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Senate decides not to raise fees

Abe Estimada
 Oregon Daily Emerald

A fiscally conservative Student Senate bowed to student pressure for an incidental fee decrease by establishing their benchmark at \$4,917,217 for next year's budget, a zero percent change from this year's budget.

By coming to this benchmark figure, the Student Senate must craft a budget that will pay for nine percent of the athletic department's budget, the approximately 123 ASUO and 36 EMU programs, and state-mandated salary increases for public employees and other cost of living expenses without exceeding the \$4 million bottom-line or raising student incidental fees.

The Student Senate budget comes from the \$119-per-term incidental fee students pay. During a Student Senate public forum on incidental fees November 17, students expressed a desire to lower them.

However, the Student Senate gave itself some relief: the body passed an amendment stating it can exceed the \$4 million benchmark with a two-thirds vote of the Senate, putting into question whether or not incidental fees will continue to go up.

The Student Senate's benchmark puts even more pressure on student groups and programs to do more with less money. And that sits just fine with Sen-

Because they aren't sound business managers doesn't mean you should put a gun to their head and kill them.

— MARK RHINARD
 Senate Chairman

ator Martin Fisher, the conservative president pro tempore of the Student Senate.

"A smart business is going to find ways of cutting excess to make up for the increases," he said. "It isn't that hard, but it's something that no one is willing to do unless someone puts a gun to their head. It's my hope that the Senate is willing to put a gun (to the student groups) and tell them to do their jobs."

Senate Chairman Mark Rhinard countered that it is not fair to compare student programs to businesses.

"Because they aren't sound business managers doesn't mean you should put a gun to their head and kill them," Rhinard said.

Senator Jessica Frahs, a member of the EMU Budget Committee, feared a zero percent change in the benchmark could mean disaster for the already financially strapped EMU and its programs.

"The EMU budget is going to get a huge cut," she said. "It's going to mean the EMU going into debt."

OSPIRG Chairwoman Kulpna Krishnamurthy, whose

program could also be forced to make cuts in its budget to accommodate the Student Senate's benchmark, argued the zero percent change would have a negative impact on students' ability to voice their concerns through campus programs.

"Regardless of what people say, people choose a campus for the atmosphere it provides," she said. "When a freshman walks into Suite 1 ASUO or Suite 5 Women's Center, they see an active campus and that influences their decision to come to this school or not."

Fisher said student expression should not be linked to the amount of incidental fees it receives.

"In my year and half of law school, I guess I must have missed the lecture in constitution class on how our First Amendment rights of speech are dependent on how much money we receive," Fisher said. "I really have no interest in placing our funding position on some ranking in *Mother Jones* magazine. Who cares? If students are really interested in getting involved, let them be involved no matter how much money they receive."

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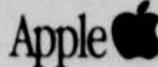
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