

Finance Board takes steps toward greater transparency

Soren Spicknall
TECHNEWS WRITER

If you're part of the Illinois Tech Student Community (ITSC) Facebook group, or if you've been a member of a small or new student organization, you've probably heard plenty of criticism of Finance Board, the SGA-administered group responsible for allocating money from the Student Activities Fund (SAF). Over the years, Finance Board has been accused of all manner of corruption, misallocation of funds, and ignorance of fledgling organizations. There has been talk about large organizations using their membership to vote allies into positions of power, and plenty of speculation surrounding Finance Board's closed hearings. In order to better serve students and address issues that have arisen over time, SGA and Finance Board leadership have taken a number of steps in the last couple years to educate organizations about the SAF proposal process, train unbiased student advisors, and open hearings to more people than ever before. In addition, SGA's

Communications Committee and Judicial Board have taken steps as well to publicize the processes related to Finance Board allocations, including independent allocation appeals that are open to all student organizations if they feel that their proposals were treated unfairly. Jacob Aynessazian, the current Chair of Finance Board, commented on a few of his recent efforts to increase its transparency and accountability, as well as steps undertaken in previous years by other Chairs. His first observation was that in the past, "there were no written rules", but that Finance Board "operated under the approval of the Chair for outside observation and attendance". In practice, this meant that generally only members of Finance Board itself, as well as a few select SGA Senators, were permitted to attend the hearings in which the group discussed and voted on budget proposals from each student organization. Today, things are starting to be different. Finance Board hearings are now technically open to all observers, "as long as [the observers] don't speak or aren't distracting", according to Aynessazian.

However, because the room for the hearings is relatively small (only permitting 10-15 guests in attendance at one time), Finance Board is also looking into the possibility of live streaming its hearings online in a similar manner to recent SGA Senate meetings. While the infrastructure to do this may not be in place before the next hearing, it will hopefully be present before this semester's end. In addition to making hearings open for each funding round, Finance Board has also been attempting to improve the SAF application process by restructuring its advising schedule. This semester, each registered student organization received an email detailing signups for specific advising slots, rather than the walk-in process that took place previously. This ensures that each organization is given a consistent amount of time to explain its budget, and avoids the crowded Friday shuffle which has characterized advising week in previous semesters. By giving every organization a structured 20 minutes to present their budget, Finance Board has been able to allocate its advising staff more

effectively and prepare those advisors for each organization they hear from. In addition to reorganizing the application process itself, Finance Board is making new gains in recruiting unbiased advisors and properly training them for their assignment. Working closely with other parts of SGA, Aynessazian and his team have devised advising strategies for open advising positions, something that has occasionally been lacking in the past. By making open advisor positions as visible as possible to students outside of SGA, Finance Board hopes to bring in a bigger crop of dedicated students with no personal biases in their recommendations. Combined with the improvements above (and more coming down the pipeline), Finance Board is opening itself up to external review and making itself more accountable than ever. There is still plenty of work to be done, but with enough dedication, hopefully these current aims will be seen through.

Union Board hosts '90s-themed MTCC Late Niite



Photos courtesy of Viktor Koves (top), Melaine Standish (bottom)