

The Weekly Initiative for a Student Cooperative Café

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ENVS 4100: Appropriate Technology and Sustainability – Ecological Design: The
Campus as a Living Laboratory

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Executive Summary:

Due to a lack of healthy, interesting, environmentally sustainable food choices, the absence of a student union at Western Michigan University, and losses in local cultural spaces, we believe that there should be a student-led, sustainability-oriented café/venue on campus. We believe that this would improve new student recruitment and retention by providing a vibrant cultural space on campus, and that it would further the university's stated goals of becoming more environmentally sustainable by making local and organic foods more accessible to students.

In 2007, WMU alumnus Ash Norton delved into the possibility of creating a student-run café. He established a desire for better quality eating options on campus by students with a survey, explored possible locations on campus, and rallied support for his project within the university and community. With a turnover in administration, his graduation, and other obstacles, Ash was unable to move further with the project.

In 2008, WMU students Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters created a registered student organization (R.S.O.) called the Weekly Initiative for a Student Cooperative Café (W.I.S.C.C.). This group was created to explore specifically what would be needed in order to accomplish Ash's goals of attaining a space on campus and creating a successful café within it. Since February 19th W.I.S.C.C. has been holding two meetings per week. One is an open public meeting that has been attended by several students, and the other is an organizational meeting to devise methods of increasing support for the project and to brainstorm creative management strategies to make use of our volunteer support.

W.I.S.C.C. has generated much interest within the W.M.U. student community and continues to grow. It has also formed a working relationship with the Wesley Foundation on campus, one of the potential locations for a café. Finally, the initiative has collected data local and organic produce and supplies distributors, equipment costs, and other factors directly related

to the formation of a small, sustainable business. To do this W.I.S.C.C. has explored models such as the Earthfoods Café at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Silo Café & Pub at the University of California, Davis, and the Uniquely Caffeinated Cafes and Café Co-op at the University of Connecticut.

The vision of the Weekly Initiative for a Student Cooperative Café is to create a campus café that:

- Harbors sustainable, socially responsible foods and food practices
- Stays true to cooperative, consensus based student management
- Creates student unity
- Promotes social learning and awareness of ecocultural sustainability
- Is a creative outlet for W.M.U. students, displaying student artwork, supporting local/student musicians, holding readings of student poetry and literature, etc.
- Provides tasty, nutritious, food and an inviting atmosphere like nowhere else on campus that keeps students coming back!

Although significant strides have been made, W.I.S.C.C. still needs the support of Western Michigan University to make this happen. W.I.S.C.C. has already established the basement of the Wesley Foundation, formerly the Fireside Café, as the most promising existing space on campus. The initiative has begun lease negotiations with the Wesley Foundation to occupy this space starting in July 2008. However, for this project to be truly successful we believe that in the future a student run café should be built into the W.M.U. Master Plan and/or renovations of buildings such as Sangren Hall or Dunbar Hall.

Current plans include an extremely low budget approach to start-up, and financial assistance from the university would be greatly appreciated and would significantly increase the chances of a

successful outcome. Another way the university could support W.I.S.C.C. is in the form of free legal and accounting advice, or by making other expert advice available.

Introduction:

By signing the Talloires Declaration, reinvigorating the W.M.U. Sustainability Committee, and initiating new projects such as large scale food waste composting, the current administration of Western Michigan University has shown a strong desire and commitment to make W.M.U. a more sustainable and “green” campus. Projects on campus ranging from photovoltaic and wind turbine electricity research, to paper and water use reduction, to sustainability-oriented fellowships at the Gibbs House are becoming institutionalized. Projects such as these are fueling hopes that the university will remain cutting edge without being environmentally destructive.

However, the challenges of global warming and quest for eco-cultural sustainability are monumental tasks, and we have a very long distance left to travel. One issue that has not yet been adequately addressed at W.M.U. is that of food. This project seeks to further a previous initiative by student Ash Norton, who wished to form an environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, student-led café on campus. We hope that this project will be a small but significant contribution to the university’s commitment to sustainability.

It is clearly understood within the subject of sustainability that changes in food production and distribution must be made. Contemporary fertilizer and pesticide-dependent agricultural practices strip the soil of nutrients and render it unproductive, while runoff of agricultural chemicals wreaks havoc on aquatic ecosystems. Centralized food distribution leads most of what we eat to travel hundreds, and often thousands of miles by truck, airplane, train, and/or ship to our table, accruing a massive debt of carbon emissions and other penalties along the way. According to current theory, sustainable food systems are those that are local and organic, avoiding both large scale chemical use and diesel fuel related transportation penalties.

Through the lens of health and wellness, other concerns about our food emerge. The majority of people in the United States are now overweight, with rising rates of diabetes and other diet related illnesses. W.M.U. is no exception. Foods extremely high in saturated fats, sugar, and sodium are ubiquitous in fast food restaurants, cafeterias, and vending machines on campus. Healthy food options are available in some areas, but it is nearly impossible to find selections that are nutritionally balanced, organic, local, and affordable to students.

The student-led component of our project adds another dimension to the project and allows it to address other concerns. Western Michigan University does not have a student union or any other cultural space maintained and operated exclusively by students. A student-run cultural space with art, music, and good food would be one more healthy social option for students to relax and express themselves, and would be an obvious tool for recruitment, retention, and increased enrollment if showcased by the university as a “green” space.

Cultural voids have been left by several recent closings and restructurings around campus and the Kalamazoo community. Vibrant local music venues such as Kraftbrau, Club Soda, and Mr. Wonderful’s, long running student hangouts, are now closed with few new businesses filling their space. Local bands and musical acts are now being driven to play in basements and other illegal venues instead. Through the closing of East Hall, construction of the Richmond Center, and renovation of Korhman Hall, student art space has actually declined on campus. Artists and musicians want to provide culture and entertainment to a student body and have few options.

Another reason for this to be student led is that students have direct access to the most cutting edge information on sustainability. They are encouraged daily to be innovative and radical in their thinking, so a café has the potential to be a pilot program for the rest of the university’s food systems. Obviously, it would be ideal to have sustainable food in all areas of the campus. This would be a low risk method for determining the viability of such a widespread change.

Methodology & Data:

Because of the importance that this be a student led space, our methodology during this phase was to involve other student's opinions as much as possible and to make our planning transparent and participatory. Ash Norton has already made cases for why W.M.U. needs this type of establishment in order to further its goals of sustainability, that students would support it, and that it is a feasible endeavor¹. Our job was to take the next step and begin to formulate a more detailed plan for making it a reality.

During January and early February we met with Ash Norton, fellow students Josh Shultz and Jenna Blanton, and Dr. Glasser to strategize. It was decided during this time that an effective way to organize ourselves and promote student participation was to start a Registered Student Organization (R.S.O.) with the purpose of initiating a student led eatery. On February 19th we had our first student meeting, including Ryan Walters, Matt Hollander, and Josh Shultz. Our primary objective during this meeting, and again on February 26th with the addition of Alex Rosen, was to name and draft a constitution for the R.S.O. and thus construct a framework for how to conduct future meeting and make decisions. Our first constitution, based on the handbook of Earthfoods Café in the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, was ratified at this time.

Between February 26th and March 11th the constitution was amended and made ready for approval at our first publicized meeting. This meeting, on March 11th, was attended by several new student-participants who have continued to contribute to the project. With a working constitution, we refocused on naming our group and submitting our R.S.O. paperwork to be officially recognized by W.M.U.'s Student Activities & Leadership Programs (S.A.L.P.). We decided to name ourselves the Western Initiative for a Student Cooperative Café. After rejection of our name because we are not officially endorsed by W.M.U., we settled on the Weekly

¹ Norton, Ash, *Student Led Campus Café* (Unpublished, 2007)

Initiative for a Student Cooperative Café, otherwise known as W.I.S.C.C. (For our current constitution, see appendix III).

With this structure in place, we continued to gather and analyze data from various sources. We revisited Ash Norton's ENVS 4100 project, along with the survey data he compiled. We began to sift through a sixty-page feasibility study he had commissioned from a management class in the Haworth College of Business and formulate methods for including its recommendations in our plans. We also began to narrow down the possibilities for where this type of project could be successful, eventually imagining worst and best case scenarios for the implementation of a student-led café.

Examples of Best Practices on Campus:

We are charting new territory with this initiative, and although there are currently good practices on campus there is nothing established at the level we are seeking. Campus Dining Services does an excellent job providing nutritionally balanced meals in the cafeterias, but current supply systems do not meet our criteria for sustainable food. The implementation of large scale food waste composting is a major step on the disposal side of the issue, but until suppliers such as Sysco and Gordon Food Services can be dropped in favor of local or regional organic distributors (or until Sysco and GFS drastically change their structures) best practices cannot be met. One major reason for implementing a small café as a pilot project is that we understand the overwhelming economic and organizational complexity of changing these distributors in haste and the unreasonable nature of such a request.

Best Practices on Other Campuses:

As mentioned previously, we modeled our constitution on the handbook of the Earthfoods Café at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. This was based on information gathered by Ash Norton, which is located in the appendices of this document. We have chosen

not to further this research in favor of making as much progress towards opening a café as possible and answering the pertinent questions involved.

Discussion:

Since we began this project with a clear idea of what we thought was needed, our research was focused mainly on the practical aspects of starting a small business on campus. Topics we investigated most heavily were the feasibility of different locations, start up costs, management and legal structure, menu design, distribution, and cultural events.

The location of a business is obviously one of the most important factors in its success, so we spent a great deal of time on this aspect of planning. We eventually settled on two scenarios, one preferred and one manageable but less desirable. The first, preferred option is for W.I.S.C.C. to secure space in a university building on main campus, such as Sprau Tower or a renovated Sangren Hall or Dunbar Hall. This would require high level endorsement from the university and significantly higher start up funding, but would be much easier in terms of legal structure and accounting because it could be incorporated directly into the university system.

The second, less desirable scenario would be for students to lease the space formerly called the Fireside Café from the Wesley Foundation. This option would require less start up funding because we would be occupying an existing kitchen complete with most of our major equipment needs. However, the space is in dire need of renovation, is in the basement of a church (a potential obstacle to attracting customers), is not wheelchair accessible, and would not officially be part of W.M.U.

Although it is the less desirable option, we proceeded with a proposal to the Wesley Foundation to lease the former Fireside Café. Their board of directors is currently evaluating a proposal for W.I.S.C.C. to rent the space beginning in July 2008, in an effort to open a café at the

beginning of fall semester, 2008. We have not yet entered into this lease, nor do we intend to unless all possibilities of starting within the university are ruled out.

Several students are already involved in this initiative, and interest continues to grow. We will continue rallying student support over the summer and are committed to making this café a reality.

Limitations of Analysis and Future Work:

The major limitations of our analysis are that we are not lawyers, accountants, or businesspeople. We are working as hard as we can to understand the complexities of forming a small business, but without the relevant experience things move slowly. Future work will need to be done on all aspects of the project, namely in the construction of a menu and organizing the details of daily operations.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Our conclusion is that an environmentally sustainable, socially just, student led café at Western Michigan University would be extremely successful both financially and in meeting its other goals. However, to realize our best case scenario would require significant capital and human investment by the university. Our ideal situation would be for Western Michigan University to provide:

- \$100,000 capital funding towards the renovation, construction, and equipment needs of a new café space on main campus
- \$20,000 seed money to set up initial supply inventory
- Free legal and accounting advice from W.M.U. staff to create a working business structure and accounting system, including a method for utilizing existing payroll systems

- Access to the university's non-profit status, with 100% of the café's surplus money going towards further sustainability initiatives
- Faculty and staff advisors as needed throughout the duration of the project (i.e. representatives from Environmental Studies, Dining Services, Haworth College of Business, etc.)

Works Cited:

Norton, Ashley. "Student Led Campus Café." Unpublished. W.M.U. Environmental Studies Program with Dr. Harold Glasser. 23 April 2007.

"EarthFoods Employee Handbook." Earthfoods Café of U.M.A.S.S., Amherst. 6 March 2007.

Alexander, Brent, et al. "Student Led On-Campus Restaurant." Unpublished. Haworth College of Business with John Schmidt. 12 November 2007.

APPENDIX I: Contact List

Name	Relevance/Title	Phone Number	Email
Lisa Batten	Director, Wesley Foundation	269-344-4076	Lisa.m.batten@wmich.edu
Justin Beach	Student Executive, Kalamazoo Peace Center		jbeach5@gmail.com
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Kirsten Lindberg	WISCC Member		Kirsten.e.lindberg@wmich.edu
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Alexander Rosen	WISCC Member		Alexander.j.rosen@wmich.edu
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Ryan Walters	WISCC Co-Planner	269-569-4877	Ryan.m.walters@wmich.edu

APPENDIX II: Contact Logs

- Tuesday, February 12th, 2008.

Meeting between Ryan Walters and Ash Norton.

Summary: Overview of Ash's project, exploration/tour of previously Fireside Café space and Wesley Foundation, discussions of limitations and problems of having café in space, and discussion of cafes in the space in the past.

- Friday, February 15th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander, Josh Shultz, Jenna Blanton, and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Discussions of creating a business plan, creating an RSO (Registered Student Organization), establishing Tuesday 6:30pm meetings, and assigned tasks for everyone.

- Tuesday, February 19th, 2008.

Meeting between Dr. Harold Glasser, Ash Norton, Matt Hollander, and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Discussions of holding our first public meeting on March 11th, publicizing our first public meeting, discussion of possible income sources for the café, discussion of fliers for group, discussion of Matt and Ryan adapting a constitution and creating a name for the RSO, and discussion of an open critique of constitution during next meeting.

- Thursday, February 21st, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Setting up, naming, and drafting a constitution for our RSO.

- Sunday, February 24th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Work on drafting constitution.

- Tuesday, February 26th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander, Ryan Walters, Josh Shultz, and Alex Rosen.

Summary: Critique of constitution, discussion of possible contacts, and discussion of when to meet with Lisa Batten to entertain a lease of space.

- Thursday, February 28th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander, Ryan Walters, and Josh Shultz.

Summary: Finish up constitution changes and discuss creating a meeting notebook.

- Tuesday, March 11th, 2008.

1st Open Meeting.

Summary: Introduction of our goals, explanation of constitution, proposed amendments to constitution, passing of proposed amendments, and discussion of flyer distribution options.

- Sunday, March 16th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Discussion of our focus to be re-vamping the business plan and creation of committees to address/tackle major issues of the business plan.

- Tuesday, March 18th, 2008.

Open Meeting.

Summary: Discussion and voting on name proposals; discussion of groups page; introduction of committees: fundraising, menu, legal status, and promotions; addition of timeline committee (Matt and Ryan); and members choosing of committee to join.

- Thursday, March 20th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Discussion of setting up meeting between Lisa Batten and Ryan Walters; discussion of a later meeting between Lisa, Ryan, and Matt to discuss a lease proposal; creation of specific assignments for committees and deadlines; and outline tasks for Ryan (find distributors and price lists) and Matt (work on business plan).

- Tuesday, March 25th, 2008.

Meeting between Lisa Batten and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Overview of planning, discussion, and goals for WISCC; also setting up meeting between Lisa, Matt, and Ryan to propose lease.

- Tuesday, March 25th, 2008.

Open Meeting.

Summary: Discussion of Ryan's meeting with Lisa and explanation of specific assignments for committees.

- Thursday, March 27th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Creation of timeline; discussion of amount of proposed rent based on workers per shift, shifts per day, wages, and income per day; and discussion of lease proposal.

- Tuesday, April 1st, 2008.

Open Meeting.

Summary: Discussion of final paper, update from legal status committee, and discussion of possible outcomes of meeting with President Dunn.

- Thursday, April 3rd, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander, Lisa Batten, and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Presenting lease proposal and going over any concerns of Lisa's.

- Thursday, April 3rd, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Discussion of what equipment would need to be purchased for kitchen, price ranging of equipment needed, and discussion of doing inventory of kitchen to find out what is already present.

- Tuesday, April 8th, 2008.

Open Meeting.

Summary: Inventory of kitchen, discussion of having point of purchase items, and discussion of dishes vs. disposable containers.

- Thursday, April 10th, 2008.

Meeting between Chris Dilley, Matt Hollander, and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Discussion of goals, possibility of sharing non-profit umbrella of Fair Food Matters, sharing of distributor contacts, and issue of transport of local/regional foods.

- Thursday, April 10th, 2008.

Meeting between Matt Hollander and Ryan Walters.

Summary: Discuss possibility of using Biodiesel truck to pick up products from distributors and discuss range of start up money needed.

APPENDIX III: W.I.S.C.C. Constitution April 13, 2008:

The Weekly Initiative for a Student Cooperative Café (WISCC) Constitution

March 10, 2008

Compiled by:

Co-Planners Ryan Walters and Matt Hollander

*****This constitution is adapted closely from the handbook of the Earthfoods Café at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. We sincerely thank Earthfoods for sharing!*****

Unit I: Introduction

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to provide high quality food at an inexpensive price to the Western Michigan University community. Members of WISCC will take part in forming an ecologically, economically and socially responsible business based on the Principles of Cooperative Management.

What is Cooperative Management?

All decisions made by WISCC will be reached through a consensus decision-making process whereby all members must consent to a decision before it is implemented. This differs from the usual majority rules method of parliamentary procedure; instead of needing 51% or 2/3 majority to make decisions concerning policy, transactions, etc., the initiative will rely on a method of decision-making in which cooperation, not competition, between members is emphasized.

Unit II: Membership

Who is a member?

Non-voting membership to WISCC is open to everyone. No individual will be denied membership because of race, sex, religion, color, height, weight, age, handicap, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, etc.

To be considered a voting member, an individual must have:

- Attended at least one meeting as a non-voting member
- Read the WISCC constitution
- Signed the Constitutional Acceptance Log in the General Meeting Notebook

Unit III: Cooperative Management Structure

All members will come together to discuss any issues pertaining to WISCC during the weekly General Meeting. All decisions requiring the group's consent will be discussed and decided at the General Meeting. Attendance is not required, but any member absent forfeits his /her rights to any vote that occurs during the meeting.

So that the General Meeting runs efficiently, all members must be aware of how it is conducted. The meeting has a specific structure and specific roles to ensure that it runs smoothly. Everybody is responsible for the productivity of the General Meeting! When these structures aren't followed, it will become confusing and frustrating.

Unit IV: Positions/General Meeting Roles

So far there are two positions for WISCC members: Co-Planners who are officers of the

organization, and all other general members. Both Co-Planners and general members may serve on committees agreed upon by WISCC. There is no limit to the number of Co-Planners allowed in the organization, and membership in this elevated position shall be open to any person who demonstrates aptitude and capability and who commits to its responsibilities. However, only two new Co-Planners will be added during each election.

CO-PLANNERS:

There are no term limits for Co-Planners. They manage all areas of the initiative and their responsibilities/capabilities are to:

- Identify overall organizational goals for WISCC and its various committees
- Create an agenda for the weekly General Meeting
- Maintain communication with committees to help guide them through their goals and responsibilities. Have 2 meetings with each committee each semester to check on goal progress and other concerns and happenings within the committees.
- Formulate policy proposals based on directions set at the General Meeting
- Facilitate communication within the initiative and its various committees
- Identify organizational and operative problems or needs and bring them and suggested solutions to the attention of the General Meeting
- Facilitate the educational process of the initiative
- Act as secretary by reserving meeting rooms for the General Meeting, and initiate the awareness of any events in the course of the semester as well as upcoming semesters' dates
- Keep a detailed notebook of all meetings, decisions, discussions, suggestions, etc. for future Co-Planners
- Run elections at the beginning and end of every semester
- Facilitate general and committee goal setting at the beginning of every semester.
- Track all money going in and out of WISCC
- Maintain detailed semester budgets
- Maintain detailed accounting statements and assist with any audits by Western Michigan University

- Lead or assist any committee with money related goals
- Take turns filling the following General Meeting roles:

Facilitator:

The facilitator will lead the meeting, ensuring the agenda is set and adhered to, discussion is focused on items at hand, and that appropriate process is followed. During the meeting, the facilitator will assume a leadership role, guiding the group as a whole. Good facilitation is necessary in order to have a good meeting; a poorly facilitated meeting is often frustrating, confusing, long and tedious.

Responsibilities/Capabilities:

- Physically sets up the meeting. The facilitator should arrive to the meeting room at least twenty minutes before the General Meeting begins with the meeting notebook, to arrange tables if necessary, and legibly write the agenda on a whiteboard
- Prepares him/herself for the meeting. Familiarize her/himself with the agenda in order to anticipate any heated discussion or possible difficulties that may arise, and adjusts his/her style and/or mood to suit the meeting.
- Remains neutral yet engaged. Remember that while facilitating you perform a role distinct from your position as a member. You must maintain a certain emotional distance from the discussion, but remain engaged, and recognize when discussion deviates from the original focus.
- Calls point-of-process. The facilitator should feel comfortable in his/her authority to call a point-of-process when s/he realizes that the discussion deviates from the original focus or when s/he feels that the group is ready to vote on a proposal.
- Is attentive. Must pay attention to the body language and tone of voice displayed by members to ascertain whether the discussion needs clarification or concluding
- Summarizes everything that occurs. Often, it is difficult for everyone to pay complete attention 100% of the time, so the facilitator must summarize all discussions at their conclusion

Note Taker:

The note taker takes detailed notes of the General Meeting.

Responsibilities/Capabilities:

- Records the assigned tasks and persons responsible for completing those assigned tasks for follow-up
- Posts the agenda for the next week's General Meeting on the list serve immediately after the current meeting's conclusion
- Remains focused and attentive. This ensures accurate and organized notes which, in turn, ensures that the following meeting will be well organized and productive

Stacker:

The stacker is responsible for keeping track of whose turn it is to speak during discussions. He/she writes down members' names in the order they raise their hands and calls the next speaker as the preceding one finishes. No one may speak until the stacker has called his/her name with the exception of the facilitator, who may only interrupt for facilitation purposes, not to add to the discussion. It is important that the stacker has full view of all members and is attentive to the hands being raised. The stack is first on, first off and the stacker calls for final comments when agenda items are running out of time. In small group settings, the stacker position may be waived for timeliness.

Time Keeper:

The individual who places an item on the general meeting agenda will assign a time for that item. It is the responsibility of the timekeeper to keep track of the time the initiative spends on each item. S/he will announce when discussion has one minute left so that stacking can be closed. When time has been called, the person who is talking STOPS after finishing his/her sentence. The timekeeper position, like the Stacker, may also be waived in small groups.

ALL OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:

Responsibilities/Capabilities:

- Be considerate. Be mindful of your turn to speak and when another is speaking
- Offer CONSTRUCTIVE criticism. Keep in mind the guidelines for giving a receiving feedback. Be vocal if the discussion is going off-topic.
- Keep a balance between your needs as an individual and the needs of the group/organization.
- Be concise. If someone voices your sentiments, say WORD (or something similar) instead of repeating it. Habitual repeaters will be publicly shamed.
- Share information. If you have crucial information to help the discussion go more smoothly, you may interject to say “point of information.”
- Habitually discourteous, malicious, or disruptive members can be banned from meetings and stripped of consensus privileges by unanimous approval of the group. Keep in mind that we are trying to bring people together in a respectful and peaceful way, respect others’ thoughts and opinions, and reserve this power to ban individuals for only the most extreme of circumstances.

Unit V: Finances**On-campus Accounts**

- WISCC will follow and be subject to all University policies, procedures, and practices regarding student organization accounts and finances. (Note: If WISCC disbands, by policy all SAF funds in the University account will revert to the University)

Off-campus accounts

- Banking will be done at the Berhard Center National City branch for non-university funds.

Dues, Assessments, or Initiation Fees

- There are no dues, assessments, or initiation fees for WISCC

Financial Policy

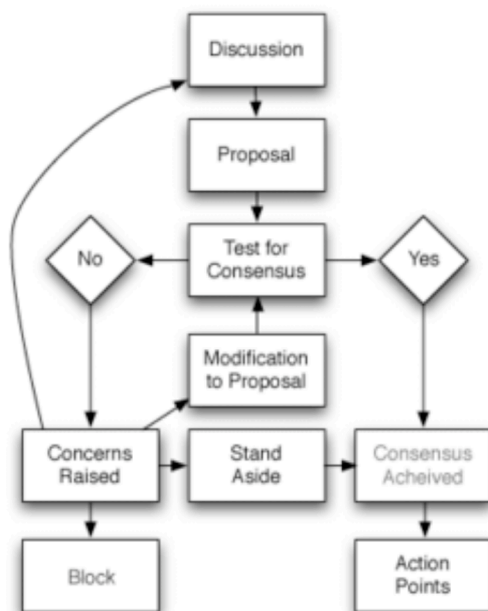
- The financial books and records will be audited at least once a year.
- Co-Planners designated as responsible for financial matters will attend University financial workshops as required.

Disposition of Non-University Funds in the Case of Inactivation

- If the organization dissolves or is inactive, *non-university funds* will be left in the off-campus account for use if the organization becomes active in the future.

Unit VI: Consensus Decision Making

Unity is the philosophy behind the consensus decision-making process. The goal is a decision that is agreed upon to by ALL members. Consent does not mean that everyone must be completely happy with the final outcome. Total satisfaction and agreement of all members is rare and shouldn't be an expectation. Rather, the decision should be acceptable to the extent that all members agree to support it. If you find yourself partially satisfied with a proposal wherein every other member agrees should be implemented, you should consider whether this is something you can support for the sake of the initiative, and understand that sometimes this decision-making process requires a leap of faith by all its members. We must assume that all members have the interests of the initiative in mind when we vote on proposals. At the end of discussing a proposal, the facilitator asks the group if they are prepared to vote. S/he then summarizes the proposal at hand, and proceeds to ask for those in favor, anyone blocking, and anyone standing aside, to raise their hands in that order. By asking the questions in this order, all members participate in the decision-making process. The following diagram is a guideline for discussion:



Amendments may be made to the WISCC constitution at any General Meeting. A consensus decision must be made, and all Co-Planners must be present.

Blocking

If you are unable to support a proposal and you think it may be detrimental to the interest and health of the initiative, then you may block consensus. In doing so you are saying that you feel the decision will so adversely affect the initiative that you prevent the proposal from passing. You should consider Standing Aside before making action to block a proposal. It only takes one member to prevent a proposal from passing.

Once a proposal has been blocked, it cannot be resubmitted without substantial changes. The decision to block consensus is a serious one, requiring a significant knowledge of WISCC's history and needs; understandably, new members are encouraged to participate in discussion as well as stand aside but can not block any proposal for their first month in WISCC. At the point of blocking consensus, you must coherently express your reasons for blocking, which may be on moral or practical grounds, or based on the personal feelings of the needs of the group, its members, and/or whom the group affects.

A Block is:

- A statement that a group member can not accept the passage of a proposal
- A feeling that the proposal is not in the best interests of WISCC or is harmful in some way to its health
- A feeling that the proposal is not in accordance with the mission of WISCC
- Explained. You cannot block without further explanation, making sure all members present have a good sense of understanding it.

A Block is NOT:

- Anonymous
- Open to attack or harassment by other members
- Open for discussion after it's explained by the individual/group blocking consensus
- Closed for further discussion outside the confines of the General Meeting, but will not continue to be discussed in the General Meeting after its placement

Standing Aside

A group member who does not feel comfortable with a given proposal can decide to stand aside. To stand aside means that although you may not personally agree with or like the proposal at hand, you do not feel that its implementation will harm WISCC and you are not of strong enough conviction to block it altogether. Standing aside can also be a way of distinguishing the group's needs from your personal needs. Any member may choose to stand aside- including first semester members.

A Stand Aside is:

- An indication that you do not agree with the proposal, but you are willing to accept it for the benefit of the initiative
- A way to put your opinion on the record without affecting the group's decision

It is NOT:

- A debate
- A statement of apathy or neutrality
- Open to discussion or direct response from other members
- Necessary to defend or explain

The consensus decision-making process requires respect and tolerance of everyone's ideas and opinions. By committing ourselves to this process, WISCC as well as the individual creates an atmosphere where all members are welcomed and encouraged to voice their ideas.

Emergency Decision Making

There are times when an emergency demands attention right away. In these situations, Co-Planners make decisions by gathering as many other members as possible to reach consensus. Once a decision is made, a written statement clarifying all aspects of the decision (including those who were present) should be put on the following General Meeting agenda for discussion.

Unit VII: Elections

Three weeks before an election, Co-Planners will announce for members to consider positions they might be interested in. Therefore, it is necessary that sitting Co-Planners provide a written statement and oral presentation at the next General Meeting. These "blurbs" should include the positions open, the commitment level and expectations (such as

time commitment per week), a summary of responsibilities, and future goals. As WISCC grows, positions will be added as needed.

Before elections, the Co-Planners will give a presentation including guidelines on what should be contained in speeches and their importance. Sitting officers will give their “blurbs” during their reports. The note taker should record necessary information so they know what spaces are open for election.

The Co-Planners will post a nomination sheet on the list serve and all members should nominate themselves by 5pm the day prior to the election. The Co-Planners will then make a ballot including all positions open (leaving some space for last-minute candidates). Elections for every position will happen as special meetings (with no other agenda items) the first Tuesdays of November and March.

Going position by position, requirements are read by the Co-Planners. With these requirements in mind, all speeches for these are read. At the end of all the speeches, there is a time for questions for the candidates. This time is also time for members of WISCC to voice strong concerns about the candidate’s ability to carry out the work of the position. If there is only one person running for a position, s/he is automatically elected.

Co-Planners tally the votes using instant runoff voting (see Appendix I). A faculty advisor may oversee or conduct the election process if necessary. Election results should be announced during the General Meeting and posted publicly. Elections must be documented and records made available to the public. If there is only one person running for a position, s/he is automatically elected

Now that positions are somewhat set, it is time for the elected to be trained on their duties to ensure a positive experience. This training is especially important if the new members will be alone for the beginning of their term. For retiring elected members: It is their time to get their notebooks cleaned out and organized, and to finish up goals. They should effectively pass down any pertinent information to the next member (for example, in a detailed letter or handbook).

Unit VIII: Operational Jurisdiction

The Weekly Initiative for a Student Cooperative Café operates under the control of Western Michigan University as a registered student organization (RSO) and this constitution and its amendments shall not be in conflict with policies established by the university, the state of Michigan, or the federal government. The organization will comply with all SALP and University policies, procedures, and practices and all local, state, and federal laws.

Appendix I: Instant Runoff Voting

The following information was copied from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant-runoff_voting#Counting_the_votes at 11:17P.M., March 10, 2008

In an [Instant Runoff Voting] election, every ballot expresses a rank order preference of candidates, which may be used in later rounds if the voter's first (and if applicable, subsequent) choice candidates are eliminated.

- . All ballots are counted as one vote for the top choice given.
 - . If a candidate holds a majority (more than half) of the active ballots, a winner is found. (No further elimination can change the top candidate.)
 - . Otherwise a candidate in last place is eliminated. If there is an exact tie for last place in numbers of votes, special tie-breaking rules are needed to continue the process.
 - . After elimination, the votes are recounted as one vote for the highest-ranked choice on the ballot that has not been eliminated. (If a ballot has all its ranked candidates eliminated, it is called *exhausted* and it can no longer be counted towards any candidate.)
- The runoff process above is repeated (back to 2) until a winner is found.

