A bill to allocate Buffer Fund monies to the ASSU Financial Manager to study and improve ASSU operations

ASSU-F2013-2

Authors:
Neveen Mahmoud, ASSU Financial Manager
Stephen Trusheim, ASSU Assistant Financial Manager

Submitted for Consideration:
Oct 1, 2013, to the Undergraduate Senate
Oct 2, 2013, to the Graduate Student Council

Action Requested:
2/3 approval of the Undergraduate Senate, where noted
2/3 approval of the Graduate Student Council, where noted

WHEREAS, one of the primary functions of the ASSU is serving student groups, whether through funding, banking systems, commercial services, advocacy or other avenues; and

WHEREAS, the ASSU should always be striving to improve its systems, processes, communication, divisional unity, investment policies, and services offered, but has no money earmarked for that specific task; and

WHEREAS, multiple ASSU bodies are currently involved in efforts to improve the ASSU funding system, an effort that will require significant amounts of support, study, and guidance from ASSU financial staff; and

WHEREAS, the ASSU should seize the opportunity — formed by a combination of increased interest, excellent management, and committed representatives — to dramatically improve the services we offer, our internal operations, and our processes; and

WHEREAS, a major effort to push forward the services we offer would incur additional costs for staffing inside the ASSU, external services, and miscellaneous things, but such costs are exceedingly reasonable in light of the potential benefits to the Association; and

Operations Improvement Project

WHEREAS, the purpose of this project is two-fold:

1. Pay for staff time, external consultants, or other resources to oversee and effect tangible, but painful, projects that have been backlogged for 3-5 years;
2. Provide flexible funding for the direct costs of efforts to improve ASSU operations that will provide better service to students, student groups, and potentially lower ASSU overhead costs; and

WHEREAS, a reasonable expense could effect all of the following initiatives:

1. Professional web-design of a unified ASSU/SSE website that presents funding, banking, and service options for student groups in one portal;
2. Rebranding and reorganization of ASSU banking and funding operations into a collaborative group as much as possible;
3. Development of an ASSU/SSE “bill tracker” that promotes institutional memory inside the organization, and represents the past 5-6 years of bills presented to the Senate and GSC;
4. “Wikification” of our governing documents and updates to reflect the past five years of bills & changes;
5. Holistic review of student group spending trends over the last three years;
6. Research on the outcomes of the current funding system, student group perspectives on the system & the ASSU, and analysis of potential changes to details large and small;
7. Through analysis of ASSU investments and management models;
8. Leadership development programs for ASSU leaders, including “all-hands” brainstorming sessions and workshops; and

WHEREAS, in addition, the funds as approved can go to any number of smaller initiatives or efforts, such as:

1. Creation of a modern vectorized logo for the ASSU, the Senate, the GSC, Capital Group, and other student-facing divisions of the ASSU;
2. Unification of ASSU funding & banking requests into a single “help desk” system;
3. Extra staff time for minor Capital Group improvements to student group processes;
4. MyGroups2 improvements requested by the UGS Appropriations Committee; and

WHEREAS, many efforts will be supported partially by internal funds overseen by the Financial Manager, but such funds are extremely limited; and

WHEREAS, this project intentionally has extra funding that is not yet budgeted, because we cannot yet envision all improvements that we may want to make; however, all funds shall be expended for the improvement of the Association, and all unspent funds shall return to the Buffer Funds at the close of next fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the ASSU Financial Manager shall oversee the distribution of all funds, and the Assistant Financial Manager shall have the primary duty of reporting to the Senate and Graduate Student Council on their use; and

Project funds

WHEREAS, the total budget for this project is **$35,000**, broken down as:

- **$12,000**: joint ASSU / ASSU Ops / SSE improvements
  - Est. $1,750 for website development & design
  - Est. $750 misc. costs for bill tracker (bulk covered from ASSU AFM)
  - Est. $1,000 for logo & letterhead design for ASSU in new Stanford style
  - Est. $3,000 for e-mail systems & information-sharing between funding & banking systems & bodies
  - Est. $750 misc. costs for waivers website updates
- **$11,000**: additional staff time for new ASSU financial analysis & funding analysis
  - Est. 3 new part-time positions for financial analysis
- **$7,000**: internal ASSU Operations efforts (accounting team & CapGroup)
  - Est $3,000 for backlogged MyGroups2 improvements
- **$5,000**: ASSU funding & leadership improvements
WHEREAS, the ASSU Overhead and Operating budgets do not contain monies that could be used for this project because it was not envisioned last spring; and

WHEREAS, the ASSU Financial Manager therefore requests the entire $35,000 from the ASSU Buffer Funds; and

WHEREAS, the Buffer Funds are made up, in large part, of unspent ASSU Overhead Budget funds — so using the Buffer Funds to finance an improvement to our internal operations is a reasonable expense; and

WHEREAS, the ASSU Financial Manager does not believe that this expenditure will adversely impact the Association’s financial position; and

WHEREAS, the costs of this project should be split equally between the graduate and undergraduate population, in light of the fact that all students at Stanford will benefit; and

Limitations on expenditure

WHEREAS, funds approved here shall be expended only within the limitations outlined below; and

Allocation authority

WHEREAS, the Joint Bylaws, Article VI §7.A.17 states: “The Graduate Buffer Fund and Undergraduate Buffer Fund shall be administered by the relevant legislative bodies in a manner specified in their by-laws;” and

WHEREAS, the Joint Bylaws, Article VI §7.A.17 also states: “Funds from the Undergraduate Buffer Fund, Graduate Buffer Fund, and Graduate Special Distribution Buffer Account may not be used for any purpose unrelated to special fees without 2/3 majority approval from both legislative bodies;” and

WHEREAS, this purpose is unrelated to Special Fees under the meaning of the Joint Bylaws, Article VI §7.A.17 — and therefore these expenditures require the consent of both legislative bodies,

THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE BODIES OF THE ASSOCIATION:

THAT the ASSU hereby approves the ASSU Operations Improvement project, and creates a budget of up to $35,000 for the project, allocating funds equally from the Buffer Funds as described below; and

THAT the funds may only be expended subject to the following constraints:

- The Financial Manager must approve all transactions;
- Any funds expended as compensation must be specifically accounted, and must have a brief written summary of how the compensation furthers the purpose of this project;
• No funds may be expended for the purposes of meeting food, event supplies/operations, equipment rental, event honoraria, facilities rental, or similar categories without prior e-mail notice to both legislative bodies; if any member of a legislative body expresses concern about a transaction, the transaction must be approved by majority vote of that legislative body – otherwise, it is vetoed.

**THAT** either legislative body may demand a report of all spending from this project at any time, and must receive such a report within seven days.

**THAT** the ASSU Financial Manager shall be held accountable for the use of all funds approved in this project, and shall budget it appropriately to maximize value to the Association; and

**THAT** the Executive Committee shall receive regular reports on this project; and

**THAT** the Undergraduate Senate and Graduate Student Council shall receive a report on this project at least once every two months; and

**THAT** at the end of FY15, all unexpended funds from the project’s budget shall close equally back to the Buffer Funds.

**AND THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED BY THE UNDERGRADUATE SENATE:**

**THAT** $17,500 shall be allocated from the Undergraduate Buffer Fund to the ASSU Financial Manager to effect this project; and

**THAT** the Undergraduate Senate approves the associated expenditure from the Graduate Buffer Fund under the meaning of the Joint Bylaws, Article VI §7.A.17;

**AND THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED BY THE GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL:**

**THAT** $17,500 shall be allocated from the Graduate Buffer Fund to the ASSU Financial Manager to effect this project; and

**THAT** the Graduate Student Council approves the associated expenditure from the Undergraduate Buffer Fund under the meaning of the Joint Bylaws, Article VI §7.A.17.