



## Spring State of Affairs Report

*Presented by the ASI President/CEO- Yahir Flores, during the May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Board of Directors Meeting*

ASI has had an eventful Spring 2024 semester filled with various events, meetings, conversations, and advocacy efforts after the initial report presented by President Flores on the Fall 2023 State of Affairs at the December 7<sup>th</sup> Board of Directors meeting. All members were required to submit another report with their reflections and feedback on ASI's state of affairs for the Spring semester. The report consisted of three questions to provide Cindy, the Chief of Staff, and the ASI President with sufficient feedback on the collective operation of ASI, encompassing all units, including programmatic, external, and internal advocacy, communication, finances, personnel, and initiatives. I thoroughly read each report and compiled the overall shared sentiments, feedback, and questions shared. In reference to the first question members were asked;

Reflecting on the semester thus far, what ASI programs have stood out the most to you and why? Please elaborate on how the event served or further contributed to the success or well-being of our students. The program may be your own events or others you have attended.

Student leaders highlighted various programs, which included Eddie's Roses, election watch party, academic palooza, student leader elections tabling, club funding workshop, National Voter Registration Drive (NVRD), Tip Tuesday, director's digest, project green Challenge, SCORE program, safety walk, stop, drop, & K-pop, and spill tea get tea. The common theme from these programs mentioned alluded to intentionality and how ASI has been able to tailor and should continue to tailor programs that meet current trends and interests of students. Expanding programs beyond our standard focuses was a common suggestion mentioned in responses from folks who would like to see new programs that foster inclusivity and safe spaces for students where they feel embraced, involved, and welcomed with new trendy creative events while also continuing our traditional events such as Eddie fest and homecoming. On the topic of intentionality, with creativity and fun aside, folks mentioned having more programs that are designed to hear from students directly and providing a safe space for them to interact and converse with student leaders directly to hear their questions, comments, concerns, and feedback as well as providing updates on what ASI is doing, information on campus/ASI advocacy efforts, and resources to them. Spill Tea get Tea was highlighted by folks who felt that it provided that space to connect with the ASI President, Administrators, such as Dean of Students Blanca Martinez-Navarro, and other ASI members, where we were accessible to the student/campus community at the forefront to



hear directly from them and vice versa. While also establishing visibility of ASI as their student government, building trust with students. In correlation, transparency has been a vital aspect of ASI, prompting the creation of our director's digest & tip Tuesday initiatives, gathered from feedback from student leaders and the student body. Student leaders expressed appreciation for these initiatives and would like to see further expansion of them; however, from a conversation with our marketing team, engagement from student leaders to participate has been difficult. As a result, we will be emphasizing both throughout the summer training to get input and participation from the incoming student leaders.

Additionally, the second question asked members How confident do you feel performing your duties, and what areas would you like more support in? Examples of what to discuss may include participation in meetings, program proposals, engagement hours, or biweeklies. Folks most notably experienced feeling confident, with the acknowledgment of some expressing not so or semi-confident in their roles and performance while emphasizing improvements in support areas that should be prioritized during onboarding and summer training to alleviate confusion. These areas are **communication, biweekly reports/engagement hours, program proposals/processes, parliamentary procedures, information on university resources, departments/offices/individuals, accountability & expectations, and ASI internal procedures/structure/policies.**

**Communication** has been a significant challenge for ASI as the team is not as responsive, affecting the function of our organization. Completion of biweeklies, State of Affairs, and transition folders: are constantly lacking submission even after multiple attempts of communication have gone out via emails and in person reminders, resulting in multiple individual follow-ups. A focus for summer training will be to lay clear communication expectations with intentional workshops on communication channels, the importance of checking emails daily, and email etiquette to provide folks with examples, skills, and tips to promote consistency and efficiency in our internal communication. External communication to the student body was also mentioned by student leaders, specifically how the increase in engagement of our social media channels has increased our platforms to students, but we would like to see that reflected in our in-person communication approaches. Posters and flyers have been great but could there be other approaches? Furthermore, it has been observed that there is difficulty in getting all committee members to participate and engage during meetings; frequently, only the same individuals participate in the discussions. Which significantly limits the content, quality, and action plans that the committee can have/do that effectively support the student body. All perspectives are welcomed and necessary to ensure ASI can discuss multiple perspectives and ideas on topics that will have an impact on the student body. Therefore, for the spring semester, committees will be slightly re-structured to



require all members' active participation through active calling on members.

### **Biweekly Reports/engagement hours:**

Student leaders have expressed concerns and feedback about the clarity of the biweekly reports, but they are unsure about whether each report submitted meets the expectations. Folks would like more support in having check-ins to see if they need to improve on specific questions/areas or reaffirm their past submissions. Additionally, having multiple examples of biweekly reports will help in referencing what quality/quantity is expected of them, which we did present to the team at the start of the summer training; however, we acknowledge the feedback and will have a folder uploaded on SharePoint with FAQ's and examples for all members to access. Engagement hours were also mentioned as student leaders expressed difficulty in meeting the required eight hours due to life, work, and other schedules. These are valid, yet we have been extremely flexible and have offered various opportunities for folks to meet engagement hours with different time frames throughout the week, which included ASI events/programs, presentations, meetings with university departments, and other campus-wide events. Although we understand that folks has other responsibilities, this is the reason we receive a GIA scholarship incentive to ensure there is accountability for student leaders in prioritizing ASI alongside their other responsibilities. Nonetheless, the incoming exec team will have further deliberation on the engagement hours, taking into consideration feedback from the individual state of affairs.

A major observation pertains to the lack and inconsistency of submissions; some members have never submitted a biweekly. Prompting the question, in what ways are we to know if they are appropriately using their role or just taking that opportunity away from other students?

Additional support areas mentioned pertaining to the **program proposals/processes**, folks shared great feedback on their events, the intention and outcomes. An area of support in this focused on the proposal itself and the creative process of brainstorming ideas/checking in with folks. The new revamped proposal form has been great in including more information and tracking progress; having a workshop to go into detail about the form will provide a better insight into what the new process is and expectations from the student leaders at each step. Additionally, having regular check-ins with commissioners and other program-heavy positions is crucial in maintaining dialogue about events and encouraging folks to continue programming while keeping them in the administrative process of contracting, ordering, bookings, etc. Cindy and I will be working with Ashley, the program coordinator.

**Parliamentary procedure**, from both observations and feedback, is a support area



needed for student leaders. Part of the hesitation from members to take part in conversation or engage in the formal process in meetings with motions, second, abstentions, objections, etc., has been due to the unfamiliarity of the procedure. Although we had a workshop during one of the summer trainings, it is evident that more specific training with the execs, chairs, and general members is needed to address the areas of confusion and structure workshops to address such confusion. The approach for summer is to work closely with the exec team on Roberts's rule of order through a hands-on practice/workshop to allow them to guide and support their direct reports. We also have larger sessions with all members about the rules during the summer and winter sessions.

In broader terms of communication on a campus-wide level, student leaders found it difficult to navigate their roles in reaching out to respective areas or not having as much **information on university resources, departments/offices/individuals**. When onboarded and throughout the learning weeks of the start of their term, folks would like more support in connecting with the respected campus areas that will bridge partnerships/relationships for the benefit of them, ASI, and those other areas. In terms of the onboarding process, conversations have started to be more intentional and effective to provide newly elected/appointed members with all the necessary information they would need, which we will expand from last semester's contact information sheet created by Cindy, Chief of Staff, will be worked on and included as part of the onboard packet.

**Accountability & expectations are** the most discussed topic throughout this year. This will be the top priority during the summer training, which lays the foundations of what is expected of all student leaders. As emphasized in this report, addressing areas of confusion and being clear from the get-go will be crucial in communicating expectations from day one to hold people accountable throughout the year and relay back to training and their commitment to serving in these capacities. Formal documentation in our **internal student government procedures/structure/policies** will serve as additional support for all members to reference their individual roles /responsibilities and collectively as ASI.

Lastly, the third question asked, In your role, what do you feel you have accomplished so far? How have your efforts aligned with the objectives of ASI, and where can you further improve? If you submitted a summer state of affairs, please discuss the progress of your SMART goals and any programs or plans you have for the remaining and upcoming semester. Most but not all members discussed their progress in achieving their SMART goals for those who drafted them in the summer and fall semesters. Folks broke down how they are meeting these goals or have shifted their goals that reflect their values, initiatives and



focus. By comparing both the summer and fall state of affairs, I noticed that many members have been progressing in completing their goals and the support areas mentioned above that could assist in furthering their progress. During the summer, we will revisit SMART goals to allow new members the opportunity to formulate theirs and discuss how the executive and full-time staff can assist with providing advice/input for members to feel supported and brainstorm.

**Student Government:** In regard to student government, the Board of Directors and members have engaged through various means of advocacy through initiatives, conversations, forums, and action plans/resolutions as a collective and in conjunction with other student groups and the university administration.

In meetings with Blanca, the Dean of Students, discussions on basic needs initiatives such as the food pantry, technology loan, emergency housing, and financial assistance, and student feedback on combating food and housing insecurity were discussed. With action plans in place or started with university departments, which have had great success with the development and success of the Eddie Eats programs, allowing students up to \$200, via their OneCard, a semester to be spent on various campus food locations. The relocation of the food pantry to expand its capacity in serving students and housing more products has been quickly moving through its process and hopefully will be up and running at the start of the fall 2024 semester.

#### Commencement

Multiple meetings were held between ASI President Yahir Flores Interim President Morishita, and President Eanes on the students' concerns and wants regarding commencement. Through continuous and long conversations between both and their administration, ASI contributed in advocating for the moving of commencement from parking lot 5 to the LA Convention Center.



### ***Corporate management affairs of ASI:***

This year, 21 policies were updated and approved by the Board of Directors, furthering our efforts to modernize ASI operations and bring the corporation up to current-day standards with our procedures. Corporate agreements for IT, our lease of office space, and the services provided by the University for HR, accounting, and procurement were renewed and updated. In addition, a new audit firm was selected to conduct ASI's annual financial audit, and a new 3-year contract was signed with Aldrich. Over the course of the year, ASI reviewed and made several strategic decisions to change leadership titles, position descriptions, and the Board's structure to align with the current student needs on campus. The training for student leaders was enhanced this year. It included two overnight retreats in June and January, with the goal of offering critical skills and leadership development as well as team building and goal setting. Three surveys were administered this year to the student body to gather feedback and inform ASI about how we can better serve as the student body's voice. The surveys sought answers to student needs, programming interests, and concerns about campus facilities, programs, and services and asked for students to comment on how ASI could better serve them. To date, a total of 1,453 students have participated in ASI's surveys! Over the course of the academic year, ASI engaged with University and U-SU partners to discuss the option of ASI assuming the responsibility of managing club banking. The addition to ASI's service portfolio was carefully considered, and the BOD approved the addition this spring, the policies and procedures are in development for ASI to manage banking for registered student organizations starting this fall, 2024.

### ***Administrative Affairs:***

#### *Club funding*

This semester we awarded \$33,778 to student organizations which led to exhausting the \$50,000 allocation we had for club funding for the academic year. This represents 24 student organizations requesting funding and a total of 33 events in various categories - conferences (professional development), social events, community building, cultural building, career development, and educational. Exhausting all club funding funds has not happened since pre-pandemic.

#### *Lockers*



45 students rented a locker this semester, and the majority of the students renewed, which means they had a locker in the fall semester and purchased it again this semester. Lockers are \$35 a semester, equating to \$1,575 in revenue for the spring semester.

### *GIA's & savings from missing biweeklies*

Missing biweeklies have been a common practice among some of the student leaders and this results in savings of the Grant-In-Aid (GIA). This semester GIAs were budgeted for \$55,565 and we are projected to pay out \$39,388 that is a savings of \$16,177.

### *Front Desk*

Our administrative assistants assist in transcribing minutes for our essential meetings - BOD, Executive Cabinet, Personnel, and Finance. One of the administrative assistants did an amazing job of doing a CSU Fee analysis that compared each campus and their student fees to show where our AS fee falls with the other campuses. Among a variety of projects the administrative assistants have accomplished this semester, they have also planned and executed our office potlucks, which allowed all ASI Staff to come together, build comraderies, and maintain our positive organizational culture and planned the ASI holiday party and ASI end of the year celebration. We have also transitioned the Front Desk from OneDrive to SharePoint to maintain consistency throughout the organization.

### *Student Staff Meetings*

This year we started having monthly meetings with all student staff to provide training and updates. Some topics that were covered this semester has been diversity & inclusion, student assistant handbook, and SharePoint. We always encourage them to let us know what they want to learn, and we will incorporate it at the next meeting.

### **ASI Textbook Scholarship Assessment:**

ASI's textbook reimbursement scholarship program provides up to \$150 reimbursement for students' course materials on a first-come-first-served basis. The application for the program is available at the beginning of each semester and closes when the allocated funds are exhausted. Students who buy their books from the University Bookstore also receive a \$25 Barnes and Noble gift card for other school supplies. The ASI Textbook Scholarship had an allocation of \$30,000 for the 2023-2024 academic year, \$15,000 each semester.





In Fall 2023, we funded 119 students with an average reimbursement of \$108. 61 students received a \$25 Barnes and Noble gift card for purchasing their textbooks through the University Bookstore.

From the survey responses collected in Fall 2023, students prefer the digital format of textbooks. However, they base their purchases on the prices, and students will choose the most cost-effective format in the end. Meanwhile, all students noted the importance of the program and how it has impacted them personally and academically. Some notable responses were, "I don't think I would have purchased some of my books if it wasn't for this program, and "So much of what's on the test and discussions rely on the textbooks, so this scholarship is a blessing."

Regarding the reimbursement amount of \$150, most students believed it was adequate, while others felt it wasn't enough. Furthermore, more than half of the survey responders believed faculty should design courses with open source or free course materials (no cost to students), which led us to have conversations with the Library to learn more about the Scholarly Communication Open Resources eLearning (S.C.O.R.E.) program which offers stipends to faculty to use zero-cost course materials and open educational resources for their classes.

In December 2023, the ASI Board of Directors approved to split the \$15,000 allocated the Spring 2024 Semester to fund \$7,500 for the Textbook Scholarship Program, and \$7,500 for the S.C.O.R.E. Program. Our Textbook Scholarship Program funded 67 students with an average reimbursement of \$109, and no Barnes and Noble gift cards were issued as we wanted to maximize the \$7,500 allocation. The allocation to the S.C.O.R.E. program was able to fund 10 faculty members, which led to savings of over \$65,000 for 443 students, with an average savings of \$82 per student.

With the success of the S.C.O.R.E. program, ASI Vice President for Finance was able to secure \$19,500 from a one-time grant to fund the S.C.O.R.E program for the 2024-2025 academic year, and he is actively working with the University Foundation to secure more ongoing funding for the program.

### **PAYROLL:**

For many years ASI's payroll has been processed under U-SU. While it was convenient, the drawbacks were significant with the greatest being that ASI employees were considered employees of U-SU.





This year ASI did a SPIN off from the U-SU and we began processing our own payroll July 2023. Our employees are now employees of ASI for all intents and purposes. ASI will continue to use ADP as the pros outweigh the cons. By continuing to partner with ADP, most of the payroll responsibilities - wage calculations, tax withholdings and deposits, reporting, changes in regulations, etc. - are taken care of.

ADP offers quick and error-free payroll processing, taxes calculated, deducted and paid automatically to the various entities, the quarterly and annual reporting are prepared and filed by them, their system has integrated time tracking capabilities. Our employees have access to a mobile-friendly self-service app that allows them to view their pay information, view their hours and manage their withholdings - all from a mobile device.

ADP does charge fees for use of the system, but when compared to the cost of the fines and penalties that can result from mistakes, this outweighs the cost.

TIAA Cref, Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America - College Retirement Equities Fund), is ASI's 403B retirement and it will still be managed by U-SU. However, we may be moving to having our own account here as well. We are in the process of looking into other retirement programs for our FT staff.

As part of our Spin from the U-SU, we have established our own Worker's Compensation account and our own account with the Employment Development Department (EDD). ASI is looking to do another SPIN to completely separate from the U-SU. However, we have incurred some bumps with the transitioning to our rates with EDD, however we are confident that it will be resolved soon, and we will be moving forward with the SPIN.

### **BUDGET:**

Decline in enrollment is affecting higher ed across the nation and Cal State LA is no exception to this. The decline in enrollment has caused approximately a \$90K reduction in our student fee revenue. With anticipated revenues of \$1.3M and expected expenses of \$1.5, we needed to access \$246K of our reserves. It should be noted that if enrollment continues to decline, the ASI reserves will not be able to sustain expenses to provide the quality events we have had beyond the next year, 2025-2026. In preparing the 2024-2025 budget, ASI took a hard look at all areas to identify where we can save.



ASI needs to be proactive if we are to mitigate the revenue decline caused by declining enrollment. ASI researched and prepared a report of the history of the ASI fee. The findings indicated the ASI fee has not been increased since 1996. However, with the conversion of quarter to semester, the ASI fee is the same as it was in 1989. Our student staff member prepared a chart of the student mandatory fees across the 23 CSU campuses. The chart indicates that while Cal State LA has the eighth highest enrollment in the CSU as of Fall 2023, we have the lowest student fee.

### ***Graphics & Marketing:***

Throughout the 2023 - 2024 academic year, our marketing team significantly broadened our online and physical engagement strategies. We created a vibrant online community where students could access essential resources, receive answers from various departments, and engage in unique scavenger hunts to discover more about campus services.

To further enhance our team's skills, members of our marketing team, students & pro-staff, attended Adobe Max, where they learned new techniques and gained insights into the latest trends and technologies. This invaluable experience has refined their design aesthetic and streamlined our creative processes, thereby elevating the visual impact of our campaigns.

Their outreach initiatives, particularly the Screaming Eagles volunteer program, significantly increased student engagement. This program supported our marketing goals and adapted to fit our student volunteers' schedules. Supported by our social media and outreach assistant, the Screaming Eagles team was crucial in collecting student feedback, spreading resources, and ensuring a constant ASI presence along the campus walkways. Additionally, the website was enhanced to ensure greater clarity, updated policies, improved language, and optimized search functionality so students could easily find resources.

Moving forward, we plan to further expand the Screaming Eagles program to offer stronger support to our volunteers, fostering a greater sense of community and establishing a welcoming space within the ASI office that our team members can consider their own.

### ***Programs:***

This year, ASI's commitment to enriching the student experience through diverse programming and engaging events remained strong. With a portfolio of over 40 organized



and funded programs, ASI directed its efforts towards fostering inclusivity and amplifying the student voice across campus. Financially, our investments in programming totaled approximately \$60,000, demonstrating a strategic allocation of resources to maximize student benefit. Notably, in the spring semester alone, ASI's events attracted an average of 155 attendees per event and totaled over 787 unique participants over various programs.

Among the achievements, Eddie Fest: Bumpin' & Jumpin' stands out as a great example of collaborative success. Held in partnership with CSI, this event drew over 330 student attendees who relished local cuisine from food trucks, grooved to live music, and immersed themselves in various engaging activities. Moreover, the annual Spring Elections campaign garnered significant student participation, with over 500 attendees actively casting their votes for upcoming student leadership.

From Earth Week to Disability Awareness Month, ASI actively impacted campus through collaborative efforts with key departments and student organizations. Notably, the Community Engagement and Outreach committee dedicated approximately \$7,000 towards fostering community spirit and celebrating diversity through events like Moonlight Breakfast, Afro Fest, Stop, Drop, and K-Pop, and Dia De Los Muertos. Working in tandem with partners such as CSI, CCC, PBI, VRC, and numerous other student life departments, we helped to cultivate an inclusive and vibrant campus atmosphere.

Staying true to ASI's commitment to student input, ASI collected over 500 responses through surveys, shaping our programming decisions. As a result, we incorporated more movie nights, outdoor recreational events like our popular dodgeball tournament, and live performances such as the David Spitzfaden Trio at Eddie Fest and Cal State LA's own Folklorico Dancers at our Cinco De Mayo Event.

Looking ahead, ASI remains dedicated to delivering diverse, engaging, and informative programs and events in the upcoming year, ensuring our continued support of the vibrant student community at Cal State LA.

Lastly, I firmly believe that we have succeeded in accomplishing various short-term and long-term goals. Through our various board/committee discussions internally within ASI and externally with departments, administration, and students to address student/campus-wide issues. ASI continues to work toward achieving the long-term goals that will be defined by our strategic plan, which is a summer & fall project. ASI continues to address member retention, internal communication, and low discussion participation. It is



our intention to build and foster relationships across the University and increase campus unity. ASI also recognizes the ways in which we can continue to improve with training to better prepare ASI members for the summer and winter retreat, where we will focus on motivation, self-assessments, and goals. ASI has grown tremendously, and we are proud to have served the campus community as student leaders during this unique environment.

In Solidarity,



*Yahir Flores*

**President & CEO**

**Associated Students, Inc.**

California State University, Los Angeles  
5154 State University Drive | U-SU: Room 203  
Los Angeles, CA 90032

T. 323.343.4792 | F. 323.343.6420

[calstatela.edu/ASI](http://calstatela.edu/ASI) | "For the Students, By the Students"