



## 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*

Following the initial Fall 2023 State of Affairs Report presented by President Flores at the December 7th Board of Directors meeting, ASI continued to have an eventful Spring 2024 semester filled with lively programs, productive meetings, conversations with administration, and advocacy efforts that reflect student concerns. As a follow-up to the spring semester, all ASI members were required to submit a new report with their reflections and feedback on the organization's state of affairs to maintain transparency and accountability towards their work. The three-question report provided the ASI Chief of Staff, Cindy Nguyen, and the ASI President with sufficient feedback on the collective operations of ASI encompassing all units, including programmatic, external and internal advocacy, communication, finances, personnel, and initiatives. Yahir thoroughly reviewed each report to compile a summary of the shared sentiments, feedback, and questions, detailed below in the order of the questions outlined in the report.

1. 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.

Among the many programs held this semester, student leaders highlighted the following: Eddie's Roses, Election Watch Party, Academic Palooza, Student Leader Elections tabling, Club Funding workshops, National Voter Registration Drive (NVRD), Tip Tuesday, Director's Digest, Project Green Challenge, SCORE Program, Safety Walks, Stop Drop & K-Pop, and Spill Tea Get Tea. A common theme from the mentioned programs alluded to intentionality and ASI's current and continuing efforts to tailor programs that meet current trends and students' interests. Expanding programs beyond our standard focuses was a common suggestion mentioned in responses from those 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.

Expanding on intentionality, with creativity and fun aside, members mentioned having more programs that foster direct communications with students, providing a safe space for them to interact and converse with their student leaders and listen to their questions, comments, concerns, and feedback, as well as providing updates on what ASI is doing, information on campus/ASI advocacy efforts, and available resources. Spill Tea Get Tea was highlighted by leaders who felt that the event provided that space for students to connect with the ASI President, University Administrators, such as Dean of Students Blanca Martinez-Navarro, and other ASI members, who were openly accessible to the student/campus community at the forefront to hear directly from them and likewise, allow them to confide in us. Just as important, the event helped establish the visibility of ASI as their student



government, building trust with students. Transparency has been a vital focus of ASI this academic year, prompting the creation of our Director's Digest and Tip Tuesday social media initiatives, gathered from the feedback of student leaders and the student body. While our leaders expressed an appreciation for these proactive measures and enthusiasm towards its expansion, conversations from our marketing team have highlighted the need for more participation and engagement from student leaders. As a result, ASI will emphasize these aspects throughout the summer training for our incoming student leaders to ensure the best actions are taken during the academic year.

2. 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.

While the majority expressed confidence in their role, some took responsibility in acknowledging less confidence in their position and performance, suggesting improvement in support areas that should be prioritized during onboard and summer training to alleviate confusion and promote efficiency. These areas are discussed below to encompass 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 not all members are responsive, hindering the function of our organization. Completion of **biweeklies, State of Affairs, and transition folders** constantly lack submission even after multiple communication attempts are sent out through emails and in-person reminders, requiring multiple individual follow-ups. Subsequent summer training will work to lay out clear communication expectations with intentional workshops that cover the various communication channels, the importance of checking emails daily, and email etiquette that provides members with examples, skills, and tips to ensure consistency and efficiency in our internal communication. **External communication** with the student body was also a noted concern, as, despite the increased student engagement through social media outlets, in-person approaches beyond posters and flyers still need to be improved. Regarding committee meetings, it has been observed that not all members participate and engage in the conversations at hand, with isolated individuals carrying the discussion. Such aspects have significantly limited the content, quality, and action plans the committee can make possible to support the student body effectively. As all perspectives are welcomed and necessary to ensure ASI can get multiple ideas and views on important topics, committees will be re-structured to require members' participation, such as through active calling or performance warning notices.

Student leaders have expressed concerns and feedback regarding the clarity of **biweekly reports**, sharing that they are unsure whether each submitted report meets expectations. As such, members suggested having more support through individual check-ins to assess areas of



improvement or reaffirm past submissions. While an example report was provided during the initial summer training and sent out through email repeatedly, we will provide the incoming team with a separate SharePoint folder containing FAQs and multiple examples for review. Some students have also expressed difficulty meeting the required eight engagement hours per biweekly due to life, work, and other commitments. While all claims are valid and acknowledged, we have also given students flexibility and numerous opportunities to meet those hours through ASI events/programs, classroom presentations, meetings with university departments, and other campus-wide events. Student leaders are also granted a GIA scholarship incentive to ensure commitment to their role and recognition of the efforts required. As such, the incoming executive team will maintain firm standards on engagement hours while having further deliberations to consider feedback from various individual States of Affairs.

There is also the noted observation that some members have never submitted a biweekly report, while others show a lack or inconsistency of submissions. To ensure that students are appropriately maintaining their roles and not taking away such opportunities from other students, disciplinary discussions will be held regarding how to address this issue.

While **program proposals/processes** have shown great feedback regarding the events and their intention and outcomes, support has been requested in making the proposal itself and the creative process of brainstorming ideas/checking in with members. While the new revamped proposal form has been great in providing more information and tracking event progress, the summer training will include a workshop to walk through the form and give helpful insight on the new process and its expectations at each step. Regular check-ins with commissioners and program-heavy positions will also allow us to maintain active dialogue in regard to the progress of the events and encourage leaders to continue programming while keeping them involved in the administrative process of contracting, ordering, and bookings.

From observations and feedback, **parliamentary procedure** is a vital support area for student leaders. Part of the hesitation from members to take part in conversation or engage in the formal process in meetings with motions, seconds, abstentions, objections, etc., has been due to unfamiliarity with the procedure. Although we had a workshop during one of the initial summer training sessions, it is evident that more tailored training needs to be personalized among the executives, chairs, and general members to address their specific concerns. Future summer approaches aim to work closely with the executive team on Robert's Rule of Order through hands-on practice/workshops so they can guide and directly support their reports. We also have more extensive sessions with all members during the summer and winter sessions to review the rules.

Looking at **communication on a campus-wide level**, student leaders found it difficult to navigate their roles in reaching out to their respective areas or needing more information on university resources, departments/offices/individuals. During the onboarding and training process at



the start of their term, leaders would like more support in connecting with their corresponding campus communities to bridge partnerships/relationships that can benefit them, ASI, and students. Thus, the new onboarding process will involve intentional conversations that effectively provide newly elected/appointed members with the necessary information. At the same time, we will work to expand the University Contact Reference List previously created by ASI Chief of Staff Cindy Nguyen to include in the onboard packet.

Accountability and expectations have been the most discussed topics throughout the year and will continue to be prioritized in the summer training. As emphasized in this report, laying out a clear foundation for incoming student leaders to prevent confusion will be critical in emphasizing expectations from the start and holding members up to those responsibilities throughout the year. Formal documentation in our internal student government procedures/structure/policies will serve as additional support for all members to reference in their individual roles/responsibilities and collectively as ASI to ensure that the entire team functions to its best capacity.

3. 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 members discussed the progress of their SMART goals among those who drafted them in the summer and fall semesters. Individuals broke down how they are meeting such goals or how their goals have shifted to reflect their values, initiatives, and focus. Through comparison of both summer and fall State of Affairs, I noted that many members have been progressing in completing their goals with improvement in the support areas mentioned above, providing the potential to facilitate their progress further. In the upcoming summer, we will revisit SMART goals and allow new members the opportunity to brainstorm their own and discuss how the executive and full-time staff can assist with providing advice/input and support in needed areas.

### **Student Government**

Regarding student government, the Board of Directors and ASI team members have collectively engaged in advocacy efforts through initiatives, conversations, forums, and action plans/resolutions and in conjunction with other student and university administration groups.

In meetings with the Dean of Students, Blanca Martinez-Navarro, basic needs initiatives were discussed, including the food pantry, technology loan, emergency housing, financial assistance, and student feedback on combating food and housing insecurity. Action plans were then developed or initiated with the university departments to great success, such as through the Eddie Eats program, which allows students up to \$200 a semester to spend on various campus food locations via their



OneCard. The relocation of the food pantry to expand its capacity has been quickly progressing, and by Fall 2024, it will hopefully serve more students and house more produce.

### *Commencement*

Through the strong feedback from students, multiple meetings were conducted between ASI President Yahir Flores, Interim President Morishita, and Current President Eanes to move the commencement ceremony location. With long, continuous conversations with the university administration, ASI was able to advocate for commencement to be moved from parking lot 5 to the LA Convention Center.

### **Corporate Management Affairs**

Twenty-one policies were updated and approved by the Board of Directors to further our efforts towards modernizing ASI operations and bringing our corporation procedure up to the present standard. Corporate agreements for IT, our office space lease, and the services provided by the University for HR, accounting, and procurement were renewed and updated. In addition, a 3-year contract was signed with Aldrich, which was selected as the new audit firm to conduct ASI's annual financial audit. 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 our student leaders was also enhanced this year to include two overnight retreats in June and January, offering development in critical skills and leadership, 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 assessed student needs, programming interests, and campus facilities, programs, and services concerns. To date, a total of 1,453 students have participated in ASI's surveys! Throughout the academic year, ASI engaged with University and U-SU partners to discuss the possibility of ASI assuming the responsibility of managing club banking. Following careful consideration of this addition to ASI's service portfolio, the BOD approved the addition this spring. Policies and procedures developed for ASI to manage banking for registered student organizations will begin this Fall 2024.

### **Administrative Affairs**

#### *Club Funding*

This semester, \$33,778 was awarded to student organizations, exhausting the total \$50,000 club funding allocation for the academic year, an achievement that has yet to occur since pre-pandemic years. A total of 24 student organizations requested funding for 33 events in various categories--professional development conferences, social events, community building, cultural building, career development, and educational workshops.

#### *Lockers*



Forty-five students rented a locker this semester, with the majority renewing their lockers from the Fall. Lockers are \$35 a semester, equating to \$1,575 in revenue for the spring semester.

### *GIA's and Savings*

Missing biweeklies has been a common practice among various student leaders, resulting in savings towards the Grant-In-Aid (GIA). The semester budgeted \$55,565 for GIAs, with \$39,288 projected to pay out, leading to 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' student fees to show where our AS fee falls compared to the other campuses. The administrative assistants have accomplished various projects this semester, including planning and executing our office potlucks, ASI holiday party, and End of the Year Celebration, allowing all ASI Staff to come together, build comraderies, and maintain our positive organizational culture. 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 covered this semester have been maintaining diversity and inclusion, the student assistant handbook, and utilizing 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 allocated \$30,000 for the 2023-2024 academic year, with \$15,000 dispensed per semester. In Fall 2023, we funded 119 students with an average reimbursement of \$108. Sixty-one 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 ultimately choose the most cost-effective format. 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 respondents believed faculty should design courses with open source or free course materials at no cost to students, which led ASI to have conversations with the Library to learn more about the Scholarly Communication Open Resources eLearning (S.C.O.R.E.) program, offering 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 for 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 ten 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, the ASI Vice President for Finance, Andrew Klein, 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 the U-SU. While it was convenient, the drawbacks were significant, with the greatest being that ASI employees were considered employees of the U-SU.

ASI did a SPIN off from the U-SU this year, and we began processing our own payroll in 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 with taxes calculated, deducted, and paid automatically to the various entities. They prepare and file the quarterly and annual reports, and 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 the use of the system, but compared to 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 the U-SU will still manage it. However, we may also be moving to have our own account here and are 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 separate from the U-SU completely. Although we have incurred some obstacles with the transition to our rates with EDD, we are confident that it will be resolved soon, and we will be moving forward with the SPIN.

### **Budget**

The decline in enrollment is affecting higher education nationwide, and Cal State LA is no exception. The decrease in enrollment has caused approximately a \$90K reduction in our student fee revenue. With anticipated revenues of \$1.3M and expected expenses of \$1.5M, 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 following 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 on the history of the ASI fee. The findings indicated that the ASI fee has not increased since 1996. However, with the conversion from a quarter to semester system, the ASI fee is the same as in 1989. Our student staff member prepared a chart on the mandatory fees for students 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 and 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, both students and 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, elevating the visual impact of our campaigns.

Their outreach initiatives, notably 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, maintain updated policies, improve language, and optimize search functionality so students could easily find resources.

Moving forward, we plan to expand the Screaming Eagles program further to offer stronger support for 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**

ASI's commitment to enriching the student experience through diverse programming and engaging events remained strong this year. 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. 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 the 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.



To conclude, I firmly believe that ASI has succeeded in accomplishing various short- 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 will continue to work toward achieving the long-term goals that will be defined by our strategic plan developed in the summer/fall and will continue to address member retention, internal communication, and low discussion participation. We intend to build and foster relationships across the University and increase campus unity. ASI also recognizes how we can continue to improve our training to better prepare ASI members during the summer and winter retreat, focusing on motivation, self-assessments, and goals. ASI has grown tremendously, and we are proud to have served the campus community as student leaders in this unique environment.

In Solidarity,



*Yahir Flores*

**President & CEO**

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