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EMU committee crunches numbers

EMU Board of Directors Budget Committee funds growth for many programs on campus

Jennifer Bear

Campus/Federal Politics Reporter

Most people would think calculating expenditures and balancing budgets is an unappealing way to spend an evening. But for the nine members of the EMU Board of Directors Budget Committee, deciding how to spend \$3,245,161 in student incidental fees allows them to have their cake and eat it too.

It hasn't been all frosting, though.

Examining each budget to make sure every dollar is properly invested has proven to be a very challenging task for the committee, because even though most EMU services are in desperate need of growth, the committee is bound to a 7 percent maximum increase in student fee allocation. A standard question at every budget hearing has been, "If you had to take out 2 percent from your budget, where would you do it and how would it affect the EMU as a whole?"

The committee had to set budgets for 14 different EMU programs, but EMU Food Services and The Break don't receive student incidental fee money. The largest increases in student incidental fee allocation went to University Scheduling and Information Services and the EMU Board of Directors, which received increases of 17.85 percent and 18.31 percent, respectively. Administration was given the smallest budget increase — 0.51 percent.

Budget Committee Chairwoman Mle Gross, an art major with a focus in metal smithing and photography, has devoted a significant chunk of her time to the budget committee. Besides presiding over more than 50 hours of budget hearings, Gross took time away from her winter break vacation to meet for an hour with every budget manager to discuss the process. But despite all the extra work and advance planning, Gross said finding ways to fund growth for all the EMU services seemed an unreachable goal.

"As a committee, I think our biggest challenge has been stretching the dollar," she said. "There really just isn't enough to go around. It's our job to try to allocate money in a way that best suits the needs of the students; however, the needs of the students are much greater than we can provide with the funding that we have."

Budget Committee at-large member Jake Holcombe said because of the tight budget for next year, the committee is trying to squeeze the most out of every student incidental fee dollar.

Holcombe is in his fifth year at the University, what he calls his "supersenior year," and is a double major in history and economics. He first became involved with the board his junior year because he wanted to feel a sense of ownership within the University.

ASUO Executive representative Donna Shefeheck joined the budget committee this year without knowing anything about student government. Shefeheck said the committee's greatest difficulty this

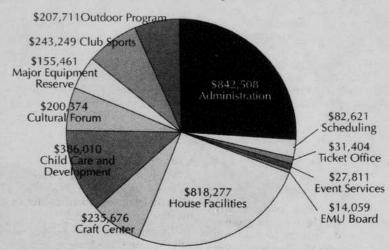
year has been getting new members up to speed. She added that more than half of the people on the board are new, and as a result, there has sometimes been friction between experienced members and new members. Besides being a committee member, Shefcheck is also involved in the greek scene as a member of Chi Omega, serves as a Freshman Interest Group assistant for University Housing and works at the Daily Grind.

"I over-commit," Shefcheck joked. EMU representative Windy Borman also works as if there are more than 24 hours in the day. When she's not performing official committee duties, she's increasing the coolness ratio on campus by organizing cultural events for the University. Borman has enticed Tibetan monks and Margaret Cho to UO Cultural Forum events, produced and directed "The Vagina Monologues" and choreographed "Chicago: The Musical." Currently she's working on bringing Maya Angelou to McArthur Court on Feb. 23.

"I have always been a busy person, so if I had a lot of free time, I wouldn't know what to do with it," Borman said. "I think I've perfected multi-tasking without having to sacrifice my priorities."

As the only faculty representative on the committee this year, associate University librarian Mark Watson brings a fresh perspective to the budgeting process. Watson has been at the University for about 15 years and said his personal strategy for allocating money focuses on funding EMU programs so that they provide the greatest benefit to students.

EMU 2003-2004 budget allocation



SOURCE: EMU consolidated budget 2003-04

"I am less worried about reducing student fees than I am about making sure that the EMU has what it needs to provide outstanding service to students and the campus community," he said.

Finance senator Aryn Clark, a native of Seaside, has been involved in student government since her first term at the University when she was an ASUO intern. Clark said the greatest difficulty she has faced while on the committee wasn't number crunching — it was public speaking.

"I have had to become more vocal in a public setting, something that I am not used to doing," she said.

Brenda Tincher, another finance senator, is a graduate student in the Not-For-Profit Management program at the University. Tincher was chairwoman of the budget committee last year and is well-versed in art of budget allocation. She said her greatest frustration has been inefficiency at meetings when committee members are unprepared to make proposals.

The Emerald was not able to arrange interviews with the final two EMU budget committee members, Kady-Ann Davy and Christa Shively, despite repeated interview requests by e-mail and telephone over a two-week period. The University Student Directory lists Davy as a pre-psychology major and Shively as a women's studies major.

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