



**Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound
Student Support Space Advisory Body
Semester-End Report and Building Proposal**

April 20, 2022

To: Kayden Diodati, ASUPS President; Grant Konkel, ASUPS Vice President; Isiaah Crawford, President of the University of Puget Sound; Sherry Mondou, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Lorna Hernandez-Jarvis, Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity; Sarah Comstock, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Bob Kief, Associate Vice President for Facilities.

From: Livi Mrdjan, ASUPS Head of Staff.

CC: Joanna Carey Cleveland, Vice President and University Counsel; Secretary to the Board of Trustees; Nate Sansone, ASUPS President-Elect, Hannah Lillard, ASUPS Vice President-Elect.

Dear Members of Campus Leadership,

At the request of the ASUPS President, the Student Support Space Advisory Body (SSSAB) has developed a publishable year-end report prior to the transition of student government leadership: April 21st, 2022. It has been a pleasure to work and learn from both members and contributing members of the body. As I reflect on my time at the university, I can confidently say that the work of this body is both vital and necessary to support our campus community. We are proud of the progress we have made and of the support received, and optimistic for the future of this body.

Executive Summary

The SSSAB is a cross-campus committee that has been charged with establishing a new physical space, a Center, for marginalized students on our campus. The formation of this group was inspired by the advocacy of the Multi-Identity Based Union (MIBU), in particular the third demand found in the MIBU Demands, published in March 2021.¹ Our vision of a new Center seeks to resolve the issues of crowding in the current spaces provided for students of marginalized identities, but even more so seeks to honor these identities in a space that is built with their needs in mind.

¹

Membership

Livi Mrdjan '22, *ASUPS Head of Staff, chair.*

Grant Konkel '23, *ASUPS Vice President.*

Sowmya Kannan '23, *ASUPS Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Justice.*

Bella Sanchez '25, *ASUPS Senate Identity-based Club Liaison.*

Lupe Barraza '24, *Student Senator, selected by the ASUPS Senate.*

Daniel Sherman, *Faculty Member, selected by the Faculty Senate.*

Jenee James, *Staff Member, selected by the Staff Senate.*

Eliana Goldberg, *Student-at-Large.*

Mariam Alafranji, *Student-at-Large.*

Maija Petterson *Student-at-Large.*

Hannah Lillard '23, *ASUPS Vice President-Elect.*

Sarah Comstock, *Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students.*

Bob Kief, *Associate Vice President for Facilities.*

Contributing Members

Kim Orr, *Facilities Services Project Manager.*

Khalila Fordham, *Staff Psychologist and Multicultural Support Specialist.*

Goal

The SSSAB seeks to develop a solution to institutional shortcomings with a sense of intentionality and urgency with respect to demands from identity-based groups by creating a new space for students with marginalized identities. We have formed our conversations upon an understanding that, although the Student Diversity Center (SDC) and the Social Justice Center (SJC) provide resources to students with marginalized identities and identity-based groups, current spaces do not meet the needs of the student body. Our overarching goal, established in bi-weekly meetings throughout the Spring 2022 semester, is to consolidate space and expand resources to make the concept of community feel more tangible.

Charge²

Our charge is to recognize the work of the Multi-Identity Based Union and of ASUPS Senator Gamel '21 by serving as a shared-governance group, under the authority of the ASUPS Executive Branch, to facilitate the advancement of an inclusive, accessible, and welcoming physical space(s) for historically and systemically marginalized students at the university. We recommend that our charge does not change for the 2022-23 academic year.

Guiding Principles

²<https://www.pugetsound.edu/associated-students-university-puget-sound-asups/cabinet/student-support-space-advisory-board>

The SSSAB has been informed by the past work of the individuals and groups as stated in the charge. We have worked to understand the historical and present circumstances that have impacted the experiences of marginalized students, staff, and faculty on our campus. We find purpose within the University's mission statement, particularly as it states: "A Puget Sound education, both academic and cocurricular, encourages a rich knowledge of self and others; an appreciation of commonality and difference... and the integration of learning, preparing the university's graduates to meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship." Our own mission envelops the tenets of the University and believes that, by creating a new Center for marginalized students, they will be better prepared to accomplish the goals that a Puget Sound education enables them to achieve.

History and Current Situation

Students have been advocating for a new student diversity center for several years. In Demand 3 of the MIBU Demands, students suggest turning the newly built Wilson Welcome Center into a new diversity center, stating: "The intention of the Welcome Center is to welcome new visitors to our campus, yet people who already exist on this campus constantly feel unwelcome and as if they do not belong within our campus community." The administration has agreed that students should feel safe and comfortable at the University, and while the Welcome Center cannot be repurposed, there is still an opportunity to create a new Center that will fit the needs of marginalized students.

The current Student Diversity Center (SDC) and the Social Justice Center (SJC) are heavily used spaces; over 150 people come in and out of these spaces on a weekly basis, hosting eleven different clubs each week. The SDC comfortably fits 10 people in the meeting space and the SJC can comfortably fit 20. For some larger clubs, such as the Black Student Union (BSU) which regularly has 20 students at a meeting in the SDC, it is clear that the identity-based clubs have outgrown their spaces. During the Fall of 2021, policy required that the SDC have only 12 students in the building at a time to meet COVID-19 safety standards, but clubs would regularly exceed that threshold. Jewish students have also expressed a need for a Kosher kitchen in the same space that they meet. The current Kosher kitchen is in the basement of the chapel, leaving Jewish students split between opposite sides of campus. The physical distance experienced by Jewish students as they are spread across campus is a common experience – a frequent discussion in SSSAB meetings was working through ways to make the new Center a larger, more collaborative and cohesive space. A student representative on SSSAB conveyed a feeling of separation during a Jewish Student Union (JSU) meeting that took place in the SDC while an Asian and Pacific Islander Community (APISC) meeting occurred in the SJC. The student said that if there was an option for the two clubs to meet in the same building and interact after their respective meetings, it would make community feel more tangible. This would lead to a direct way for the university's mission to be realized by allowing for "an appreciation of commonality and differences" between identity-based clubs. Centralizing a singular space for students is not

just significant for the convenience of the matter – it is significant to honor the reclamation of space by marginalized students who must no longer be on the periphery of campus in temporary spaces, but in a central and permanent location.

The SDC also houses the Food Pantry and the Lending Library which are run by Student Affairs. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been an increase in student need for the Food Pantry, resulting in even more foot traffic through the SDC. Both of these small spaces have different offices that utilize the already limited number of available spaces, including the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, the Division of Student Affairs, and the Chaplaincy. With multiple departments hosting events and students in the spaces, there have been widespread miscommunications regarding the reservations of the spaces, and who is in charge of making sure students' needs are being met. Having a larger and consolidated space would ease the stress on both students and the various organizations. A new Center would allow for growth of both resources and programming that will appropriately fit the growing population of students with marginalized identities.

Current Plan

The SSSAB sees the need for a new, dedicated Center, one that creates a central location for multiple and diverse user groups to meet concurrently, one that supports multiple functions while creating a safe, comfortable, and accessible place for students to engage and interact.

In conversation with Bob Kief and Kim Orr in Facilities Services, we have discussed several possible types of space for a new Center which include a new stand-alone building, the remodeling of an existing building, or a space within an existing building, in a central campus location.

A stand-alone, new building would be ideal for the new Center as it could be designed to support multiple user groups all with varying needs for uses of space that range from more open and shared space, such as seminar or break-out rooms, to more private offices, counseling or individual meeting spaces. SSSAB understands from Facilities that while a new stand-alone building is exciting to think about, it is likely cost-prohibitive when there are more cost-effective and efficient options to achieve the goals and needs for a new Center.

In addition to a stand-alone building, there is a possibility to remodel or renovate existing campus locations to create a new Center. An example would be to convert a portion of a residence hall for a new Center, creating a synergy between the Center and the remaining portion of the hall, which would remain as student housing.

Finally, the option to renovate an existing building: the SSSAB believes Warner Gym is the most ideal, central, non-marginal location on campus to develop a Center for marginalized students.

Warner Gym is currently underutilized and serves a very small and transient population that includes visiting professor offices and locker rooms for visiting sports teams. Facilities has communicated to SSSAB that it would not be difficult to relocate the current occupants of Warner Gym to other campus locations. Facilities has a plan to convert the storage space under the bleachers at Baker Stadium into a locker room for visiting sports teams.

The repurposing and renovation of Warner Gym would be the most central location on campus for a Center for marginalized students. It is a location that would reflect the University's commitment to a diverse student population, one that "...encourages a rich knowledge of self and others; an appreciation of commonality and difference." Further, while the number of students in each identity-based club is always fluctuating, and as enrollment numbers are trending towards recruiting a more diverse student body, the Center for marginalized students must move from the periphery of campus to fit the needs of those incoming students and most importantly reflect the University's commitment to a diverse student population. A central campus location reflects this commitment.

Further, as stated in the MIBU Demands and discussed at the SSSAB meetings throughout the semester, the SJC and SDC were intended as temporary, stop-gap spaces to fulfill some of the support needs of students, but never were intended to meet the spatial needs.

To further conceptualize a new Center for Puget Sound the SSSAB and Facilities teams researched, gathered and discussed information obtained from several state and nationally located universities to better understand the space allocation and configuration for Multi-Cultural, Identity-based Centers. While many universities provided helpful pieces of information, Oregon State University, in particular, shared its expansive building initiatives, lessons-learned, and floor-plans which have guided our work and next steps which will continue over the summer and resume with pre-design, programming fall semester and subsequent campus master planning when that effort begins.

Future Master Plan

A new master plan will be informed by the University's strategic plan, strategic enrollment plan, residential strategic plan, campaign objectives, and recommendations emerging from the program review process, among other influences. The new plan will want to take into consideration many factors such as support for student success; the smaller number of undergraduate students; changing demographics and needs of campus members and prospective students; technological changes and trends; the changing world of work; pedagogical trends; programmatic changes; climate change; and much more.

The Plan should be more focused on how best to allocate, improve and/or repurpose existing campus spaces. For example, how might excess housing be repurposed; what might buildings such as Warner Gym become; what might make campus spaces more welcoming for a diverse

population; where might we locate certain departments or function on campus; how can we make the campus more physically accessible; how might we address climate change and sustainability goals; what changes will help us recruit, engage and retain students, faculty and staff; and which rearrangements and renovations are needed to support curricular, co-curricular, student services, and administrative needs into the future? What will the improvements cost, how will projects be prioritized, and how might they be funded?

Updating a master plan needs to be an inclusive process that facilitates community engagement whereby all campus constituents are invited to contribute to an authentic depiction of the desired student experience.

Next Steps

Because of the conversations throughout the semester, and with the guidance of the information and floor plans from OSU, the SSSAB concluded that it is ready to engage in a limited pre-design, programming effort to help define the organizational adjacencies and space allocation needs for the new Center. Because a location for Puget Sound's Center has not yet been determined, the programming work scope will include space allocations (square footages for various spaces), space adjacencies, hand-drawn sketches with an image board of the potential look and feel of the Center. ASUPS has approved \$10,000 for the pre-design, programming phase and has allocated up to \$50,000 in funding to ensure the success of the project.

Facilities Services has requested proposals (RFP) for programming services from architectural firms with higher education and diversity center experience. SSSAB, with Facilities Services, expects to select a firm the week of May 2, 2022, hold one teleconference with the select firm before graduation on May 16, 2022, and will then start the programming effort fall semester 2022. SSSAB understands that the marginalized student Center will be an integral part of the University's master planning effort, a process that will engage Puget Sound's campus community and its Board of Trustees.

The goals of SSSAB moving forward will be to examine program needs and sustainable space solutions for the future including, but not limited to, meeting spaces, study rooms, kitchens, and accessible bathrooms. The SSSAB continues to commit itself to the student voice with input from students, faculty, and staff on program directives and with additional advice from in-house facilities specialists and outside consultants. We look forward to the possibility of creating a space of belonging on campus for marginalized students.

Respectfully Submitted,

Livi Mrdjan '22
ASUPS Head of Staff