



# Plan to Renew Student Activism

Promoting Civic Engagement at Washington University



Washington University in St. Louis  
Student Union





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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*To the Washington University Community:*

Student activism is a commitment to perform intentional actions that promote positive change for fellow students and is demonstrated through the collective strength of students getting involved and working together to improve the community around them.

The success of Washington University is directly tied to student activism. The University's ascent to a position of global leadership hinges on its ability to "encourage students to be bold, independent and creative thinkers" that are "useful members of our global society." Local service is a catalyst for global change. That is why it is so important to promote opportunities for student activism and civic engagement on campus.

Recently, there has been a decline in student activism—a decline that can be attributed to a lack of intentional leadership on the part of Student Union. There is no doubt that Student Union takes seriously the responsibilities of allocating the student activity fee and facilitating campus programming. But, there is no such certainty regarding Student Union's commitment to being a conduit for student activism.

This perception is responsible for both an increase in student apathy and a decrease in student empowerment. And even those students who try to make a difference often find their efforts limited because they are done in small pockets without effective partnerships and coalitions<sup>1</sup>. In order to reverse this trend Student Union must help to renew student activism by engaging and mobilizing students

around common efforts to improve the undergraduate experience.

These improvements are investments we cannot afford to delay. Even as the current economic recession forces the University to constrain activity and limit growth in many areas, the undergraduate experience will remain our greatest asset.

Furthermore, these improvements must be led by students in order to be embraced by students. This has been the case throughout our history. Students have been the impetus behind many great improvements like the judicial code and student bill of rights, the Village BLOC program, the campus card system, the alumni mentoring service and the most recent athletic complex renovation.

The *Plan to Renew Student Activism* is a proposal that aims to promote civic engagement and encourage students to become active participants in their own experience via three objectives: advocating for investments in the areas that the majority of students experience on a daily basis; proactively engaging the student body in an ongoing dialogue about important issues in innovative ways; and actively building support and coalitions within the student body for key projects and initiatives.

As we begin this project, let us remember our guiding principle—making reality the vision of Student Union: empowering every undergraduate student to be a force for change and improvement at Washington University.

Sincerely,

JEFF NELSON  
STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2009

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<sup>1</sup> Zimmerman, Katherine S., and Angela Halfacre-Hitchcock. "Barriers to student mobilization and service at institutions of higher education: A greenbuilding initiative case study on a historic, urban campus in Charleston, South Carolina, USA." *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 7 (2006): 6-15



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Plan to Renew Student Activism (Plan)* is a proposal that aims to promote civic engagement at Washington University via three objectives: improving the daily experience of students, creating dialogue in innovative ways, and mobilizing student support for key initiatives.

## Improving the Daily Experience of Students

Improving the daily experience of students is an essential part of the *Plan* because we believe that students are more likely to get involved and be passionate about initiatives that address issues that affect students most often.

Communication, collaboration, and community are core tenants of the student experience, which we seek to improve. The Montana Administration (2009-2010 Student Union Executive Board) is committed to working with all parts of Student Union, an active student body, and the University Administration to accomplish each of these goals over the next few years:

1. Outsourcing online communication tools.
2. Creating a centralized student portal.
3. Reducing line congestion in dining halls.
4. Extending campus card functionality.
5. Responsibly restructuring dining hours.
6. Implementing universal digital signage.
7. Promoting more strategic programming.
8. Developing more class unity and traditions.
9. Increasing attendance at athletic games.
10. Creating greener campus events.

## Creating Dialogue In Innovative Ways

Dialogue helps to renew student activism because it keeps students engaged. When the student body is tuned into ongoing discussions about campus issues, more ideas are exchanged and policy is crafted in a manner that keeps all parties well informed while using the best contributions from all sources.

The Montana Administration is committed to harnessing new technology and other innovative resources to creating this dialogue in a public space with students and administrators so that all parties are actively engaged. We pledge the following:

1. Facilitating discussions through online social networking websites.
2. Conducting bi-weekly student polls about campus issues.

## Mobilizing Student Support for Key Initiatives

Broad student support is critical for the success of any student-led initiative. Forming coalitions within the student body is the most important part of the *Plan* because it will help to form an active base of students to demonstrate the need and desire for other improvements talked about in the plan.

The Montana Administration is committed to working with students from across campus to develop grass roots organizing strategies that will promote student activism and civic engagement. We pledge the following:

1. Accompanying resolutions with student signatures.
2. Partnering with student groups to build coalitions.
3. Disseminating information through a Ground Team and strategic connectors.



# Improving the Daily Experience of Students

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# IMPROVING THE DAILY EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS

In order to renew student activism, Student Union must advocate for investments in the resources that the majority of students experience most often—resources that are utilized during the course of their daily experience. Pursuing an agenda focused on these issues will inspire more active student involvement because students are more likely to be passionate about issues that directly impact them on a consistent basis.

The Montana Administration will lead Student Union in pursuit of projects and initiatives that aim to improve the University's infrastructures for *collaboration*, *communication* and *community* because we see these as core tenets that most shape the undergraduate experience. We will look to accomplish the following goals:

**Creating an environment that is conducive to frequent collaboration.** Student Union must work with the Administration to ensure that students are equipped with tools that make collaboration seamless and natural. We should harness the power of new technologies and other resources to ensure that collaboration happens all over campus—from the classroom with fellow students and faculty members to co-curricular activities and student group programming.

**Making all forms of communication more effective and engaging.** Student Union must work with the Administration to improve the various infrastructures that we use to communicate. We should think of communication as more than just the routine interactions that facilitate information sharing. We should view communication as a powerful tool that enables every member of the University to be more informed and to make spirited contributions to our common experiences.

**Strategically developing shared experiences and traditions to build community.** Student Union must work with the Administration to develop and institutionalize distinctive aspects of the Washington University experience that will set us apart from other schools. Students already help to shape our community on a daily basis through campus programming and informal interactions with each other. Now we must expand upon these efforts and coordinate them into a larger vision about campus unity and school pride.

Advocating for investments in these areas will not only yield the most tangible results but will also produce a catalyst by which student passion is most likely to generate student activism. Initiatives that improve the way we collaborate, communicate or build community will not, in and of themselves, renew student activism. But, they form one component of a larger plan by giving students causes for which to be activists.

## OUTSOURCING ONLINE COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Many students have begun to rely on email, online calendars and web pages as their primary forms of communication. These tools are also frequently used to make collaboration, both in and out of the classroom, easier. Students use email to share files and documents; calendars to schedule meetings and appointments; and web pages to disseminate important information<sup>2</sup>.

Commercial companies offer these services for free, but there are many benefits to both students and the school when the University is the service provider. An

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<sup>2</sup> Kvavik, Robert B., and Judith B. Caruso., [ECAR Study of Students and Information Technology, 2005: Convenience, Connection, Control, and Learning](http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ers0506/rs/ERS0506w.pdf). Rep. Vol. 6. [Educause](http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ers0506/rs/ERS0506w.pdf). 3 June 2009  
<<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ers0506/rs/ERS0506w.pdf>>

@wust.edu email address is more professional and gives students a desired affiliation with the University. An integrated calendar is easily and securely shared across the institution enabling students to manage busy schedules and make appointments with professors. A University hosted web page gives legitimacy to resumes and academic work that is published online to a broader audience.

Nevertheless, students are beginning to use commercial services at an increasing rate because universities can't realistically offer solutions that are robust and reliable enough to meet their needs. This growing trend makes it difficult to efficiently collaborate and communicate within the University because so many different students use so many different platforms<sup>3</sup>.

This difficulty would exist even if all students used University provided accounts because the University maintains separate systems for each undergraduate school. Therefore, the features that undergraduate students receive vary across academic divisions and students do not have access to a global address book.

The majority of students receive accounts with limited features: an outdated and unreliable email client like that is not robust enough to handle common features that students expect in a Web 2.0 environment, a limited 500 megabytes of storage space, and no access to an online calendar.

The University spends hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to provide the current system to students. In a time of fiscal restraint, the University should not invest so much money into providing poor quality and

underutilized online tools. The current system makes communication and collaboration inefficient, does not have the necessary features to meet student needs, and is too expensive. If we outsourced these services to a third party company, we could save money and improve the services at the same time.

**Action Steps:** The President will continue to serve on the Student Email Group (SEG) Steering Committee and will advocate to it and other administrative officials to fully outsource online communication tools to *Microsoft Live@Edu*. This service will allow the University to host student email and other services offsite for free while maintaining the benefits of traditional University hosted systems. This means that the University could stop paying hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to provide online services to students while improving the services at the same time<sup>4</sup>.

Live@Edu offers the following features:

- 10 gigabytes of storage space
- @wustl.edu email address
- Integrated and shareable calendar
- Document repository
- Webpage creation
- Integration with WUSTL Key
- Global address book
- Lifetime email accounts
- Data ownership and privacy<sup>5</sup>

We believe that outsourcing online communication tools should be a top priority because it will allow the University to cut

<sup>3</sup> According to a February 2007 survey by Student Union Technology Resources Committee 39% of students outsource their WUSTL email to a third party vendor.

<sup>4</sup> Google Apps for Education and Microsoft Live@Edu allow educational institutions to host email offsite for free. There may be a one time implementation costs associated with outsourcing online services, but these costs are estimated to be lower than the current annual cost of providing online student services.

<sup>5</sup> A representative from Washington University General Counsel has been in contact with representatives from Microsoft and Google to examine all necessary contracts and paperwork to ensure that the University would be able to meet its legal obligations for data ownership and privacy if email were outsourced.

unnecessary costs, provide students with more robust and feature-rich resources, and improve the opportunities for communication and collaboration within the community.

## CREATING A CENTRALIZED ONLINE STUDENT PORTAL

Washington University provides many online resources that are essential to the academic and social experiences of students. Students use them frequently to access important information: course syllabi, grades, account balances, academic and social calendars, library databases, university announcements, etc. Nevertheless, students have a hard time managing all of this information because it is presented to them in a decentralized way.

Imagine a student who is primarily enrolled in the College of Arts & Sciences and is also taking courses in the Olin Business School and the School of Engineering. When this student goes to submit coursework online or to determine the due dates for his next assignments, he must go to three different websites—Telesis for his liberal arts classes, Blackboard for his business classes and the Course Management System (CMS) for his engineering classes.

Imagine another student who uses an online calendar to manage her various commitments. In order for her to have a comprehensive schedule of her academic, social and student group events, she must manually copy information from over three different websites—The Link, WebSTAC, and her online course syllabi.

These types of scenarios occur far too often and are only a subset of what students experience when using the University's online resources. These resources are highly

decentralized and greatly inconsistent, creating a bad experience for the user. Students must maintain multiple passwords to log in to multiple sites that contain information that is related and should be seamlessly connected, but currently is not.

**Action Steps:** The Montana Administration will form a task force of qualified students to actively work with appropriate administrators in developing a centralized online student portal using the latest Web 2.0 technologies. The portal should not just be a central repository for links to external websites. Instead, the portal should integrate functionality available in WebSTAC, eRes, Telesis, The Link, Blackboard, and other appropriate web applications into one central website. In addition to features already present in the these applications, the portal should include the following additional features:

- Personal calendar/itinerary that can be synced and integrated with data from external Microsoft Outlook calendar, Google Calendar, and other web-based calendars that utilize iCal, CalDAV and other standard formats.
- Ability to automatically add event dates, exam dates, due dates, etc for student groups and classes for which a student has membership to personal calendar/itinerary.
- Ability to utilize social networking APIs such as Facebook Connect to allow students to easily interface with major social networking sites.
- Ability to request any campus resource (i.e. event space, equipment, etc).
- Ability to securely access electronic academic content (i.e. streaming lectures, notes, enrichment exercises, etc).

We believe that creating a true student portal can transform our campus for years to come. Studies show that a comprehensive student portal will improve the student experience, increase productivity and introduce cost savings for the University<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, this initiative will be a top priority during the Montana administration.

## REDUCING LINE CONGESTION IN DINING HALLS

Dining is more than just the habitual consumption of food. Dining is one of the most important aspects of a college community. Throughout history, colleges and universities have long regarded the dining experience as an essential component of the academic and social development of students. When students dine with other members of the community they have unique opportunities to engage in discourse that can range from informal discussions about current events to intellectual debates about academic work. Not only do these conversations build long lasting relationships but they also help to shape students' views about the world around them.

Washington University is highly regarded for its award winning food and state-of-the-art dining facilities, but the overall dining experience is weakened by long lines and lengthy wait times. In addition to the adverse affects on community building, line congestion has adverse affects on the eating habits of students and the food service of the University.

Undergraduate students have very busy lives and dining opportunities are tightly scheduled around classes, study sessions and

co-curricular activities. The opportunities to have a dedicated dining experience are already limited and when students have to stand in long lines and wait for food, they have even less time to eat and build community.

Long lines also make it easier for students to make unhealthier food decisions. When lines are congested and wait times are long, students may be encouraged to order fried food like chicken tenders or French fries because they are usually already cooked and quicker to prepare than healthier alternatives.

**Action Steps:** The Montana Administration will work with the Campus Services committee to provide feedback and recommendations to Dining Services during the pilot and implementation of the WebFood® online ordering program.

## EXTENDING CAMPUS CARD FUNCTIONALITY

The “cashless campus” is being driven by the extension of functionality in university identification cards. Washington University has witnessed the benefit of this over the past three years. Students overwhelmingly support the campus card program—using it to make cashless purchases in the campus store, Bear Necessities, vending machines, laundry rooms, printing stations, and many other places.

While the campus card has grown into a great tool, it still lacks important functionality that students want. The University can provide students with a more robust campus card by adding the abilities to make online purchases and purchases with off campus vendors. We encourage the University to pursue this option because it will strengthen our relationship with the local community, provide a more practical and secure way for students to spend money,

<sup>6</sup> Moskowitz, Robert. "Campus portals: come to higher education: these everything-in-one-place web sites can streamline administrative and student services and could save institutions money." Matrix: The Magazine for Leaders in Education June 2001. Bnet. 17 June 2009 <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0HJE/is\\_3\\_2/ai\\_79961317/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0HJE/is_3_2/ai_79961317/)>.

and introduce a new revenue stream for the university.

Allowing students to use the campus card system with off-campus vendors clearly strengthens our bond to the local community. It gives students additional incentives to explore the region, and increase the business that local vendors receive. Students directly benefit from this increased business because the vendors are more likely to offer student discounts and other specialized services due to higher demand.

Extending campus card functionality also gives students a more practical and more secure interface for making purchases. The ability to purchase items from the University online with a campus card would be an additional convenience to students, but introduce the possibility of an online market place where students can safely and securely exchange goods and services.

Furthermore, extending campus card functionality to off-campus venues greatly reduces the need to carry around cash and credit cards. Cash and credit cards are becoming more risky for students because increases in credit card fraud<sup>7</sup> and violent muggings in neighborhoods around the University<sup>8</sup> continue to be a growing concern.

Lastly, extensions to the campus card system can provide a new incremental revenue streams for the University. The CBOARD Group offers a service called Off Campus Advantage that can allow the Universities to earn a share of every dollar that is spent off campus using the

campus card<sup>9</sup>. In fact, estimates show that the University can generate hundreds of thousands of dollars by extending campus card functionality to off-campus venues<sup>10</sup>.

**Action Steps:** The Montana Administration will work with the Campus Services Committee to meet with appropriate administrators and develop a central campus card office charged with managing and overseeing potential expansions of the current program. Once established, Student Union will work with the campus card office to undertake the following actions:

- Enroll in Off Campus Advantage or a similar program.
- Allow students to use the campus card account to purchase University resources online.
- Conduct a comprehensive study regarding student preferences for campus card use at off campus locations.
- Use data collected from the comprehensive study to develop partnerships with local off-campus vendors that will allow students to make purchases with the campus card.

## RESPONSIBLY RESTRUCTURING DINING HOURS

Washington University is renowned for its superior food quality, but limited hours sometimes make dining inconvenient for

<sup>7</sup> Mills, Elinor. "Credit card fraud a top concern in US as economy melts." *CNET* 06 Apr. 2009. ZDNET Asia. 24 June 2009  
<<http://www.zdnetasia.com/news/security/0,39044215,62052910,00.htm>>.

<sup>8</sup> *Student Life* [St. Louis] 2 Feb. 2009. *Studlife.com*. 4 Feb. 2009. College Publisher. 24 June 2009

<<http://www.studlife.com/news/students-rent-loop-apartments-despite-crime-1.1353556>>.

<sup>9</sup> *Off-Campus Advantage*. 24 June 2009

<<http://www.offcampusadvantage.com/universities/>>.

<sup>10</sup> Bell, Tom. "Showing Bottom Line Value and ROI." Chart. *National Association of Campus Card Users*. 7 May 2009. 24 June 2009

<[http://www.naccu.org/webconferences/051409\\_Position\\_Your\\_Card\\_Program\\_Notes.pps](http://www.naccu.org/webconferences/051409_Position_Your_Card_Program_Notes.pps)>

students. Students dine on a nearly 24-hour cycle and expect to have meals five to six times per day. Therefore, the University should responsibly restructure dining hours to conform more closely to this kind of lifestyle.

In particular, the University should restructure dining hours in such a way that enables the development of both a late night venue for residents living on the North Side, and a 24 hour dining option for all residents while reducing the overall number of dining hours on campus.

**Action Steps:** The Montana Administration will work with the Legislative branch of Student Union to develop legislation that calls upon the University to responsibly restructure dining hours in the next year. We will push for the legislation and subsequent implementation to accomplish the following goals:

- Extending operating hours of The Village dining hall to include service until 2a.m. on weekdays and 3 a.m. on weekends.
- Creating a 24-hour dining location where students can purchase both pre-prepared and limited made-to-order food.
- Generating a net decrease in total number of campus dining hours by reducing hours in dining locations that replicate the food service of other dining areas.

## IMPLEMENTING UNIVERSAL DIGITAL SIGNAGE

It is very difficult to communicate important information to students at large. When the University wants to disseminate time-sensitive information, a mass email is generally used. Email is generally effective, but students do not always get the information as quickly as necessary in an emergency or other urgent situation. Recently, the University invested in a

mass text messaging service to deliver emergency information to students, but this service is also limited because students can opt out and miss the important information all together.

Student groups also have a difficult time communicating with large portions of the student body. Information about events and programs is primarily communicated using the underpass and flyers. The underpass is an effective form of communication, but many students do not live on the South 40 and therefore are not in a position to see information publicized there.

Flyers are the most common publicity resource, but are highly ineffective and environmentally unsustainable. The campus posting policy limits the locations and amount of flyers than can be posted on campus. Therefore, creating and posting a flyer does not typically have the intended effect and wastes both time and environmental resources.

Our campus lacks a way to effectively communicate information to a large amount of people in a manner that is easily accessible. A system of digital signage is a solution to this problem that will save money and generate a smaller environmental footprint.

Digital signage is a system of electronic displays that dynamically show information. Such a system can be deployed across the University by installing or using already existing flat panel LCD screens in campus buildings and establishing a central server for information.

This set-up would undoubtedly enhance our communication tools<sup>11</sup>. Students use

<sup>11</sup> Angelo, Jean M.V. "Digital signage delivers on campus: affordable wide-screen digital signs are finding multiple uses on campuses, and may even generate revenue." *University Business* Oct. 2004. Bnet. 17 June 2009 <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0LSH/is\\_10\\_7/ai\\_n6239741/?tag=content;coll](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0LSH/is_10_7/ai_n6239741/?tag=content;coll)>.

campus facilities every day. Placing screens with dynamically changing information in these buildings is a more effective way to disseminate information than what we currently have. Digital signage could serve as an emergency alert system, virtual flyer board, and announcement hub.

Digital signage will also save money and reduce our environmental footprint. It is more cost effective and more sustainable to use less paper, ink, and other resources that go into generating a paper flyer. Additionally, digital signage eliminates the need for custodial workers to clean up outdated flyers. In total, a projected display in the system can reduce carbon consumption by up to 7.5 percent<sup>12</sup>.

**Action Steps:** The Montana Administration will work the Legislative Branch of Student Union to develop legislation that calls upon The University to develop a robust system of universal digital signage. We will ensure that the legislation recommends the following:

- Installing LCD panel displays in all buildings that do not currently have them.
- Connecting all campus displays to a central network.
- Purchasing software that includes but is not limited to the following features:
  - Ability to organize displays into groups as necessary (i.e all displays in the Danfoth University Center as one group).
  - Ability to assign users with varying permissions and access levels per display group.
  - Ability to upload content to a central server for universal display.

- Ability to upload unique content to a display to be shown alongside universal information.
- Ability to design custom display templates.
- Ability to assign different templates to different display groups.

- Developing a process for student groups, academic departments, campus offices and all other sanctioned entities with the University to use the system with tailored permissions as needed.

## PROMOTING MORE STRATEGIC CAMPUS PROGRAMMING

There are several entities that program for undergraduate students: Student Union, Congress of the South 40, residential advisors, college councils, student groups, school councils, class councils, academic departments, etc. Nevertheless, the decentralized nature of our campus programming causes many events to be planned without effective coordination and strategy. The result is an over-programmed experience with repetitive events that aren't as cost effective as they could be.

Promoting more strategic campus programming is essential because it reduces unnecessary expenses associated with over-programming and provides for a more substantial community experience for students. We can begin to develop more strategic programming by fixing the lack of coordination, communication and collaboration that leads to over-programming.

**Action Steps:** In order to establish a framework for more strategic programming, the Montana Administration will do the following:

- Invite all campus organizations that program primarily for undergraduate

<sup>12</sup>Cisco Systems Inc. "Digital Signage: A Sustainable Advantage." Press release. Cisco. 2 Apr. 2009. 29 May 2009  
<[http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2009/prod\\_040709b.html](http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2009/prod_040709b.html)>.

students to adopt The Link as their primary campus events calendar.

- Work with the Legislative Branch to Implement a policy that requires all student groups to have an event displayed on The Link before the group can utilize any Student Union provided publicity resource to advertise the event.
- Work with the Treasury to develop a policy of not funding appeals for events that occur during a timeslot when two or more other events are scheduled to occur.
- Work with the Treasury and Budget Committee to incentivize successful collaboration among student groups.
- Invite representatives from Congress of the South 40, Interfraternity Council, and Women's Panhellenic Council to serve as ex-officio members of the Social Programming Board to promote more collaborative large-scale events.

## DEVELOPING MORE CLASS UNITY AND TRADITIONS

A student who finds a life-long link to the University as an undergraduate student is more likely to graduate and become an active alumnus that gives back. Students are certainly already linked to the University in many different ways. Nevertheless, we will benefit more by developing a set of common links that all students can identify with, regardless of how they shape their individual journey at Wash. U.

Common links are developed from common experiences—common experiences that build class unity and campus traditions. Memories formed during these programs and

events connect Wash. U. students to each other and the campus forever.

Developing more class unity and traditions are essential objectives in the goal of improving our community. Initiatives that seek to identify and promote class unity and traditions will not only improve the undergraduate community in the short term but they will also improve alumni relations for the entire University in the long term.

**Action Steps:** The Vice President of Programming will lead a task force of representatives from each class council to identify or establish traditions and sustainable programs unique to each class. This task force will produce a set of recommendations to guide class councils in future programming.

## INCREASING ATTENDANCE AT ATHLETIC EVENTS

Washington University students are active participants in their experience, not mere spectators. Because of this, some may argue that a vibrant athletic fan base is inconsistent with our student culture. While we cannot expect to replicate a Division I atmosphere on our campus, there is no reason that we cannot increase student attendance and participation at athletic events. Student attendance at these events is important because it is consistent with our values and habits, and builds community in a very exceptional manner.

Washington University students make it a priority to support and recognize the hard work and success of their peers. That is why so many students attend student group programs, research symposiums, dance performances, and other events with which they are not personally involved. Our student athletes are not only successful in their respective sports—winning four national championships in the last three

years—but also excellent academically—being recognized on multiple occasions for impressive team grade point averages and fielding several players for NCAA All-Academic Teams.

Student attendance at athletic events is also important because it establishes and builds community in a very unique way. Students who attend athletic events, regardless of their academic major, residential college or student group affiliation, are united by school pride and the collective desire for the Bears to succeed. Cheering on the Bears—wearing one of the many red shirts that paint a sea of school spirit—contributes to an intangible energy that can be a hallmark of our community. Students who would not otherwise find a reason to interact are thus connected, at least momentarily, by this common experience.

**Action Steps:** In order to increase attendance at athletic events, The Montana Administration will do the following:

- Continue the Chipotle® Challenge<sup>13</sup> partnership with Red Alert and the Athletics Department to incentivize attendance at athletic events.
- Actively work with student groups to eliminate some of the over-programming that occurs on the days of select big games in major sports by funding minimal or no events that would conflict.
- Collaborate with the Athletics Department to develop a process by which appropriate student groups can sponsor half-time shows and provide performances and other entertainment.

- Seek to institutionalize organic student-driven traditions that aim to generate excitement about athletic events (i.e. tailgating).
- Publicize and promote major athletic events in innovative ways.
- Promote the Washington University fight song.

## CREATING GREENER CAMPUS EVENTS

Environmental sustainability is an issue, on which Student Union must take a leadership role. Seeking to improve Washington University's commitment to sustainability in addition to shifting student culture and attitudes towards environmentalism will provide a direct benefit to the daily experience of students as well as promote both local and global change.

As the University develops a larger strategic plan for environmental sustainability, students should contribute by exploring concrete ways to make campus events greener. This type of commitment will show that all aspects of Washington University are serious about sustaining and preserving the community around us for future generations.

There are many considerations involved with promoting greener campus events. For example, student groups must continue to have autonomy and creative control over programming. Additionally, Student Union must fund groups in a manner that makes it possible to make environmentally sustainable choices when planning events. That is why Student Union must not issue a top-down mandate, but must facilitate dialogue among students and student groups that produces a bottom-up push for change.

<sup>13</sup> The Chipotle Challenge is a program started in 2008 by Student Union that coordinates Chipotle® sponsorships for athletic events and other large campus programs.

**Action Steps:** In order to create a framework for greener campus events, The Montana Administration will do the following:

- The President will appoint an Executive Advisor for Sustainability who will advise on proactive changes to both Student Union and University policies to promote environmental sustainability as well as assess the effectiveness of existing Student Union-led and University-wide sustainability initiatives.
- The President will create a Green Events Commission (GEC) comprised of the Executive Advisor for Sustainability and other interested students to offer consulting services to help student groups plan more environmentally sustainable events and conduct in-depth research to determine best practices and recommendations for environmentally sustainable events.
- The President will commission a Special Executive Task Force for Sustainable Events (SETSE) co-chaired by the Vice President of Administration and the Executive Advisor for Sustainability and comprised of leaders from major campus programming groups and representatives from all applicable branches of Student Union.
- Based on their research done by the GEC, the SETSE will develop and propose environmental sustainability guidelines for campus events that will allow student groups the flexibility to program in innovative and unique ways while decreasing their overall impact on the environment. The SETSE will then work with the legislative branch to enact these guidelines as Student Union policy.

# Creating Dialogue in Innovative Ways

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# CREATING DIALOGUE IN INNOVATIVE WAYS

The creation of dialogue is essential to the renewal of student activism. Dialogue allows ideas to be exchanged and ensures that policy is crafted in a manner that keeps all parties well informed while using the best contributions from all sources. The Montana administration will lead Student Union in efforts to create dialogue in innovative ways by undertaking initiatives that accomplish the following goals:

**Making information available through a variety of mediums.** Different students prefer to receive information in different ways. Some read emails while others read Facebook messages. Some follow twitter feeds while others watch Youtube videos. Student Union should not rely on one medium to communicate, but should harness the power of various mediums to maximize the number of students that are reached.

**Giving students an opportunity to give input publically.** Students can easily give suggestions to Student Union officers or administrators through email or a face-to-face meeting, but this limits dialogue to being a merely bidirectional occurrence. Students should be able to give input publically so that ideas are shared on a larger scale and elected officers are held accountable to constituents.

**Making dialogue natural by leveraging tools that students already use.** Participating in a dialogue about campus issues should not create extra work for students. Student Union should take advantage of the tools and places that already reach students in order to ensure active participation.

## FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS THROUGH ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS

The tools of web 2.0 and the concept of social networking have revolutionized the way

college students are communicating. In the past, the internet was a medium where individuals went to only find information. Now the internet is a medium where individuals both find and share information.

College students are quickly adapting. From one machine—a laptop computer or a mobile phone—students can keep in touch with friends on Facebook, share photos on Flickr, watch or upload videos to Youtube and talk about their day in real time on Twitter. But even as these tools are primarily used to build personal relationships, they are quickly becoming tools to organize people and spread information about larger issues as well.

In order to build an active base of students, Student Union must begin to create dialogue within the student body using these tools. These efforts should compliment traditional efforts of outreach. Sending emails and holding meetings should continue, but online social networking tools should be strategically employed to create a larger and more dynamic dialogue.

**Action Steps:** To facilitate dialogue using online social networking tools, The Montana Administration will do the following:

- Post a blog post on the Student Union website after important meetings with students and administrators.
- Add a message board to the Student Union website where students can freely post and respond to other discussion items.
- Communicate information to the public via Twitter on a daily basis.
- Post a weekly address to the student body on Youtube and the Student Union website.
- Manage a Student Union Facebook page.

## CONDUCTING BI-WEEKLY POLLS OF THE STUDENT BODY ABOUT CAMPUS ISSUES

to formulate policy proposals.

Student Union officers are elected to represent student constituencies. Therefore, broad student opinion must play a role in the work that Student Union does on behalf of students. Student Union has traditionally done a few surveys throughout the year; however it has often been hard to encourage students to complete surveys that require more than a few minutes of their time. Furthermore, online surveys are not the best way to gather data that can be used to extrapolate representative information about the entire student body.

Conducting in-person polls of the student body on a bi-weekly basis alleviates some of the concerns mentioned above and provides many new benefits. In-person polling is more scientific, so data that is generated from such a methodology will likely be a truer representation of students. Also, Student Union will be able to ask fewer questions and make polls take less time to complete since polling will be done on a very frequent basis.

More importantly, in-person polling provides additional benefits to Student Union and the Administration. Student Union officers will have new opportunities to interact with students and have conversations about campus issues. And both Student Union and the Administration will have access to 'live' data that will give a dynamic perspective on student opinion for important topics.

**Action Steps:** Members of the Public Relations committee will conduct bi-weekly polls in the Danforth University Center during lunch hours. The polls will ask a few questions about different campus issues. Student Union officers will be encouraged to use the results of the polls

# Mobilizing Student Support for Key Initiatives

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# MOBILIZING STUDENT SUPPORT FOR KEY INITIATIVES

Creating an atmosphere for activism hinges on our ability to mobilize student support for key initiatives. The Montana administration will accomplish this by leading Student Union in efforts to improve the relationships that Student Union has with different segments of the student body. The following goals will form the foundation of our work:

**Forming partnerships and building coalitions.** Students must present a strong and united voice to the Administration in order to effectively communicate our priorities, needs and desires. Certainly, the formal role of Student Union is to be the “voice” of students. But, the word of Student Union means little if the work of students does little to compliment it. We each take full ownership of our experience when we stand united in common efforts. Therefore, Student Union must mobilize and engage students to ensure that the University continually invests in daily experience of undergraduate students.

**Making students feel more connected to Student Union initiatives.** Too often, students question the affect that Student Union has on their college experience aside from the allocation of money to student groups with which they participate. Student Union must decrease the mental and psychological divide that separates students from their student government. It is not enough for Student Union representatives to have a physical presence in the places where students often convene. Student Union must also seek to connect with students in a way that encourages larger portions of the student body to actively work on behalf of key initiatives.

**Transitioning to a culture of shared responsibility.** The notion that each group of students is merely a niche-oriented operation with a singular focus is false and detrimental to

the goal of student activism. There is no doubt that different segments of the student body have different areas of focus and different passions. But there are so many issues that affect every student. And these issues can only be fixed with the active participation of every student. We can no longer view our responsibilities in a disjointed light. The students in Student Union are not the only ones concerned with parking on campus. The students in the Congress of the South 40 are not the only ones concerned with the Residential Life lottery stem. We are all concerned, and we must all work together to take actions in dealing with these kinds of issues.

## ACCOMPANYING RESOLUTIONS WITH STUDENT SIGNATURES

Student Union, in its capacity as the representative government of students, articulates the position of students on important campus issues. Even so, the nature of democracy affords students the right to disagree with Student Union and ensures that elected representatives must gauge whether their work is aligned with the needs and desires of the majority of the people that elect them.

Resolutions are pieces of legislation that propose policy initiatives to the Administration on behalf of the student body. In the past, resolutions have seen mixed success. When they work, resolutions help to bring about concrete improvements to the daily experience of undergraduate students. When they do not work, resolutions usually suffer from a lack of clear support among students.

Allowing students to append signatures to a resolution makes it more forceful in a number of ways. In particular, the signatures provide a clear indication of how many and what kinds of students support certain initiatives. Also, students feel more connected to

the proposal and are more likely to be active in seeing it implemented.

**Action Steps:** Before signing legislation, the President will give students 2-3 to review it online. Students will also have the opportunity to leave comments online and append their signatures if they support it.

## PARTNERING WITH STUDENT GROUPS TO BUILD COALITIONS

The relationship between Student Union and student groups should not be based solely on money and should be displayed more often than just during the budgeting process. Student groups are conduits for activism—students who participate in them are already passionate about something enough to get involved!

But student group members are not only affected by the causes of which their groups raise awareness. Campus issues that impact their daily experience also affect them. These students possess a foundation for activism that should be harnessed and used to push for improvements that will benefit students at large.

**Action Steps:** To form partnerships with student groups and build coalitions, The Montana Administration will do the following:

- Host monthly focus group meetings with student group leaders to talk about campus issues.
- Periodically visit student group meetings throughout the semester to talk about pertinent campus issues.
- Work with student group leaders to develop an ongoing agenda item at student group meetings to discuss campus issues.

## DISSEMINATING INFORMATION THROUGH A GROUND TEAM AND STRATEGIC CONNECTORS

Email, flyers and bulletin boards can be effective forms of communication, but they are limited in two key ways. First, they are largely one-way—students receive information but cannot easily communicate information back. Secondly, these mediums are too impersonal and lack the intellectual discourse that occurs during face-to-face conversation.

Student activism is best achieved at the grass roots level. In addition to traditional communication techniques, Student Union should develop a “Ground Team” and empower a dedicated a group of students to disseminate information to smaller groups of constituents.

Unlike Senators, members of the Ground Team and other strategic connectors will be naturally connected to their constituents through connections in residential areas and student groups. Additionally, these students won’t have the responsibility of advocating for specific policies, but will seek only to facilitate two-way communication between Student Union and the student body in an organic manner.

**Action Steps:** The Montana Administration will work with Residential Advisors and other appropriate contacts to identify students on each residential floor to serve on the Ground Team. Additionally, the Montana Administration will identify student leaders who, by virtue of their campus involvement, can serve as strategic connectors

The Ground Team and strategic connectors will be charged with communicating information about campus issues to their various constituencies and soliciting feedback in both quantitative and qualitative ways. To

ensure that information is timely and accurate, the Vice President of Public Relations will meet with the Ground Team and strategic connectors on a regular basis.



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