

PFC

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groups that had not yet gone before the PFC. These cuts would help grant the needed \$18,500 to fund the coordinator position.

"For us to look at [the budgets] again to cut more out in order for us to get a position, that's just unfair for other programs," Chen said.

But Rice said the PFC always looks at each group with the same criteria: how a program spent its money in the previous year, the amount the group is requesting and, sometimes, the amount the group received in the previous year. She said she and Sedgwick only approached Chen because they wanted his input on how to deal with both the ASUO and the MCC wanting the budget increases.

"I don't recall anything like that," Rice said, referring to telling Chen to choose one position or cut budgets.

But when asked how she expected Chen to look at the situation objectively, Rice responded, "I don't know ... I guess we were ... looking for something to go off of, someone to say, 'This is OK.'"

After the conversation, Chen sent an e-mail to Rice and Sedgwick on Jan. 24 expressing his feelings. He wrote that he "felt it was unfair to even suggest to cut other budgets for the Execs [sic] or any other budget," and that "it is extremely unfair to pit two large programs (that serve unique student interest [sic]) against each other."

When asked why she felt Chen would write such an e-mail if she and Sedgwick never asked Chen to choose between the positions or cut other programs' budgets, Rice said, "Maybe he misunderstood what we were trying to ask him."

The early bird gets the worm

Chen said he is upset with the PFC's hearing procedure overall because the ASUO is treated like any other student group. He said the executive is distinctly different from other student groups because it's responsible for administering and protecting \$7 million of student fees.

"It's like comparing the White House to the Eugene DMV," he said.

But Rice said the PFC had to be fair and approach the ASUO's budget like they would any other student group — looking at its roll over and post-close figures.

ASUO Vice President Mitra Anoushiravani said she felt that if the ASUO had gone before the PFC earlier, rather than last, it would have improved its chances of getting the coordinator position because the PFC would not have

been caught up with meeting the 0 percent benchmark.

"I think that there was too much benchmarking over their [the PFC] heads, and they wanted to make [the ASUO] handle the burden of being the bad guys," she said.

But Rice maintains that order does not matter.

"We started cutting budgets from day one, and we ended cutting budgets ... I don't believe that order has anything to do with it," Rice said in the beginning of the interview with the Emerald.

But toward the end of the interview, Rice said that the PFC may have felt like it had to make decisions between the two groups because they came before the PFC during the same week, Jan. 24-28.

"I'd say that order doesn't matter, but in a way, I guess at times, it kind of does," she said. "I don't think order matters in the sense that if you come early you'll get more money, you go late, you'll get less money. But I think it matters in terms of when it's the crunch time and you see how many groups we have ... and the benchmark becomes stronger and stronger in our minds."

Picking and choosing

But not just the ASUO is upset about the process.

Jay Breslow, coordinating intern for the University's diversity program who went before the PFC on behalf of the MCC, said the PFC created an environment where the two groups competed against each other for the amount of money they would receive. Breslow said Sedgwick approached him before the MCC's hearing and told him that because the PFC could only afford one of the positions, he should tell her why the MCC deserved the money more.

Breslow said he felt it was unfair to ask him to say that one position was more important than the other because he supported both. The MCC requested and received an increase of \$38,743, most of which will fund the position.

"That's not the way it should be," he said.

Sedgwick said she didn't remember those details of her conversation with Breslow, but she said it would be the "logical thing" for her to ask those questions.

Rice said the PFC never approached the situation as the ASUO versus the MCC. She said the PFC saw a value in the MCC position but not in the ASUO position. She said it was clear that those who voted on it didn't value the ASUO position because the appeals to the PFC and Student Senate failed.

Rice said money may have been

factored in to the benchmark for the ASUO position if the PFC had known the ASUO was planning to request the money before the 0 percent benchmark was set. But she said she was not aware of either the ASUO's or the MCC's requests until she received their budget requests in December.

But Anoushiravani said she told Rice during a Nov. 3 meeting with her about the ASUO's benchmark recommendation that the ASUO would be pursuing that position in its budget. She said she factored the money for the position into the executive's 0 percent benchmark recommendation that it gave to the PFC.

"It's not been a secret to anybody in the student government that Wylie and I have been planning on reinstating the position from the beginning," she said. "We said that when we got into office."

Breslow said that when the PFC realized that the benchmark wasn't attainable because of the MCC position, it should have looked at the programs objectively, which he said he didn't feel happened.

"The fact that they tried as hard as they could to meet the benchmark ... that's an OK thing to do," he said. "Unfortunately, it did not benefit students as far as the ASUO coordinator position."

No comparison

Chen said the PFC's decision to not fund the coordinator position will ultimately harm students and next year's executive by not having a person in the ASUO office who can help students with bureaucratic paper work and who has an institutional memory.

"The big issue is having someone in our office help advocate on issues ... and historical reference and legal reference," he said. "That will help empower us to make good, ethical decisions in what we do here."

But Sedgwick said that the ASUO can always try again for the position next year.

"I don't think enough time has elapsed to prove that this position is necessary ... and the MCC had never had a position of that kind, and I felt that they had demonstrated adequately that it was necessary."

Anoushiravani, however, said the two programs should have never been compared and that both should have gotten funding.

"It's easier to say no to us because you're not saying no to diversity, and so [the PFC was] putting the responsibility on us to make a choice, which shouldn't even have been a choice in the first place," she said. "It's not yes to student accountability and no to diversity, they're apples and oranges."

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