A Bill to create the Senate Innovation Fund
UGS-2013-6

Author:
Ilya Mouzykantskii, Chair, Student Life, ASSU Undergraduate Senate

Sponsor:
Natasha Patel, ASSU Undergraduate Senate

Submitted for Consideration:
8 October 2013 to the Undergraduate Senate
9 October 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

Background and Purpose

WHEREAS, the Undergraduate Senate is comprised of 14 persons who were elected by their peers on the strength of their platforms, ideas for the future of the school, and passion for the community we share; and

WHEREAS, numerous surveyed outgoing Senators often find it difficult or unsatisfying to serve in the Undergraduate Senate because they have limited ability to effect change themselves, or complete initiatives of individual interest; and

WHEREAS, allocating a budget for each Undergraduate Senator to spend on behalf of the student body is an effective way to improve the commitment of each Senator, increase the amount of work that the Senate can get done every year, and improve the negotiating power of every initiative that a Senator brings forward; and

WHEREAS, the budgets so allocated will permit Senators to receive real-world experience in working with administrators to begin new initiatives, will help Senators
work with student groups to propose new events or programs, and will help Senators receive feedback from their constituents; 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,

**WHEREAS** ad-hoc committees are allowed as per the UGS governing documents; and

**WHEREAS** the Senate should strive for independence and transparency in planning and implementing programs funded by the ASSU Senate; and

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

**The Senate Innovation Fund**

**THAT** the Senate hereby creates the Senate Innovation Fund, with an annual budget of $52,000, and allocates that amount from the Undergraduate Buffer Fund for this program; and

**THAT** the money will be transferred from the Buffer Fund on October 31 2013; and
THAT each Senator (who is a Senator as of October 31st 2013) shall receive an Innovation Fund budget of $3,000; and

THAT every Senator is hereby charged to spend their Innovation Fund to make a meaningful difference in the undergraduate community; and

THAT a “meaningful difference” is to be broadly construed to allow every Senator as much flexibility as possible, but the intent of the Innovation Fund shall specifically exclude:

· Funding efforts that will end with crafting advisory bills, resolutions, or other measures that solely express the opinion of a group of people;
· Using the money for personal gain, including personal social events, or only for the gain of Senators or other internal ASSU persons;
· Primarily sponsoring small gatherings (e.g. lunches, dinners) unless those gatherings have clear goals, are attended by persons the Senator(s) do not typically meet with, and do not make up the majority cost of the specific grant in question.

THAT upon request, the AFM will render a decision on a specific transaction (preauthorizes) before the money is spent, within 3 working days. If the senator disagrees with the AFM’s lack of preauthorization, they may appeal to the SIF ad-hoc committee, and if the senator disagrees with the SIF ad-hoc committee, they may appeal to the senate as a whole, which, with a 2/3rds vote, may pre-authorize a transaction and instruct the AFM to reimburse.

Public Communication

THAT by 7pm on November 5, every Senator shall write an initial 1-2 paragraph description of how they will spend their Innovation Fund, which shall be posted on a public website by the Communications Committee and sent out to all undergraduates by the ASSU Executives by November 15 2013, which shall give an indication as to how they wish to spend their funds; and

THAT by 7pm on February 4, every Senator shall write a 1-2 paragraph update on how they have spent their funds to that point, which shall be posted on a public website by the Communications Committee; and
**THAT** by 7pm on April 22, every Senator shall write a 1-2 paragraph update on how they have spent their funds, which shall be posted on a public website by the Communications Committee and sent out to all undergraduates by the ASSU Executives by April 30; and

**THAT** Senators who do not meet these deadlines shall be ineligible to use the Senate Innovation Fund, and their remaining budget shall go to the Extra Funds; and

**Reimbursement**

**THAT** an ad-hoc committee of three Senators, herein called the Senate Innovation Fund (SIF) ad-hoc committee, will be appointed by the UGS to monitor reimbursement by a Senator requesting funds from the Senate Innovating Fund, and will contain either the chair or co-chair of the Approps committee, and two other Undergraduate Senators; and

**THAT** all reimbursements for the fund shall be processed through the Assistant Financial Manager, in the form that he will specify, which shall require itemized expenses, and shall require each Senator to briefly justify how each expense meets the purpose they have publicly stated; and

**THAT** the Assistant Financial Manager shall only process reimbursements that he reasonably believes meet the purpose of the funds that was publicly stated and the intent of the Innovation Fund; and

**THAT** if the AFM does not believe the reimbursement request does not reasonably meet the intent of the Innovation Fund, the AFM will refer the request to the SIF ad-hoc committee; and

**THAT** upon consideration of the request by the SIF ad-hoc committee within 5 working days of the AFM’s referral, the committee will render a decision by majority vote on whether reimbursement shall be processed; and

**THAT** no reimbursements shall be made if they are against ASSU or University policy, as defined by the Financial Manager; and
THAT the Financial Manager will receive a budget of $1000 to pay for the administrative expenses of the Senate Innovation Fund, which shall include incremental staff time and processing overhead, but shall not be paid to the Assistant Financial Manager; and

THAT the Assistant Financial Manager will process all reimbursements in a timely manner; and

THAT if the Senator or AFM appeals the SIF ad-hoc committee’s decision within three working days of notification by e-mail, the Senate, with a 2/3rds majority approval, may overrule the SIF ad-hoc committee decision.

Extra Funds

THAT the budget of the Senate Innovation Fund not allocated to senators directly shall be set aside as “Extra Funds” for the program; and

THAT the Extra Funds may be applied to any initiative within the Senate Innovation Fund under the following procedure:
1. The affected Senator(s) must submit a bill, in the proper form defined by the Administration and Rules Committee, that names one Senator as the recipient of a specific amount of Extra Funds from the Senate Innovation Fund;
2. Previous notice need not be given;
3. The bill must be approved by a majority of those present and voting; and

Senate Innovation Fund regular meetings

THAT by 7pm November 5, the Senate shall designate a second meeting time, which shall occur at least once every three weeks during school time, the purpose of which shall be to meet and provide updates on activities for the Senate Innovation Fund; and

THAT by 7pm October 22, the Administration and Rules Committee shall put forth modifications to the bylaws that detail the structure of this meeting and rectifies any outstanding issues affecting meeting attendance requirements or other such requirements; and

Fund Reallocation
THAT funds that have been allocated to the Senate Innovation Fund and not spent by September 15th, 2014 will be returned to the Undergraduate Buffer Fund; and

AND THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED BY THE GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL:
THAT the Graduate Student Council approves this expenditure from the Undergraduate Buffer Fund under the meaning of the Joint Bylaws, Article VI §7.A.17.