

**PROGRAM REVIEW FOR THE
STUDENT ACTIVITY FEE ALLOCATION PROCESS
AT
INDIANA UNIVERSITY PURDUE UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS
REVIEW TEAM REPORT**

Introduction and Charge to the Team

Within the context of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis' (IUPUI's) status as an urban campus seeking to strengthen its ties with its community, the team was charged to review the allocation process for the student activity fee at IUPUI by Dr. Trudy Banta, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor. The impetus for the program review was student activism reflected in a document entitled, "Through Our Eyes: The State of the Black Student at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis," dated November 2, 2006. Among other related issues, the review team was asked to examine and address the process used to fund student organizations to ensure the process does not systematically bias or favor specific student organizations.

The members of the review team were: David A. Suzuki, Ph.D., Director, Oculomotor Neurophysiology, IUPUI; Richard E. Ward, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Student Affairs and Professor of Anthropology, IUPUI; Janette Perez, B.S., IUPUI alumna; Frank E. Dobson Jr., Ph.D., Director, Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center, Vanderbilt University; Phillip E. Jones, Ph.D., Vice President, Student Services and Dean of Students, University of Iowa; and Barbra Henley, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago, who served as chair of the review team.

Process

With the exception of two review team members who were unable to travel to Indianapolis due to weather conditions, the team met on the campus of IUPUI on February 26, 2007. Audio conferencing was used to include the two members who were not present physically.

Meetings that were approximately one hour in length were held with several groups of IUPUI stakeholders. During session one, six staff members from the office of Campus and Community Life (CCL) met with the team. Session two included eighteen interested administrators, faculty and staff from schools and programs including University College,

Liberal Arts, Herron School of Art, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, School of Nursing, School of Medicine, School of Dentistry, School of Science, School of Engineering and Technology, the Graduate School and the School of Social Work. The third session was attended by sixteen students representing campus-based organizations, student government, school-based organizations, and the Black Student Initiative. This session lasted ninety minutes. Twenty-six individuals representing students, staff, faculty and administrators attended the fourth session, an open forum. All attendees were asked to share with the review team their thoughts, impressions or ideas about the IUPUI student activity fee allocation process. While some shared grievances, several offered suggestions.

The team reviewed documents received prior to and during the campus visit. Included among the documents were: Student Activity Fee Frequently Asked Questions; Activity Fee Use Guidelines; student activities funding flow chart; Allocation Committee Policy; a 2003 report containing recommendations relative to student activity fees spreadsheets for the allocation of student activity fees and student activity fee cash balances in the schools' accounts; allocation guidelines used by selected schools; IUPUI's vision, mission, diversity values and goals; and "Through Our Eyes: The State of the Black Student at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis."

At the end of the day, the review team met with Drs. Trudy Banta and Karen M. Whitney, Vice Chancellor for Student Life and Diversity, and Karen Black, Director Program Review, to share with them indications of our findings and preliminary recommendations.

Findings

While the grievances of the Black students were asserted in terms of their perceptions of "barriers IUPUI has placed against...the Black student community...", there appear to be clear systemic deficiency and insufficiency of processes and procedures that are arbitrary, vague, and inconsistent and tend to negatively impact all groups utilizing or aspiring to utilize student activity fees. The processes and procedures have been viewed as biased by many student groups: new campus-based organizations that are limited to \$150 funding for an event; established student organizations whose members must meet specific attendance standards; and Black student campus-based organizations comprised of students whose need and desire to associate beyond the schools have either not been funded or have been funded inadequately due to confusing guidelines and limited funds. The list, while not exhaustive, contributes to the perception of a process that is biased along the lines of race and ethnicity, and the perception needs to be addressed. While other groups did not file formal grievances, the Black students became active about the issues and need to be commended. The creation of more equity in the allocation process for student activity fees will help to support all student organizations and strengthen ties among all students within the community.

The Board of Trustees document entitled, “Activity Fee Use Guidelines” states the purposes for which activity fees may be expended. The guidelines address a wide range of spending categories including programming, travel, equipment, operations, food, and individual group expenditures. The statements were found to be unclear and lacked direction for student use. The construct of the guidelines appears to result in confusion and arbitrary, inconsistent, and subjective interpretation during implementation. The guidelines do not delineate who has administrative responsibility for final accountability for the implementation of the system. There is no provision for an appeal process in the guidelines or the operating procedures of the various entities involved in the allocation of fees. Moreover, the guidelines have not been revised since 1979.

There are multiple systems or processes for allocating student activity fees that create the potential for inequity. There is a variance between the process to fund campus-based organizations and the school-based organizations and differences between the schools’ processes to fund organizations. A lack of transparency of the processes stems, in part for the multiple and sometimes conflicting guidelines.

The existence of large surplus student activity fee funds in many of the schools to be a point of contention between Undergraduate Student Government which is required to return unused funds at the end of the school year and the schools that are not required to do so. Over \$400,000 of unspent funds have accumulated in the schools and have resulted in the appearance of inefficient use and inequities in the distribution of student activity fees.

Insufficient funds are available for student activities, and for some students, the overall allocation of funds is not reflective of their interests. The high percentage of student activity fees dedicated to the construction and maintenance of a new Campus Center was cited as an example of the latter.

In the IUPUI statement of mission and values, diversity is the centerpiece, but is not evident in the allocation of student activity fees. Funding of “Heritage Month” programming is extremely limited; cultural awareness programming is given low priority in the plans to increase the student activity fee for the Quality of Student Life Initiative; and plans for a multicultural center remain vague and are a clear source of tension for students and staff.

Because multicultural centers exist on the campuses of Purdue University, Indiana University, and other higher education institutions in the State of Indiana, the issue will remain paramount at IUPUI. Indiana expanded its center recently, and the center at Purdue is among the largest in the nation. Moreover, Notre Dame, Indiana State and Ball State universities have either African-American or multicultural centers. The absence of a center on the IUPUI campus tends to undermine the institution’s demonstration of a commitment to diversity.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the review team recommends the following:

- Update and clarify the “Activity Fee Use Guidelines”
- Develop a set of principles or student bill of rights for shared governance participation with emphasis on collaboration with the academic and student affairs administration.
- Develop a unified set of by-laws and guidelines for equitable student program participation based on the provisions of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and other applicable federal, state, and University provisions pertaining to considerations of human rights.
- Continue to allocate student activity funds to the schools based on enrollment.
- Create uniformity and standardization by eliminating all current allocation processes and developing a new, uncomplicated, single process for the allocation of student activity funds that both the schools and the Undergraduate Student Government should follow.
- Eliminate the current system for funding student programs on an event-by-event basis and create a system of annual budget requests for funding student organizations’ programs.
- Develop written guidelines for budget requests, a manual of procedures, and periodic mandatory workshops and/or meetings to provide information about funding procedures.
- Abolish the requirement for mandatory attendance at the first two USG meetings and make information available through an easily accessible website and the development and distribution of a CD that contains eligibility requirements for funding, sequential steps for applying, the one uniform set of guidelines concerning allocations, FAQ sections, and an appeals process.
- Eliminate the \$150 limit for new organizations.
- Conduct an annual review and identify procedural points that are the basis for the rejection of applications for funding. Revise website and CD accordingly.
- Have all budget requests of organizations and councils submitted electronically to the CCL office whose staff becomes responsible for the receipt and dissemination of requests and the long-term retention of these records.
- Offer training or meet with any new student organizations that might convene after the regularly scheduled Nuts & Bolts workshops are held.
- Develop a system that emphasizes administrative fiduciary accountability for allocation recommendations from student government and school councils to the administration.
- Revise the school funding system to require schools to return unused allocations to the central student affairs administration at the end of each fiscal year, effective June 30, 2007. Have the Vice Chancellor convene a committee comprised of students (who will predominate) and faculty/staff to recommend the allocation of the unused funds from the schools for diversity programming. Develop a process for considering unique diversity programs with recognition of the historical context of the community that surrounds the campus.

- Increase funding for Heritage Month programs and other diversity programs and events.
- Increase the student activity fee to provide more funding for student organizations.
- There is only one recommendation around which the review team did not reach a consensus. It is the question of whether or not the schools should retain the current unexpended student activity fees that have accumulated in budgets. A majority of the six tam members recommends that the funds remain with the schools; however, two members of the team recommend that 50% of the funds be returned for diversity-related programming or to facilitate the establishment of a multicultural center on the IUPUI campus. The rationale presented in the dissenting views included the fact that the systems allow the schools to retain unused funds by to not allow Undergraduate Student Government to do so; therefore, the systems are inequitable and can be viewed as unfair. The inequity can be remedied immediately by removing some of the unexpended funds.

Conclusion

The current student activity fee allocation process has much room for improvement. The systems in place are confusing, inequitable and alienate rather than unite. The IUPUI campus is faced with a major challenge to eliminate the real and imagined perceptions of inequity and bias relative to the allocation of student activity fees. Concomitantly, faculty, staff and students of the IUPUI campus have an unprecedented opportunity to work collaboratively to create a single new process that will promote fairness for all student organizations. Moreover, a new student activity fee allocation process and revised fee use guidelines can be developed accordingly to demonstrate the diversity espoused by IUPUI and sought by the Black Student Initiative and others of good will.

March 14, 2007