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FALL ASNU RECAP: SENATE RESTRUCTURING, CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS IN PROGRESS, AND CLARIFICATION SOUGHT ON SOCIAL-DANCE POLICY



The 2018-2019 ASNU team. Photo courtesy northwestu.edu

By Maggie Bright

The ASNU team has continued working to provide improvements to campus life this semester, including numerous changes within their own system in order to better serve the NU community.

Senate restructuring

Passed last semester, ASNU implemented an internal change in the representation of senators this fall. Senators are now based on living areas, instead of class standing as they had been in previous years. Every residence hall has one senator per floor, as well as one senator to represent the apartments and Families-in-Residence (FIRS) and one to represent off-campus students. There are also two at-large senators.

Student Body Vice President Alex Lee explained that the reasoning behind having living area-based senators was that students would be more comfortable expressing their desires for campus changes to someone who is a part of their floor.

"[Since] Senate is part of student voice, we found that better student representation comes from the community that you are specifically in," Lee said.

Having living-area-based senators has already shown benefits, Lee said. He attributes increased voting participation in Senate elections, as well as improved responses and feedback to ASNU surveys, for that structural change.

Campus improvements in progress

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ASNU approved several new clubs this semester, including Hands to Outreach — a service club focused on community development and serving the NU and greater Kirkland community — a French language club, a hip-hop club focused on music and culture, as well as a new multicultural life club: the Asian Pacific Islanders Student Fellowship.

This semester, ASNU hosted their first town hall meeting focused on the Caf, and are planning to host another town hall next semester on NU security updates, to allow students more opportunities to interact with NU security officials.

"We are working with the security team and the President's office to host a town hall [for students] to meet with security and address some of the issues like parking and things like that," Lee said.

New Christmas lights are displayed around campus this semester thanks to ASNU funding. Hive Senator Olivia Ragland said the lights display is one of the things she's most proud of working on this semester, due to students' positive reactions.

"The Christmas lights are a huge [success] since I know that that's [something] so far people have really liked, and I'm excited to see how much more they like it as the semester ends," Ragland said.

ASNU Chief of Staff Hannah Vaughan said that she will be working with Ragland on a food-waste education initiative next semester to make students more aware of the food that is being wasted at the Caf. Vaughan is working with Food Services Director Ali Hamze and officials from the city of Kirkland to find ways to reduce this waste.

"[Hamze] has said that his staff is really conscious about what they are throwing away, and what they've found is a lot of the food waste that [NU produces] is from students," Vaughan said. "What we are trying to do next semester is make students aware of the amounts of food that we are throwing out, unnecessarily most of the time."

ASNU also plans to host a screening of the documentary "Just Eat It: A Food Waste Story" to initiate conversations about the issue.

ASNU is working with the NU administration to have a study countertop constructed in the HSC Fireside Lounge next semester. Lee reported that the countertop, proposed by ASNU last year, is in the final stage of a long process of getting approval for the cost and construction.

Several other projects will continue development in the spring, including providing umbrellas for students at various places around campus and installing water-bottle fillers.

At-Large Senator Blessing Gasela Mhlanga, who has been involved with acquiring the ASNU-sponsored umbrella stations, said that the umbrellas have been ordered and students can expect them to be available beginning next semester.

Wolfpack Senator Cody Hanford has been involved with getting water bottle fillers installed in buildings around campus. This has been an ongoing project, with many fillers already being installed in many buildings around campus, and ASNU has been working on a proposal to install them in residence halls.

Pride Senator Shelbie Knowles has overseen the acquiring of equipment available for students to rent from the ASNU office this semester. A high-quality speaker, as well as hammocks, have been added to the inventory. A full list of items available for rental can be found on the bulletin board posted outside the ASNU office.

Social-dance policy clarification

ASNU is also working on more long-term goals, including proposing guidelines for social-dance clubs. Two dance club proposals, including a swing dance and an international student dance club respectively, were brought to ASNU this semester.

Although these proposed clubs were initially rejected based on NU policy against social dancing, ASNU is working with Student Development to formulate a proposal that would allow dance clubs to be considered under specific guidelines. Currently, the [NU Community Handbook](#) states that the university does not sponsor or permit events centered on social dancing, with exceptions for dramatic, musical, or cultural dancing performances which must pass prior approval by the respective academic or Student Development department.

Lee said that ASNU's aim is not to change policy necessarily, but to work with the policies already in place and to clarify the guidelines for social dancing so that social dance clubs could be considered in the future.

"It's really an open and vague description [in the handbook], so what all these clubs kept saying is that we want to do this, but we want to do it the right way," Lee said.

The ASNU team is in the process of researching NU's dancing policy, as well as policies in place at comparable colleges, to formulate the proposal. Initial guidelines have been submitted to Student Development and are awaiting further approval to pass the guidelines on to higher administration.

Mhlanga said that his overall experience serving the NU community with ASNU has been positive, and that many changes are being made and will continue to be made around campus.

"I've been very, very happy and proud of the leadership... and also [of] the senators for this year, they've been very hard working and very dedicated to push forward with projects that they are working on," Mhlanga said.

For more information, or to voice your input on campus change, email asnu@northwestu.edu, visit [their page on Eagle](#) or stop by the ASNU office located in front of Perks during office hours Monday-Friday, 3-7 p.m.

