

**UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
FEBRUARY 12, 2024 – GRAND SALON  
MINUTES**

*Chair Zesati led the BOD and meeting attendees through the USU Land Acknowledgment.*

**I. Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the USU Board of Directors was called to order at 12:36 p.m. by Chair Zesati.

**II. Roll Call**

<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Guests</b>
Angelina Armenta	Nawshin Sabah	Alejandra Aparicio	Nicholas Gevorgian
Dr. Megan Bell		Ryan Hairapetian	Daisy Gutierrez
Mishell De Leon		Jeremy Hamlett	Matthew Kadish
Ashley Godinez		Joe Illuminate	Matthew Mateo
Paige Hajiloo		Natalie Johnson	Mayra Romo
Debra Hammond		Tari Hunter	
Daniel Lopez		Sharon Kinard	
Joaquin Macias		Sarina Loeb	
Marilyn Orantes		Samantha Liu	
Sankalp Pala		Audrey Martinez	
Nawshin Sabah		Martel Okonji	
Dr. Freddie Sanchez		Caroline Ponce	
Dr. Mirna Sawyer		Gabby Puzon	
Dr. Winterhalter		Shelley Sakoda	
German Wong		Tim Rasmussen	
Jasmin Zesati		Ruth Vasquez	
		Steven Wein	
		Malahat Zhobin	

*\* TEAMS video participant*

A.S. President Hajiloo arrived at 12:39 p.m.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

M/S/P (M. Sawyer/ G. Wong) Motion to approve the agenda for February 12, 2024.

***Motion passed 13-0-0.***

**IV. Approval of Minutes 1/22/2024**

M/S/P (G. Wong/ M. Orantes) Motion to approve the minutes for January 22, 2024.

***Motion passed 13-0-0.***

**V. Open Forum**

Assistant Director of Resource Centers, Sarina Loeb introduced the Pride Center’s new manager, Martel Okenji. Okenji is a CSUN alum and was an active student leader who advocated for the creation of the USU Pride Center. Pride Center Manager Martel Okonji introduced himself and shared his excitement to be back at CSUN and continue to move the mission forward.

Associated Students Senator Matthew Kadish shared his concerns regarding music at the SRC. Kadish requested the Student Recreation Center lower the music to a consistent volume so as not to compete with headphone music students played while working out at the SRC. He felt it was damaging to the ears to have both types of music playing simultaneously. Acting Co-Director, Student Recreation Center, Jeremy Hamlett spoke to Senator Kadish following up on his concern.

#### **VI. Chair's Report**

Chair Zesati reported that she and Vice Chair Lopez have met with Executive Director Debra Hammond, Associate Executive Director Tari Hunter, and Assistant Director of Programs and Leadership Audrey Martinez on a bi-weekly basis. She shared that the BOD Retreat scheduled on February 5, 2024, was canceled due to weather issues and would be rescheduled at a later date. She hoped it would be an informative and bonding experience for all. Chair Zesati and Vice Chair Lopez shared that monthly check-ins with all Board members will be scheduled following the meeting. She hoped this would be a chance for Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs to check in with them, share committee updates and successes, and serve as a time to support each other. She shared that attendance was mandatory for student directors and attendance was optional for all non-student directors. Lastly, Zesati announced that Chair of the Facilities and Operations Committee Director Collins had resigned due to personal reasons. She wished her the best and was thankful for former Director Collins' time on the Board of Directors. With the resignation, the Board of Directors opened recruitment to fill the vacancy.

#### **VII. Vice Chair's Report**

Since the last Board meeting, Vice Chair Lopez has worked with Chair Zesati to get the BOD to move towards completing their goals and setting-up for the spring semester. Vice Chair Lopez has met with Marketing Coordinator Malahat Zhobin and Marketing Supervisor Gabbie Puzon, and brainstormed ideas for content creation on the BOD social media. He thanked Marketing Supervisor Gabbie Puzon for the social media presentation she had put together. It would be presented later during the board meeting to show the efforts made to increase USU BOD visibility and student engagement. He shared his support and excitement for the new monthly check-ins with student directors and hoped it would provide the opportunity for better communication and strengthen their bond as a group. The first check-in was scheduled for February 19, 2024, and hoped to see board members at the meeting.

#### **VIII. Executive Director's Report**

Director Hammond shared several highlights from her Executive Director report. She was excited to welcome Pride Center Manager Martel Okonji and shared that they were one of the original students who advocated for an LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, now known as the Pride Center. They had been an instrumental figure in the approval for the center and their return was truly a full circle moment for all.

Director Hammond shared the current USU partnership with the Geospatial Science and Technology Center on campus in supporting data for the Heat Map project. The Heat Map project aims to track student foot traffic on campus, in what buildings, and at what times throughout the day. The data provided was important in order to see where the students were and find ways to bring them services and programs that address their needs and success on campus. The Center for Geospatial Science and Technology had helped aggregate data to create an interactive heat map that provided options to scroll through various hours of the day to find the concentration of student attendance and patterns on campus. The information derived from the heat map would launch twice each year in the fall and spring semester and would help campus administrators including the USU make strategic decisions about initiatives that contribute to student success. The project is in the testing phase and is scheduled to roll out in the fall 2024 semester. Director Hammond thanked Acting Co-Director of the Student Recreation Center, Jeremy Hamlett, for leading the project on behalf of the USU. She also thanked Associate Executive Director of

Equity, Programs, and Leadership Tari Hunter, Associate Director of Operations and Services Samantha Liu, and Assistant Director of Programs and Leadership Audrey Martinez for looking into where the Union might take programs outside of our facilities and into new spaces to better serve students.

Hammond shared that she had had the opportunity to take the executive management team to see the film *Origin*. The film was based on Isabel Wilkerson's book, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, which addressed slavery in America, the Holocaust, and the caste system in India. It made comparisons between these topics. Director Hammond shared that it was a tremendously impactful and moving film which she has viewed twice since its release. She encouraged others to watch it and hoped it would move everyone to action.

She shared that she and Associate Executive Director of Equity, Programs, and Leadership Tari Hunter had the opportunity to present to the American Council on Education (ACE) visiting fellows who are on the rise on their respective campuses. Their presentation discussed efforts in student success and equity and inclusion initiatives. They also shared information regarding the three Resource Centers, student employment, the Oasis Wellness Center, and the upcoming Basic Needs Suite. The presentation highlighted the impact and contributions the University Student Union has made towards the CSUN campus and student life. It was well received, and Hammond was asked by the council to provide additional information. The same presentation will be provided for the Board of Directors at a later date.

## **IX. A.S. Report**

President Hajiloo shared an update regarding the Black Student Success Initiative report, which would be released at the end of February or early March. The CSU wide initiative addressed the retention and graduation rates of Black students on campus. President Beck released her own initiative before the CSU's, aiming to better understand the experience of Black students on CSUN's campus. CSUN hired a consulting group to gather research, data, hold discussions, and analyze programs and events on campus to help compile a report. The findings covered current best practices, areas of improvement, and recommendations for the campus. Hajiloo shared that A.S. plans to host a townhall meeting to present the findings of the report.

President Hajiloo talked about the on-going technical issues regarding the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The priority deadline was pushed back to April 2, 2024. While the national commitment deadline is typically May 1, CSUN was one of the first CSUs to push their commitment deadline to June 1, 2024, which would allow students time to better understand how financial aid works, the options available, and assist in their decision to matriculate to CSUN.

She shared important updates from the Academic Technology Committee and announced that Maple Hall was opening in early March, housing 183 additional classrooms. Some classes from Sierra Hall would be shifting to this new building. She shared that LinkedIn Learning was now linked with Canvas, allowing professors to give students assignment credit for completing LinkedIn courses. On April 6, 2024, the new portal would be launched, rendering the old portal obsolete. Across CSU's campuses and institutions, efforts were being made to make the eduroam Wi-Fi a smoother transition for all when visiting different campuses. She shared about the CSUN Ready program for textbooks, which would be a good program, and class materials would cost \$17.50 per unit. The faculty was given a chance to submit materials that could be provided to students at a less expensive price, making it more accessible for all. A Canvas page called Canvas Classrooms for technical resources was added to the main page for all students to centralize information. The Information Technology (IT) department would be giving information and updates. Lastly, she shared that Kindness Week for A.S. was from February 12 – 16, where kindness and self-love were celebrated. On Tuesday, February 13, during the Farmer's Market,

there were lots of giveaways in partnership with the University Counseling Services (UCS), and many different activities for students to participate in throughout the remainder of the week.

## **X. Committee Reports**

### **A. Diversity & Inclusion**

Director Godinez shared that the Diversity and Inclusion Committee meeting dates had been finalized for the Spring semester. The meetings would be held on Fridays on Zoom from 2 – 3 p.m. The first meeting was held on February 23, 2024, via Zoom. She thanked Associate Executive Director Tari Hunter and Equity and Diversity Initiatives Manager Natalie Johnson for continued support and help with the Committee.

### **B. Facilities & Operations**

Director Pala shared that the Facilities and Operations met on February 2, 2024, and voted on setting their official meetings for Fridays from 2 – 3 p.m. Their subsequent meeting was held on Friday, February 23, 2024. Director Pala shared that Director Collins had announced her resignation from her position as Chair of the Facilities and Operations Committee due to scheduling conflicts with her academic and work life. He had wished her the best of luck in her journey. The committee has since reviewed the SUMMIT presentation which covered the USU Heart of Campus renovation and expansion plans and discussed the construction site location, schedule, and budget for the Basic Needs Suite (BNS). The committee also reviewed key points from the BNS Naming Meeting on January 29, 2024. The meeting focused on outreach initiatives and adapting to student needs. Lastly, Director Pala encouraged committee members to attend the USU Cultural Welcome Celebrations being held throughout the month of February.

### **C. Finance**

Director Orantes wished everyone a happy love month. She shared that the Finance Committee finalized their schedule and will have their meetings on the following dates:

1. February 23, 2024
2. March 15, 2024
3. March 29, 2024
4. April 26, 2024
5. May 31, 2024, (which serves as the Annual Budget Meeting)

To ensure the Finance Committee members feel a sense of belonging, Director Orantes shared that the Finance Committee would continue hosting bonding events with one scheduled for March 1, 2024. She thanked Director De Leon, Co-Chair of the Finance Committee, for her continuous support for the committee.

### **D. Personnel**

Director Wong hoped everyone had a wonderful weekend and was able to stay dry during the heavy rains. The Personnel Committee had everyone's schedules solidified and were looking to hold their first committee meeting in mid to late February. Their first meeting would focus on reviewing their goals and meeting schedule for the spring semester. They had several goals they want to achieve and expected an active and busy semester.

### **E. Retirement**

Vice Chair Lopez wished Director German Wong a Happy Belated Birthday. He shared there were no new updates from the Retirement Committee and their next meeting would be held in person on February 29, 2024.

## **XI. Action Items**

No action items for the meeting.

## **XII. Discussion Items**

### **A. Executive Director Administrative Work Plan Mid-Year Status Report**

The following information was provided and discussed by Executive Director Debra Hammond. Updates were shared with the Board of Directors to keep them informed of the status of Director Hammond's administrative work plan. Notes for each item could be found in the agenda packet on pages 19-21. The updates would help the board evaluate her performance coming later in the semester.

1. Oversight of USU Projects (In Progress and On Track): This project focused on the behind-the-scenes items related to financing, actual use of student fees referendum, and long-term planning regarding the renovation and expansion of USU facilities. There would be a graduated fee increase in student fees as opposed to an immediate increase. There had been weekly meetings discussing the redesign, detail orientation, political partnerships, and financial aspects of the project.
2. Oversight of Basic Needs Suite (BNS) (In Progress and On Track): Weekly meetings had been held concerning this project. Significant donors for the project were secured including the State of California and two private donors. A groundbreaking ceremony was slated for May 3, 2024. Discussions had begun concerning how the BNS would operate and what the USU's role is in partnership with various campus entities.
3. Succession Planning Protocols (In Progress and On Track): Director Hammond announced her resignation effective December 2024 at the January 22 BOD meeting. She had worked with staff to develop an Annual Executive Calendar for the Director's position to ensure all projects remained on track. In the upcoming month, she shared that she would present the Board with personnel options for their consideration.
4. JEDI-related learning and work for the USU & CSUN (Completed): Director Hammond had served on a variety of committees throughout campus. She served as a Co-Chair of the Black Student Success Council and Commissioner on the Commission for Diversity and Inclusion, from which she resigned in 2023. Associate Executive Director Tari Hunter continues to represent the USU on the Black Student Success Council (BSSC) and oversee the organization's JEDI goals, while Assistant Director Sarina Loeb sits on the Commission for Diversity and Inclusion.
5. Serve on Black Student Success Initiatives Work Team (In Progress and On Track): She had been a member of the Core Work Team and had participated in all the meetings and provided feedback to the team. She was excited for the final report as this was the first step in the process that would be analyzed to figure out the University commitments related to Black Student Success would look like.
6. Train and Develop Associate Executive Director (In Progress and On Track): The search had concluded for the regular position of Associate Executive Director of Equity, Programs, and Leadership with Tari Hunter being the successful applicant in December 2023. Training will continue through June 2024.
7. Organizational Planning for Staffing, Programs, and USU Services (In Progress and On Track): She had looked at USU services, programs, and opportunities to ensure there was appropriate staffing to continue these operations. There was a shortage of staff which continued due to the Great Resignation. She shared that things were being revamped, combining positions to save money but also give other people an opportunity to grow and take on more responsibility. Staff would continue to work on programs and see what could be kept, modified, and or eliminated. She was engaged in an employee compensation review, reclassifications that would be done internally, and possibly reinstating the merit-based increase program in lieu of general salary increases in an effort to compete with the job market.

## **B. 2023 – 2024 Mid-Year Progress Report on USU Goals and Outcomes**

In alignment with the Division of Student Affairs strategic priorities, Director Hammond presented the University Student Union mid-year progress report regarding the four goals listed below. She noted that we are on track and doing well:

**Goal #1:** The University Student Union (USU) will enhance staff, student employees, and board members' understanding of and appreciation for the principles and practices of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as an understanding of culture (self and others) and its impact on identity development.

**Assessment method:** The University Student Union (USU) will implement culturally inclusive training and programs for USU staff, SAEs, and the Board of Directors to strengthen knowledge and understanding of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles and practices.

**Update:** The USU has provided appropriate training throughout the year and well into the spring semester including the BOD Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) training with Dr. Allen Lipscomb in July 2023 followed by a JEDI post assessment. Student Assistant Employees at the USU took part in the fall 2023 SUMMIT keynote delivered by Dr. Pierre Sherrill, and identity development workshops at the winter 2024 SUMMIT provided by Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager Natalie Johnson. In the spring semester, USU professional staff will be attending a mandatory JEDI training with Dr. Allen Lipscomb on April 5 which will focus on diversity and an equity centered approach to our work. A pre and post assessment will be provided for the training as well.

**Goal #2** The University Student Union will continually improve and enhance facilities to provide the CSUN community and guests with quality facilities, equipment, and technology in support of student success efforts and to increase revenue-generating opportunities.

**Assessment method:** The USU would determine the viability of continuing the New Heart of Campus and the Basic Needs Suite projects, including redefining each project scope, schedule, and budget, financing and student referendum commitments.

**Update:** Numerous project updates and a comprehensive presentation in March have been provided regarding the on-going USU renovation and expansion project. It was determined by the 2022-2023 BOD not to increase student fees beyond the \$125 amount proposed in the original referendum passed in 2019.

**Goal #3** The University Student Union will provide learning-based student work experiences that support student readiness for post-college employment.

**Assessment method:** in the spring of 2024, USU student assistant employees would complete a customized version of the Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education (NASPA) student unions and programming survey. The survey measures the self-reported impact of the student union student employment experience on the development/enhancement of various skills that support readiness for post-college employment. A report would be generated that evaluated the effectiveness of specific interventions.

**Update:** The NASPA survey was administered at the winter 2024 SUMMIT which yielded a 96% completion rate from students. The survey explored the impact of student employment at the USU including transferrable skills and career readiness.

**Goal #4** The University Student Union will help student assistant employees become aware of the skills they are acquiring through its Student Employment Program.

Assessment method: Human resources will add skill sets to 50% of the job descriptions for Class I and Class II student positions.

Update: The USU Human Resources department assisted in reviewing job classifications and added a list of skill sets in employee job descriptions to help students become aware of the skills they can acquire from their employment. Additionally, exit interviews are conducted as employees separate with the organization to assess their experience and efficacy of the USU employment program.

### **C. Basic Needs Suite Naming Presentation**

Marketing Manager Steven Wein and Marketing Coordinator Malahat Zhubin presented on the Basic Needs Suite Naming process. They shared that students had been surveyed and were asked to provide thoughts and feedback for the space. Students were asked to respond to what the essence of the BNS meant for them, and some of the responses provided were: feeling a weight lifted off, freedom, nest, recharged, when basic needs are met success seemed possible, sense of belonging, and hope for the future. The shared feedback has been aggregated to present a name for the Basic Needs Suite. Marketing Manager Steven Wein and Marketing Coordinator Malahat Zhubin led the Board through an activity where they brainstormed and collected ideas for naming the BNS.

Director Armenta left at 1:58 p.m.

Director Bell left at 1:58 p.m.

Director Orantes left at 2:04 p.m. and returned at 2:07 p.m.

### **D. BOD Social Media Efforts**

Marketing Supervisor Gabbie Puzon presented a crash course on the BOD Social Media Efforts. She shared that this presentation was also shared with the Equity, Programs, and Leadership area of the USU and everyone was getting the information. This version was tailored for the Board of Directors. There are going to be bi-weekly social media meetings with the BOD, and she extended the invitation to any director who wished to participate. Some of the topics discussed included:

1. Unified Branding: the little things mattered when it came to front-facing material, ensuring colors that represented USU were used, and consistent and uniform branding when posting on social media.
2. Accessibility Practices: making everything as accessible as possible, using plain language and explaining acronyms when first used, camel cases, no flash gifs, captions for stories and reels, and inclusive language were among some of the ways to do this were discussed. These small details help in the long run.
3. Engaging the Audience: being responsive to comments, likes, direct messages (DMs), and followers. She encouraged cross-departmental collaborative posting but reminded everyone that the USU was always represented.
4. Responding to Negative Comments: Comments shouldn't be deleted since all students deserved to be heard, but she advised responding appropriately if one decided to engage. The Marketing department work actively to assist anyone who needed help when responding to negativity.
5. Social Media Best Practices: There were 12,900 followers at the time of this presentation. Knowing who your audience is important. They could see who commented and liked, and then analyze their audience based on this. She advised being authentic and building relationships when given the opportunity.
6. Social Media Gameplan: Basecamp was the software being used to track projects and provide updates as needed. It helped with assigning tasks, meeting deadlines, and seeing overall progress.

She offered extra support for anyone who wanted a deeper understanding or more hands-on practice on anything discussed. The Board asked questions for clarification on responding to negative comments and scenarios that could arise. Marketing Manager Steven Wein answered some questions and advised not to delete comments, reiterate facts, not engage negatively, and give information where applicable.

Director Sanchez left at 2:19 p.m.

Director Winterhalter left at 2:23 p.m.

#### **E. Increasing BOD Visibility and Outreach**

Chair Zesati and Vice Chair Lopez led the discussion on Increasing BOD Visibility and Outreach. Vice Chair Lopez shared that they were on a schedule for content creation and had plans to assign student directors weeks they would be in charge of creating content. He encouraged the student directors to tap into their committee members to join. He encouraged them to use the time they met with their committees to create content. He wanted to make the BOD more personable and engage with students. He hoped to see other directors showcased in each other's videos and invited the non-student directors to join. He reiterated the expectations for Board members and wanted to ensure they were active in their roles.

Chair Zesati reminded everyone that one of the goals that had been voted on was the visibility of the Board and wanted their support. The student body needed to know their faces, know that there was someone on the Board to help them, and receive student feedback in general.

Vice Chair Lopez clarified that the check-ins would be an open space for student directors to engage, share committee status reports, and feedback for Chair Zesati and himself. He hoped this had been an opportunity to increase bonds and create communication.

#### **XIII. Announcements**

Director Joaquin Macias invited everyone to the USU and Alumni Leadership Mixer on February 29, 2024, hosted by the Alumni Association sponsored in part by the USU and Premier America Credit Union. Director Macias encouraged everyone to attend along with several clubs, organizations, and chapter representatives from over 20 different chapters.

Assistant Director, Programs and Leadership Audrey Martinez announced the A.S. and USU elections taking place. She invited everyone to tap and encourage potential students who would be great candidates for these leadership positions. The term would be for 2024 – 2026. Info sessions were going to be held the week of February 12 – 14, campaigns would run through March, and live results would be announced and posted on April 11, 2024.

#### **XIV. Adjournment**

Board Chair Zesati adjourned the meeting at 2:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Debra L. Hammond,  
Executive Director