

\$ Programs Finance Committee

12 groups denied funding; budgets approved for two

BY AYISHA YAHYA
NEWS EDITOR

Saturday was a quiet day for the Programs Finance Committee. The committee allocated funds to two groups in straightforward hearings and de-funded 12 others that did not turn in budgets or come to the hearing.

The PFC approved the University Theater's \$32,000 budget, a 4.06 percent increase, with little debate.

Development Director Joseph Gilg said the University Theater has a long history on campus, entertaining local residents before the symphony, ballet and opera were established in town. Through the years it has moved toward focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of productions.

"We try to do a very eclectic range of plays," Gilg said, adding that the theater offers not only entertainment, but a valuable training ground for students.

The executive recommendation initially proposed only \$1,250 for the theater's Mad Duckling Summer Theatre, which features shows for young children and families. Gilg, who had requested \$2,500, said he was disappointed by the recommendation because the program has been getting \$2,500 through requests to the ASUO Senate, and he had the impression that funding for the program would

continue to increase.

"I feel betrayed by this," he said.

ASUO Finance Coordinator Mike Martell said he arrived at the \$1,250 figure because "all recommendations are being kept at current service levels."

However, PFC Member Dan Kieffer made a motion to increase the amount to \$2,500, saying that it was evident the group had done a good job with its money in the past to fund the Mad Duckling series.

The Oregon Voice received \$10,016, a 1.5 percent increase.

Editor in chief Jennifer Hill said the money would help the feature magazine, which publishes seven issues a year, buy licensed computer software and other supplies. The magazine also hopes to host issue release parties to help publicize the product.

"We've been really diligent about spending our money and gaining the trust of the PFC back," Hill said.

Oregon Voice chose to cut down its telephone and long distance budget so they could have more funding in other areas, PFC Controller Carrie Henderson said, adding that the group had spent its money well.

"They put out a great product with

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PFC increases OSPIRG budget in quiet meeting on Thursday

The Sustainable Business Symposium also saw its budget grow to meet its 'ambitious aspirations'

BY MORIAH BALINGIT
NEWS REPORTER

The meeting was supposed to be the blockbuster Programs Finance Committee event of the year — a bureaucratic episode so dramatic and so epic that last year's OSPIRG Campus Organizer Ben Unger compared it to "The Lord of the Rings."

But Thursday night's Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group's PFC hearing fell far short of expectations, to the relief of many who showed up to support the group. This year's meeting, which resulted in a 4.17 percent funding increase from last year, drew a few more than 20 people and lasted less than two hours.

Kit Douglass, OSPIRG program coordinator, said before the meeting she was confident the meeting would go well because OSPIRG worked especially hard this year to work out any kinks in its budget before the hearing.

Last year, OSPIRG was nearly defunded because of concerns over the transparency of its budget.

"This year, we've worked to make the budget easier to understand," she said.

In fact, the group didn't receive its executive recommendation until 45 minutes before the meeting because both parties were "still providing information to one another," Douglass said.

ASUO Finance Coordinator Mike Martell would not comment before the meeting on whether OSPIRG had

received its recommendation.

The Executive came in with a recommendation that would have decreased the group's budget, but OSPIRG co-chair Stephanie Erickson pointed out that the recommendation was based on an incomplete audit, an act she said didn't make sense.

She added that the recommendation was also based on the group's budget from fiscal year 2003-04, when its budget was cut to less than \$100,000.

"We're doing more programming. We're engaging more students. It doesn't make sense to cut us," she said.

ASUO Vice President Mena Ravasipour concurred, and added that it was the PFC's responsibility to use its discretion and take these sorts of circumstances into consideration.

"That's part of the beauty of being PFC, because that's your job," she said.

PFC co-chair Mason Quiroz raised concerns that the budget wasn't transparent enough. As a contract group, OSPIRG provides its own audits and has only one line item in its budget, and the money is sent to the group's umbrella organization, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group. In the past, critics have said this has allowed OSPIRG to shirk fiscal accountability.

"It makes me uncomfortable to fund them when I don't know where the money's going," he said. Quiroz left the meeting before a vote was called.

PFC member Jael Anker-Lagos countered that she felt the group's funding practices saved students' money.

"I want to think of OSPIRG's money being sent off campus as saving University of Oregon students money," she said. "It's going into a big pool and being maximized."

The PFC fully funded all but one of the group's requested increases for a \$120,074 budget. OSPIRG's request for \$13,000 for an additional environmental advocate was denied.

The Oregon Commentator, the University's conservative journal of opinion, has long been a vocal critic of OSPIRG. In fact, former Editor in chief Owen Brennan Rounds sued OSPIRG and the State Board of Higher Education in 1998 on the grounds that the incidental fee violated his associational first amendment rights by funding OSPIRG.

The Oregon Commentator's current editor in chief, Tyler Graf, criticized the PFC for its inconsistency and said he felt OSPIRG wasn't "advantageous to the cultural or physical development of students," a necessary tenet for any student group to receive incidental fee funding as defined by Oregon statutes.

"It's simply a way for lobbyists in Portland to get money from students," he said. "The PFC is sending a message that isn't consistent. They'll nickel-and-dime other groups, but they'll give OSPIRG over \$100,000."

Douglass responded that OSPIRG has shown it is in fact beneficial to students.

"It's been proven year after year that we play a vital role on

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