Finance & Budget Committee
2019-2020 Meeting Minutes

Friday, November 1, 2020, 11:30am-12:30pm
HUB 314: GPSS Board Table

PRESENT:
Shane Schrader – Treasurer; Committee Chair
Rene Singleton, SAO Adviser; Ex-Officio Committee Member
Becky Tran - Budget Specialist, Staff
Ted Cohen, GPSS Senator
Danielle Brown, GPSS Senator
A.J. Balatico, GPSS Senator
Simon Crean, GPSS Senator
Terrence Pope, GPSS Senator

NOT PRESENT:
Jared Canright , GPSS Senator

Shane calls the Meeting to order at 11:32am.

OVERVIEW

Becky gave each member an agenda, copies of a previously approved Departmental Allocations Application (from Chemistry, May 2019) and Special Allocations Application (from the Student National Pharmaceutical Association, May 2019), meeting minutes from 05/17/19, and copies of the “Special and Departmental Allocations FY20 Funding Guidelines”.

1. Call to Order
   a. Approval of Agenda

   Ted moves to approve the agenda. Danielle seconds. Motion to approve the agenda passes.

2. New Business
   a. Welcome + Overview of Committee

   Members introduce their names, year, and department.

   Shane thanks everyone for coming and gives a brief overview of what the Finance and Budget Committee does: “We hear and vote on presentations from groups around campus, registered student organizations (RSO), and departments that are looking to
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get allocations for any funding needs they have. One of our biggest roles is to approve and submit the budget for GPSS for the following year. During Winter Quarter, we will be going over current officer’s proposals for how their budget is going this year to better modify/adjust the budget next year. GPSS Treasurer creates an initial budget, takes it to the Executive Committee, they create their adjustments and we make our own adjustments to find a good compromise.”

b. Parliamentary Procedure

Shane reviews parliamentary procedure. It is a language we use to make sure we are equitable in creating a space that people can voice their opinions in a way that is typical of governing bodies. When you want to speak, please raise your hand so no one talks over each other. We are fairly informal but will need to be more formal when proposing motions, voting, and adjourning.

c. Logistics: Emails, Shared Drive

Confirms committee member’s emails so GPSS can grant members access to the Google Finance+Budget Shared Drive which has documents such as meeting agendas, meeting minutes, active budget, and other related documents. Also confirms everyone’s name and departments so we can update the GPSS website. No personal information will be made publically available, if any committee member is contacted, please forward it to the GPSS Treasurer’s and/or Budget Specialist’s email.

d. Budget Overview

Shane shows members the current year’s budget. Each line item is broken down into “buckets” and has a budget number that we use to track spending. There may be cases where we want to overspend. For example, for allocations last year, we spent 101% of our budget - that had to be approved by the F+B and executive committee, depending on the amount. We shouldn’t feel like we can’t fund groups because of our budget constraints.

e. Review of Historical Proposals

Reviews meeting minutes for May 17, 2019 because it has a special and departmental allocation example including questions the committee asked each group proposal. For the special allocations example, we heard from the Student National Pharmaceutical Association. For the departmental allocation example, we heard from the Chemistry Department. GPSS funding is primarily for graduate interests. Some key questions that we have asked for have been: how are they going to market the event and how is the event going to reach graduate students.

Danielle asks for clarification about the different amounts between the $211.39 listed in the application and presentation notes versus the amount of $124 currently available
Shane explains that this was at the end of the academic year where we only had $124 left in the budget. But the committee self-approved to spend up to an additional $800. We can approve 4% spending increase through a committee majority vote; for 8%, we’d have to go to the Exec committee for approval to bring funds out of our general fund into our F+B account.

Ted questions the ability of the committee to approve overspending and wonders if it is something we should look at for this year.

Shane specifies that it is only possible with the oversight of the committee to get additional funding. However, a detail we may be interested in changing is the “4%” amount because if our budget gets bigger, 4% of $17,000 is significantly different than 4% of $30,000. Something to keep in mind to propose to the next treasurer to look into changing.

Rene mentions that the significance of this self-approved increase possibility is that at the beginning of the year, GPSS has a full budget to work with. But towards the end of the academic year when groups come in with proposals, they are desperate for funding because there are fewer options to apply for funding.

Ted says that we are an exception to other funding sources in that we tend to have more money than our counterparts at the end of the year.

Shane mentions that there are other funding sources that run out of funds by mid-Winter quarter. When it gets to late-May, GPSS is one of the only options left for funding. We don’t have a lot but we can typically still offer some funding assistance.

Looks at the funding differences between special allocations and departmental allocations. There are rules when it comes to special allocations - none of our funding can go towards food or alcohol; or if an organization has a speaker come into town, the speaker cannot use our travel money and do another event in town; no purchasing gifts or prizes; can’t further institutional help but can help out with career services for departments (i.e. last year we helped the Physics Department with a career services event).

Danielle asks if a department/organization funds a speakers to come out, is that only allowed once per year?

Shane confirms that it is only once per year unless it is a quarterly event.

Advertising guidelines - if we help fund an event, the organization needs to include GPSS / GPSS’s logo on their posters, their marketing campaigns, and/or on any items
we have helped pay for (i.e. last year, we funded the Chemistry Department’s new grill). This helps get the word out about our group / campus presence.

Funding caps on how much we can actually give to the group. For large events, it’s capped at $750. We don’t often give the full amount to preserve our funds for future events towards the end of the year. If it’s something that we think is really in line with furthering grad students’ goals, we’ll fund a lot higher (last year, the max we funded for one event was $500). If RSO’s come in, they’re capped at $400/quarter but can reapply each quarter for funding.

Ted asks if the $750 cap is a hard cap, or could we go above that?

Shane answers that we can go above $750, we just need ⅔ majority vote to do so.

Departmental Allocations - last year the Chemistry Department applied for funding to buy a grill that will only be used for graduate students and would be locked up otherwise. The proposal was originally for a $824.58 grill, but by the time they went to purchase, the grill was on sale for $667.91, so it was re-approved for the lower amount. Departmental Allocation caps are $1,000 per program, per year. The main thing we fund departments for are retreats - and the cap for this is $15/attendee. We cannot use any money for lobbying.

Ted points out that this is a good example because he is in the Chemistry Department and when that proposal was presented, he had to recuse himself. If you encounter requests that you are in some way involved in, you need to recuse yourself.

Becky interjects that F+B needs to re-vote on the Chemistry Department’s grill proposal from last year.

f. Amended Agenda Item: Discuss & Vote on the Chemistry Departmental Fund Changes

Simon moves to amend the agenda to add the discussion and voting for a change to the Chemistry Department Allocation under “New Business (F)” and move the Q&A session afterwards. A.J. seconds. Motion passes.

Simon asks for more details about this new proposal change(s). Also points out that the notes on this application states “the Chemistry Department has multiple senators, a strong record of participation, and recommends that if the department applies in FY20, F+B should consider funding other departments first”.

Shane explains that this comment is only applicable for new proposals. This discussion and vote is to amend their proposal last year. This summer, we had some back and forth discussion with the Chemistry Department. Lizzy C., a Chemistry graduate student who applied for this funding, said that they “ended up getting a grill that was $249 before tax and separately purchased a cover and toolset (receipt included) for a total of
$307.12… [Lizzy now wants to know if they could] use the remaining money to buy another one of these $249 grill and a $14.98 grill cover ($293.02 with tax)... [and give back] the remaining $67.76 back to GPSS”. We approved x amount, if they spent x-2, and they want to use the remainder to get a second piece of capital, could they do that and send back the net dollar amount to GPSS.

Shane asks Ted, since he’s in the Chemistry Department, if he could elaborate more on the grill/item and the event(s) the grill would be used for.

Ted elaborates that the events the department uses these grills for are only for graduate students and there is always a big line for the grills. If we approve for them to get two grills, that means more space, and graduate students can get through the line faster.

Ted recuses himself.

Shane voices that this specific situation has credibility in that the department did not spend the money on a second grill on their own but came back to GPSS and asked for permission. We approved them for one grill, which was a larger, more expensive grill but they ended up getting a smaller, cheaper one. And the total funding amount is still in GPSS’s favor because it is below the $824.58 that we originally approved and still under the $667.91 that was amended. Shane is in favor of this second grill purchase going through as long as they send us proof of purchase for the second grill and sends back the $67.76 excess to GPSS.

Simon wants confirmation that the second grill will be the ~$200 mentioned.

Shane confirms this amount.

Shane offers to the committee to table this vote until next week if everyone wants to personally read over the email from Lizzy and get more information about it. Shane mentions that these funds were under last year’s amount and any amount that comes back will go into the GPSS general fund, not F+B’s budget for this year.

Danielle reiterates that if the Chemistry Department applies for any further funding this year, that we should prioritize other departmental applications.

Simon motions to vote. A.J. seconds. No objections.

VOTE: Unanimous votes for YES. Ted abstained.

Becky will reach out to Lizzy from the Chemistry Department to let them know they can purchase the second grill and to return the remaining amount to the original budget number.
Shane explains his main concern with accepting more money back into the general fund is the general fund is meant to be a giant amount of money that acts as a cushion for less funded academic years. But it is not doing graduate students any good just sitting there. As a future matter, Shane wants to change the bylaw so that every year, GPSS commits a portion of their general funds into their endowment. An endowment is a large set of money that was put aside by GPSS in about 2014 that we can’t touch the principal amount and we get dividends and returns off of that principal every year. The original amount was about $100,000 and we’ve been getting about $5,000/year into our general fund. But that small amount hasn’t always been proportioned out and used every year. So, we’re not using it or growing it. Shane proposed to the committee last year that if we grow our endowment, then we can also grow our return year after year. So if we run into any future funding issues at the state or federal level, we can have a larger endowment with more funds that we can pull out.

Ted asks for the general fund balance.

Shane stats the total balance is $418,000, and as of June 2019 more than $272,000 of it is spendable.

Simon asks for clarification as to where did this money come from.

Shane explains that at the end of every year, any positive balance we have is added to the general fund.

Danielle asks if the general fund solely belongs to GPSS.

Shane confirms.

Rene mentions that the money we get from the provost has gone down. We can’t use state funds to pay for food, drinks, or alcohol. So the majority of the money we get from the provost goes towards food, drinks, and alcohol for our events. The provost money back from 2013-2014 is higher than it is currently, but it seems like this amount is going down. So it would be in our best interest to build our own discretionary money.

Ted asks if our endowment returns could be used as discretionary money for alcohol and food.

Rene recommends we do research on what the funding source is.

Next week we will have a proposal from a Physics RSO, and potentially others.

3. Q&A Session

a. A.J. asks how many members need to be present to meet quorum.
Shane answers 5, including the Treasurer and Budget Specialist if needed.

Ted adds that we can have proxies, but they have to be other senators.

4. Adjourn

Rene says it was nice to meet everybody.

Simon moves to adjourn the meeting. Danielle seconds. Motion to adjourn the meeting passes.

The Meeting was adjourned at 12:16pm.