

Finance committee stops fee growth

Kudos to the ASUO Programs Finance Committee for meeting the zero percent increase benchmark for student incidental fees.

It is the responsibility of the PFC to make sure students don't incur higher fees because of increases in budgets, and they have truly done their part.

The benchmark, set by the Student Senate last fall, was set to try to stem the growth of the fees.

At a time when education costs are rising, it is nice to know that at least part of the student government is working to keep the incidental fees down.

The \$119 per term fee in place now is a lot of money for students, money that could be spent on food or rent.

After the meeting Thursday night, where the committee heard from OSPIRG, the PFC was under its goal by nearly \$10,000 or 0.5 percent. This could mean that incidental fees would stay the same for next year or possibly go down, said Joey Lyons, committee chairman.

However, the PFC budget is not the only factor in calculating the fees. The ballot measures on next week's ballot could increase the incidental fees students pay each term.

The finance committee has been attacked by many groups this year. They have had to cut funding for some groups and give zero funding increases for others. That's a hard job.

Other group leaders agree that the PFC has a tough job. It isn't easy to make decisions on money issues for other people. But, some groups didn't seem to understand that the goal of this process was to keep costs down.

When the ASUO executive came before the committee they asked for \$15,000 more than they received this year. This group of leaders should have been the example for the rest of the groups. They are leaders of the student government, and they knew the goal of the PFC was to meet the benchmark. Yet they asked for an increase anyway. What does this say to other organizations? It basically says these rules apply to everyone but them.

Groups such as Musical Arts and Dance Oregon had the right idea. They went before the PFC with the same budget they had this year. They got the message about savings and trimming the fat that was sent out by the senate and the finance committee. They really should be the example for other student groups.

The PFC's frugal ways left more money for groups who because of growth or special projects needed an increase.

The Jewish Student Union received an increase in its funding because the members showed the committee that they needed more money to fund their Holocaust remembrance week, but they were only one of a few.

So just in case no one else says it, good job!



■ OPINION

Power of Executive office inflated



JOE HARWOOD

It seems that every year during the spring student election season, daring duos espousing change ooze from the University woodwork to make a run at the ASUO Executive, proclaiming grandiose plans to end student apathy as we know and love it.

The erudite and spunky politicians make promises they cannot keep, pander to campus media in a manner that would embarrass even Don King and spend precious beer money on fliers and brochures no one really reads.

The campaigns resemble federal and state elections mainly through using rhetorical speech of ambiguity. Phrases like "greater accessibility" and "affordable education" become common buzzwords and colorful power-verbs like "improve, build, retain and restructure" override truth and substance to cover holes in empty and meaningless platforms.

Too bad for students that the candidates don't embrace the mud-slinging tactics of the professional politicians; that would be fun. Character assassination and defamation really complement that first cup of coffee in the morning.

Am I cynical? Hell yes.

In all candor, the ASUO candidates promising to "keep education affordable" reveal a serious lack of understanding concerning Oregon's budgetary woes.

The cost of attending the University has more than doubled over the last four years, and Gov. John Kitzhaber is pushing another 4 percent tuition increase for the upcoming biennium. About the only way to really keep education affordable is to introduce

a new tax, and that has as much chance of passing as Dan Williams has of being chosen Man of the Year by the zealots of the Save Amazon Coalition.

Fighting for cheaper tuition is certainly meritorious. However, implying that a student body president has the power to elicit budgetary redirection toward higher education is simply a lie.

Just take a look at some of the candidate platforms and notice that most are chillingly similar in their utter lack reality.

- Chris Kantowitz/Niki Scott: Plan to keep education affordable, strengthen student groups and restructure the ASUO. Hohum. Why not liquidate the ASUO and use the office space as a distillery or micro-brewery? Better yet, obtain a mass prescription for steroids and dispense them intravenously to weak student groups.

- Nat Farnam/Eli Elder: Keep education affordable, renter's protection and improving the relationship between students and the Eugene police department. Wow! These two promise to rein in Eugene's "disrespectful" police force which allegedly subsidizes its two-dozen per day donut habit by ticketing bicyclists who blow stop signs. Even more ridiculous, they vow to institute price controls to bring down rent in a market with less than a 1 percent vacancy rate. Maybe they will also advocate for peasant land seizure and armed insurrection while stepping all over the free market.

- Kenya Luvert: Build bridges between the University and the community, retention of students of color and First Amendment protection. No comment, won't even touch it.

- Justin Good and Thom Schoenborn: Make all fees optional, create a micro-brewery to augment the EMU budget and increase parking. These two clowns also want to log the old-growth on campus and make a parking lot out of the graveyard across from the Pit. Unfortunately, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission is upset with both for a recent statement made in a campus publication and has vowed to never issue either a license.

- Jennifer Williamson and Zachary Kelton: Quality education, greater accessibility and the creation of a community of tolerance and respect. Perennial insiders from Suite 4, both push their past ASUO experience, claiming it will bring tangible solutions to little problems like tuition increases and federal cuts in financial aid. Their flier even claims that Williamson's personal clout was responsible for saving this year's federal financial aid. Ouch. Is it also true that Kelton parts the Red Sea in his spare time?

The problem with most of the executive candidates is they tend to over-inflate the power and importance of student government. Students really don't care, as evidenced by low voter turnout every year (less than 15 percent).

The bottom line is that the candidates for ASUO executive have no power to follow through on many of the promises they make and the office itself is relegated to mere ceremonial status. Remember that if you get around to voting next week.

Joe Harwood is a columnist for the Emerald.

■ LETTERS POLICY

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