: So, SGA doesn’t have a stance on the contract?
       28. **Marcus DiBacco**: We don’t have a stake in the game. Essentially, we are Switzerland.
       29. **Joey Joyal**: Can we have a discussion about it?
       30. **Marcus DiBacco**: Yes, we can talk more about it at the Town Hall, Monday, April 1 at 4:45 pm.
       31. **Drew Dalton**: If the students were to have a vote of No Confidence, would it be SGA wide or student body wide?
       32. **Marcus DiBacco**: It would be through SGA, but it would be student wide. I would be hesitant to do SGA wide vote
    7. Items not listed on the agenda.
33. BOARD OF TRUSTEES' REPORT: **Cameron Swan**
    1. As I mentioned last time State House Day will be Wednesday, April 3. Currently, we are targeting 7:00 am for the departure. I have heard from some of you, but if this is something you want to do please email me at [Trustee.sga@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:Trustee.sga@westfield.ma.edu). as soon as possible, the date is coming sooner than you think. Once I have a finalized list we will talk specifics about the day.
34. **Daniel Armnay**: When do we have to let you know by?
35. **Cam Swan**: As soon as you can, definitely by Thursday.
36. **Joey Newlin**: Is it a National State House Day or is it just school’s State House Day? And what do we do there?
37. **Cam Swan**: It is just our school. I will give more information if you sign up, but you should get in contact with your State Rep and set up a meeting with them.
38. **Katherine Pinney**: What time are we leaving?
39. **Cam Swan**: 7:00 am.
    1. All University Committee**: No Report**

B. NEASC Steering Committee: **No Report**

C. Strategic Planning Committee: **No Report**

D. Student Advisory Council: **No Report**

1. VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT-STUDENT LIFE: **Thomas Howard V**
   1. Student Affairs Committee: **No Report**
   2. Diversity/Inclusion Committee: **No Report**
   3. Food Services Committee**: No Report**
   4. Parking Control Board: **No Report**
   5. Student Athletic Advisory Board: **No Report**
   6. Substance Advisory Committee: **No Report**
   7. Veteran’s Affairs Report: **No Report**
2. VICE PRESIDENT’S REPORT-ACADEMIC LIFE: **Madeleine Scott**
   1. Academic Policies Committee: **No Report**
   2. Curriculum Committee: **No Report**
   3. Enrollment Management Committee: **No Report**
   4. International Programs Committee: **No Report**
   5. Academic Technology and Information Services Committee: **No Report**
   6. Writing Liaison Committee: **No Report**
   7. Guest Lecture Committee: **No Report**
3. VICE PRESIDENT’S REPORT-FINANCE: **Thalita Neves**
   1. Finance Committee: **No Report**
   2. Foundation Report: **No Report**
   3. Student Organization Council: **No Report**
4. VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT-PROGRAMMING: **Matthew Howe**
5. Campus Activities Board**: Matthew Howe**
6. Here are the events for the week.
7. Tonight, March 19 in the Owl’s Nest at 8:00 pm, SAIL is hosting an open mic night. Stop by to show off your silky voice.
8. If you’re looking to perform again, stop by on Thursday, March 21 for WSKB’s open mic night.
9. Bingo is Friday, March 22! Same place and time as usual, 10:00 pm in the Scanlon Banquet Hall. There’s only a few Bingos left for the year so definitely stop by for your chance to win.
10. On Saturday, March 23 in the Owl’s Nest, SAIL is hosting their smart phone film festival at 8:00 pm. Come down to see student’s homemade videos.
11. Now for something to look forward to. Owl Bash is only a few weeks away so start getting excited now. More information about the schedule of events will come your way very shortly.
12. CAB’s next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, March 20 in E017 at 5:00 pm.
13. Neighborhood Advisory Board: **No Report**
14. Community Relations/Fundraising Report**: No Report**
15. SECRETARY'S REPORT: **Elizabeth Ferrara/Courtney Smith**
    1. Executive Secretary Report: **No Report**
    2. Legislative Secretary Report: **Courtney Smith**
16. The deadline for Blue Key Nominations has been moved to Wednesday, March 20 of this week.
17. For those of you who may need a refresher the Blue Key Award is the highest leadership award that a student can obtain during their time at Westfield State. The Blue Key Award is reserved for those students who are going above and beyond in their extracurricular activities.
18. I want to emphasize that students can and should nominate other students for this award, arguably you know what your fellow peers are achieving the best out of anyone.
19. Tonight I have printed out nomination forms in the event that you have someone on your mind to nominate, which you can do after the meeting. Otherwise, if you think of a fellow leader to nominate please email me your nominations by tomorrow at midnight.
20. **Joey Newlin**: How do we know if the person you are nominating has already gotten the award in the past?
21. **Courtney Smith**: You can nominate anyone, it doesn’t matter if they got it in the past, and they can get it again.
22. PARLIAMENTARIAN REPORT: **Jacob O’Kane**
23. Rules and Regulations Committee: **No Report**
24. Constitutional Review Committee: **No Report**
25. ADVISORY COMMITTEES:
    1. Advisory Committee on Facilities Planning: **No Report**
    2. Advisory Committee on Academic Planning: **No Report**
    3. Advisory Committee on the CURCA**: No Report**
    4. Advisory Committee on Budget Planning: **No Report**
    5. Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Affirmative Action: **No Report**
    6. Advisory Committee for Vice President of Student Affairs Search Committee: **Thalita Neves**
26. You all should have gotten an email about this already, but in case you don’t check your email, I’m here to remind you all that the VPSA candidates are visiting campus next week and I need as many people to be at the student forum as possible. The student forums will be:

* Monday, March 25 from 12:45 pm – 1:45 pm in the SGA room E017.
* Tuesday, March 26 from 12:45 pm – 1:45 pm in the SGA room E017.
* Tuesday, April 2 from 12:45 pm – 1:45 pm in the SGA room E017.

1. Another reminder email will probably go out to students either later this week or next week, but if you have any questions in the meantime, let me know.
2. **Kaytlyn Mekal**: Are there emails being sent out with candidate’s resumes?
3. **Thalita Neves**: Yes.

1. COMMUTER COUNCIL, CLASS AND HALL REPORTS:
2. Commuter Council: **No Report**
3. Senior Class: **Shane Stocker**
4. This Thursday the Senior Class Council will be hosting an open house/Town Hall meeting in the SGA room E017 at 3:30 pm. We encourage anyone and everyone to attend.
5. Next Wednesday, March 27, the Senior Class Council will be hosting a 50 days until graduation toast from 6:00 pm until 7:00 pm in the Scanlon Banquet Hall. There will be pizza, cake, and we will be raffling off caps and gowns.
6. Junior Class**: David Youngerman**
7. I am excited to tell you about the progress the Class of 2020 has made since our last meeting.
8. We have spoken with Alex Simisky, who will help our class by creating a video that helps students of the Class of 2020 connect with especially talented student within the Junior Class. Our video will be two to three minutes long and will connect these students by introducing themselves, why they chose Westfield State, what their special talent is and what their plans are after Westfield State. He said that realistically, between now and the end of the year, we can create two videos if we have exceptionally talented students.
9. We already have one student Tyler McCallumore who I know to be the YoYo master of Westfield State. He has shown off his skills in classroom presentations and goes to professional YoYo competitions. I am happy to have this relationship with Tyler and just met him on a whim one day. I believe that there are many more students like Tyler out there. If you know anyone from the Class of 2020 who has a special talent, please tell them to reach out to me or the rest of the Class Council.
10. I hope this is a great and innovative way to connect our students to build a community and will further better connections for the Class of 2020 into senior year.
11. If other Classes would like to continue this, I believe that we can connect our classes more from these videos and will interest new students to come to Westfield by understanding that there is a very diverse and fun student population that go to Westfield State.
12. We are continuing our progress with senior events for next year as well as finalizing a date for the Buzz Off in April. If you want to start fund-raising for this event you can start now and please tell your friends who want to fund-raise for such a great cause like the Buzz-Off an event put on with the help of One Mission.
13. Our next scheduled meeting is this Friday, March 22 from 3:00 pm until 4:00 pm in the SGA Conference Room E020
14. Sophomore Class: **No Report**
15. First Year Class: **No Report**
16. Apartment Complex: **No Report**
17. Courtney Hall: **No Report**
18. Davis Hall: **No Report**
19. Dickinson Hall: **No Report**
20. Lammers Hall**: No Report**
21. Lansdowne Place: **No Report**
22. New Hall**: No Report**
23. Scanlon Hall: **No Report**
24. University Hall: **No Report**

1. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
2. NEW BUSINESS: (requires majority vote to be opened)

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS:
   1. **Mitchell MiKittrick**: If you are interested in my position for next year, feel free to talk to me after the meeting.
   2. **Liz Ferrara**: Buy your Owl Ball tickets, they are extended to Thursday, March 21.
   3. **Jake O’Kane**: Rules and Regs after the meeting.
   4. **Liz Ferrara**: Come to Food Committee at 4:00 tomorrow, March 20.
   5. **Barbra Hand**: Liz, are the half-price tickets for senators available until Thursday?
   6. **Liz Ferrara**: Yes.
   7. **Marcus DiBacco**: Can I see all Hall Council members after the meeting, and Exec in cubes after that
   8. **Matt Howe: 60** days until commencement**.**

1. ROLL CALL: Own Azevedo, Erin Coulter, and Emily Walden were absent.
2. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 7:17 pm.

*To ensure the courtesy of others,*

*Please refrain from ANY cell phone use during the meeting.*

*Please also note that for accurate record keeping purposes, SGA meetings are recorded and kept on file by the SGA Executive Secretary.*