**Word Cafe Table Notes:**

**Group 1: OTHER GROUPS/EMERGENT INTERESTS**

**Question Discussed**: *How might we support students interested in engaging around emergent issues and pursuits in an environment of limited resources (human, financial, space, time, etc)?*

**Current Barriers**:

* No process for proving differentiation
* Too much space for duplicate groups
* No “exit strategy” for groups that don’t thrive to cease existing
* No minimum standard to receive funding
* No standardized annual review process

**Move Toward**:

* An application process for new groups that requires “proof of differentiation”
  + WSA can serve as arbiter to approve new group on probationary status
  + If group is not unique, WSA can suggest collaboration with other existing groups/committees
* An Annual Review process for each group
  + Groups must prove minimum viability to receive funding the following year
  + System could emulate life of a grant cycle
* A graduated system for new group formation
  + New group applies for committee standing under auspices of existing (“partner”) group
    - Does not have to be perfectly aligned, just an appropriate partner
    - Committee gets one vote on board of its partner student group
    - Committee has allotted independent operating budget to pilot events, activities, etc.
    - End of pilot year, partner group votes on committee status
      * continue as is
      * form independent group
      * disband committee

**Best Practice Lab:**

* WHN
  + WCG--started under WHN; need existed beyond WHN scope, WCG branched out and became its own group.
  + ???--started under WHN; group was too niche, ceased to exist.
* UPSA
  + Application process for emergent interests:
    - Become sub-committee
    - Receive board vote & independent budget
    - Review at end of year--group continues or doesn’t
  + Room for new groups to emerge *and* for shifting interests

**Group 2: IDENTITY + DIVERSITY GROUPS**

**Question**: How might we create a student group model that takes into account the validity and importance of ID-based student groups while acknowledging the leadership and operational challenges they face?

**Four buckets of responses**:

1. Event co-sponsorships vs Partnerships: Currently, most of the student groups work together by co-sponsoring events. If groups collaborated in more strategic partnerships (perhaps on a semester basis, particularly matching ID based groups with larger student groups), they could increase visibility for both groups, cross promote, share resources, etc.
2. WSA: reduce the official WSA requirements for the ID-based groups around numbers of board members and numbers of events. WSA could also send out a separate email blast for any board vacancies of the ID based groups to reach the wider Wagner audience. This blast could be done in the spring and announced at first year orientation.
3. Current Exec Board structure: board chairs vs coordinating committees for positions other than president, treasurer, and VP.
4. Proposed Model: people feel a loss of identity by lumping together all of the ID-based groups in one coalition. They want to keep the names of the current ID-based groups to maintain alumni engagement and for incoming students/recruitment. Like the common governance structure, that leaves more flexibility for students to get involved on the committee level. What is the standard for what is considered an ID-based student group year by year- if only one person wants to represent a group, is that acceptable? Should there be a minimum number of people?

**Group 3: BUDGET ALLOCATION**

**Question:** As we look to enhance the functioning of student groups, how might we re-imagine how student group funding is allocated?

*Issues identified:*

* Problems with continuity/transition
* Small budget groups are trapped because of use of historical data for making decisions
  + No potential for student groups to develop
* Maybe some groups should fold, but that option is not easily built into system
* Duplication of efforts
* Right now larger groups have no incentive to partner from a money perspective
* Poor transition system means budget is “fake” at first – new leaders don’t really know what they need
* Co-sponsoring doesn’t work because of way groups get reimbursed

*Potential new methods:*

* Fund budgets for specific events instead of groups
  + ID the biggest events of the year and separate them out for collaboration
* Shared budgets/collective pots
  + Groups have individual budgets, but there is a larger pot for shared events
  + Maybe larger pots in specific areas (policy, management) with access for smaller groups
* Better decision guidelines/restrictions
  + Attendance
  + Price/person
  + Total $ of people
  + Furthering the mission
* Participatory budgeting
* Outside funds:
  + Fundraising/self-sufficiency
  + Get more money from university
  + Rely more on departments at Wagner for money
  + Take into account access to outside funds/Wagner departments when making decisions
  + If possible to get outside funds, do a matching system
* Two rounds of budgeting, one from old board, one in later fall with complete board for spring
* Budget by semester instead of by year
* When cuts need to be made, make % across the board cuts
* Look at how well groups actually used their budgets when making decisions

*Other things that came out of discussion:*

* Budgets (and all WSA votes) are voted on by student group reps at Caucuses, but the WSA is supposed to represent the students, not the groups
  + Student body as a whole should approve budgets
* Think more about the types of events we want
  + Maybe 1 bigger and more smaller
  + Different categories of events
  + More knowledge sharing
* Alleviate the event requirement, it allows for more flexibility
* Need to focus on what we actually need to spend money on, events can happen without budgets
  + Recalibrate what an events needs to be
  + Find a way to grow without needing money
* Stern can charge Wagner students for attending events, but we can’t charge them. Why not?