Student Org Budget Caps Cut for Fiscal Year 2017

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Budget caps for student organizations at Metropolitan State University have been cut from $10,000 to $5,000 for fiscal year 2017. Funding for student organizations is collected through student activity fees and is allocated by a subcommittee of Student Senate called the Student Activity Fund Allocation Committee (SAFAC). Student activity fees are collected by the university with tuition. For Metro students, the fee is $4.43 per credit. This fee has not changed in a number of years.

Since the previous $10,000 cap couldn’t support all of Metro’s student organizations, SAFAC “chose to lower the cap from $10,000 to $5,000,” said Chuyi Moua, Chair of SAFAC.

Student groups can submit requests to SAFAC for yearly operating budgets, supplemental budgets and conference requests. Funding is dependent on SAFAC’s evaluation of these requests based on an established set of criteria.

Moua said that last year, the budget requests submitted by student organizations exceeded the amount of money in SAFAC’s reserves, and as a result, SAFAC went over budget. “Once we went through all the proposals and made the necessary cuts, we were still in a deficit,” he said. “So we had to make a cut across the board to all organizations including the governing and student services orgs just to make the budget fit with all of the budgets requested.”

Student Life and Leadership Development (SLLD) categorizes student organizations depending on their role in the university. That is, groups classified as “governance” or publishing organizations, like Student Senate, University Activities Board, The Metropolitan, Haute Dish and Theatre Underground are not subject to the $5,000 budget cap. However, all these organizations saw cuts to their budgets last fiscal year. All other organizations are subject to the $5,000 cap.

Phil Fuehrer, interim director of student programing, said that even with the cut to the budget cap, Metro is more generous with its distribution of student activity fees than many institutions in the Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) system.

SAFAC committee members are not necessarily members of Student Senate. Rather, it is made up of five Metropolitan State University students, two student senators and three alternates.

Moua said budget caps are reviewed at least once a year, and adjusted as needed. He said collaborating can help organizations overcome budgetary issues. “We want all the student organizations to start networking with one another if they have not already,” he said. “It will help everyone because they would then be able to collaborate on events, network with each other to meet new students and also it could help build a lasting relationship with the organizations itself as the leaders pass the torch.”