

Finance Board holds their second open hearing of the semester

Reno Waswil
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Finance Board (FB) is the branch of the Student Government Association (SGA) that has the power to allocate money from the Student Activities Fund (SAF) to every student organization on campus. Every semester, they hold three proposal periods for the purposes of hearing student organization proposals for what they want to do and how much money they wish to request from the SAF. This period includes a week of advising, when FB members meet individually with student organization presidents and/or treasurers to talk about the proposals they wish to submit, and a full day of hearing, when the members get together to talk about and actually make decisions on how the money should be allocated.

The Saturday a week after the end of advising, just enough time deemed fit for each FB member to gather all of the information necessary to make a decision on each of the organizations they advised, the hearing is held. This year, the second of these hearing was held on Saturday, October 15. The requisite voting members of FB along with Sung Min Choi Hong, the FB Chair, and Ryan Miller, the Office of Campus Life (OCL) SGA adviser, met at 8:30 a.m. in the MTCC Executive Conference Room to begin their tedious day-long process. A couple of the members were considered the "Recorders," and kept a tally on the allocations and information.

The actual hearings begin at 9 a.m. and are completely open for attendance to the student body, even catering both breakfast and lunch for board members and those in attendance. This week, TechNews was the entity in the audience, arriving around 10 a.m. and staying until the end. Anybody is allowed to come in and observe the process, but is not allowed have influence over the decisions while they are being made, and are not allowed to speak or interact with the board unless during periods when the "floor is open" so that they do not bias any decisions.

Prior to the official start to the hearing, a quorum is held in which all of the members discuss and prepare some preliminary details about how the hearing will run. A general order of organizations have to be somewhat predetermined in this period. This is because not all members can be there the whole time and the member that did the advising for any specific organization needs to be present when that organization is heard. Hong, who was elected FB Chair at last semester's SGA elections and adorned with a dashing suit for the occasion, commented that he arrived as early as 7:00 a.m. that day to set everything up in anxious preparation.

Among the first tasks of members is to, as per FB guidelines, fund in full all operations budgets capped at 40 dollars per organization for those that proposed for one.

From there, the process of the hearing worked like so: according to the general order, one by one, each organization's proposals were looked at one proposal at a time. For each proposal, the FB member that

advised that organization would explain what it is, why they are proposing for it, and any pertinent information about the proposal. There would be a discussion and follow up questions to the proposing member and some research if any was necessary. Any of the members could then make a motion to what should and shouldn't be funded and by how much. Passing the motion requires a majority vote of the present members, with any ties being decided by the chair.

Some proposals naturally took much longer than others. Commonly requested proposals or ones that are clearly laid out in the guidelines are very easy to decide; standard food budgets for programming or general body meetings within the amounts specified within the guidelines would be approved "in full" almost immediately. Others in which there was clearly missing documentation provided by the organization to make a decision or the guidelines specified that it could not be funded at all or further than it had been funded previously were "cut to zero" fairly quickly. Larger and more expansive proposals, or ones in which the guidelines were less clear or there was simply less precedence for what to do often took a great deal of time to go through. Hong had to set a timer on many of the proposals, after which a decision had to be made.

Biasing was of huge concern. When an organization arose that any of the voting members were a considerable part of, they would dissociate from conversation and the voting so as to not unfairly bias the decision. FB maintains a commitment making their decisions strictly on precedence and guidelines.

During the course of the hearing, certain issues came up again and again to the point of requiring a larger discussion about establishing precedence. The funding of club shirts became one such issue. The guidelines specify that all non-uniform club attire would be funded at 50 percent, and the precedent was that proposals up to and around 10 dollars was an appropriate per-shirt cost to fund in this way. However, throughout the meeting, concerns arose over whether that was a truly achievable goal by organizations not ordering cheaply and in bulk, and whether proposals for short sleeve and long sleeve t-shirts should have different caps on them, or whether such a precedent would be abused. Eventually, it was noted that this current funding limit was unrealistic, and it was decided that 20 dollars was a much more appropriate cap on per-shirt funding. Whether this would make it into FB guidelines was not a certainty, though, as there needed to be more consensus discussion among members. As a side note, after the hearing, Hong, looking over the notes from the previous hearing that semester, noticed that there was actually some talk about changes to club shirt funding that was never actually acted upon.

Because of this insistence of precedence in all funding decisions, if a decision is made for one organization that changes a precedent for whatever reason from what it was in a different proposal passed that day, FB would go back and adjust funding accordingly.

Other recurring issues included how to deal with the funding of lodging and transportation (which are capped at 75 percent), often with regards to conferences and competitions when the cost for their registration (which is fully funded) includes lodging. Others included how to go about funding sound equipment when Alien Sound and Lighting was available for free, the line between giveaways and essential items or "prizes" for events, and having "one quote" for multiple different, but similar proposals, such as multiple public speakers or shirt proposals that were expected (but not confirmed) by the organization to be the same exact cost.

One sizable discussion surrounded the instance of an organization that was not totally ready for their advising, asking if they could complete it with everything later on that week. They were allowed, and were told to contact their adviser when they were ready, but never did although their proposals were submitted. It was likened by one member to 'asking your professor for an extension on an exam, then allowing you, and then coming in a few days later and telling them that you finished the test outside of class.' It was chalked up to miscommunication and their proposal was discussed, but Hong instructed that it not happen again.

Of the almost 200 and growing student organizations that exist on campus, this hearing only saw about 120 proposals, not too many of them being too complicated at that. This is a result of the fact that some of them are frozen (so they cannot propose for funding), some don't see a need for proposing at that time or at all, and still others may wish to propose for funding but never came in for advising. The second hearing tends to be the smallest of the semester, and this one might have been on the lower end of that. Hong referred to it hearing as "the calm before the storm," and foresees a huge proposal on the horizon at the last one this semester (which will be funding for next semester).

When the hearing finally concluded at almost 4 p.m. (note that this is much shorter than typical) there was a brief demonstration of the process and the formalities of crediting student organizations' HawkLink accounts for the members that hadn't learned that yet, followed by an open floor discussion. These included discussing topics brought to FB about possible considerations and changes to their policies and practices.

The first topic discussed was the increasing number of VanderCook organizations proposing for funding. Hong said that although it is policy that organizations complete their proposals online through the FB budgeting system prior to attending advising, for such organizations, due to the accessibility limitations of VanderCook students have with online Illinois Tech services, advising periods should include FB members helping them put their budgets into the system. It was suggested that advising time in these cases should be longer than the standard for other organizations to account for this.

Next, a conversation was held about FB's policy not to fund fundraisers with the

SAF. Fundraisers are held when organizations want to raise money that they can use outside of FB guidelines, and it is generally considered wrong to use the SAF to explicitly fund such events. It is deemed that many of the organization that regularly hold fundraisers have access to money from previous fundraisers with which they can use instead, as well as there being methods of fundraising that do not have outset costs, such as "Penny Wars." The major concern was that organizations that have never held fundraisers would have a hard time putting them on if they did want to. The discussion went on with several new ideas proposed and concerns levied, but no new policy was set in stone.

Also discussed was a suggestion that FB publish how much money they are giving each organization for all students to see. Toward this, many of the members agreed that transparency was generally a good practice. However, the members were concerned that just seeing the numbers out of context of what had been discussed would be misleading, and that this was the reason that the hearings were completely open in the first place. They therefore decided against it.

A last topic was brought to Hong by Career Services regarding informing them when organizations propose bringing assumedly career specific public speakers to the school to talk--who, when, and where they will be on campus--so that they do not inadvertently double-book these sorts of events. Considering that many of these events are even funded in part by the department, making sure that Career Services isn't funding events that take place during other events they specifically put on themselves was also a related issue. FB decided that, considering how difficult this would be and how much of a burden to student organizations, exploring whether Career Services could provide updates on their events would be a better course of action. Additionally, more strictly upholding that organizations who plan on getting funding from Career Services show proof that they visited them before advising was deemed a good course of action.

Due to the stress and tension on many of the members during the course of the meeting, during breaks and open-floor periods the group tried to lighten the mood as much as possible. These included watching hip hop artist Lil Dicky's videos on YouTube in light of one of the greek houses proposing to bring him to campus, and amusedly watching videos of John Cena which would play on Hong's computer when he tried to access certain FB proposals due to some sort of malware.

Although it was a stressful event laden with difficulties, issues, and regular complaints, the members of FB legitimately care and try to do the best work they can, working hard and under high pressures to do so. Those interested in seeing for themselves what this team does should make arrangements to attend all or part of the last hearing of the semester on Saturday, November 19.

The Bog re-opens on Saturdays in reversal of previous decision

Reno Waswil
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

A few weeks ago, I wrote an article about the Illinois Tech bowling alley, bar, and casual hang-out area The Bog closing on

Saturdays this semester. Since this article, there has been an update to this story.

Earlier this month it was announced in an email sent out through Hawklink that "Due to popular demand, The Bog will re-open on Saturday, October 8, from 5 p.m. - 1 a.m."

Nothing is known further about

the order of events that resulted in The Bog reopening, or whether the article in any way affected it. Nonetheless, even after being closed for some time, a notable number of students could be found in the Bog utilizing the space.

This past Saturday, the first Los Angeles Dodgers vs. Chicago Cubs baseball

game was even projected in the bar area, inaugurating what hopes to be continual work to make the area a fun place to be for students on campus on Saturday evenings.



Photos by Reno Waswil