Confused Clubs Overspent Budget

By Andrea Kniss
Staff Writer

"Where did the money go?" After discovering that campus clubs last year overspent roughly $5,000 of their allotted resources, the Student Government Association (SGA) is now on a mission for answers.

Each year the SGA determines how to distribute its funds to the various clubs and student organizations at EMU based on the clubs’ roles on campus and their ability to raise funds for themselves.

Additionally, the SGA controls a savings to sponsor causes such as the Student Fund, Compassion Fund and other special campus projects. The account also serves as a buffer against overspending. However, many of last year’s clubs exceeded their allowances, depleting the savings account and forcing this year’s SGA cabinet to assess and recover from the damages.

Determining “who spent what” and strategizing for problem-solving and prevention are ongoing processes, said to SGA Treasurer Weldon Miller. "It’s still all a little hazy," he said. "We’re working with the clubs to ascertain the reasons they charged the money and if they are legitimate or not."

Much blame for the confusion can be placed on technological changes made by the Business Office during the past year. A web-based system of accounting and record-keeping was adopted to replace a less advanced system. The transition caused misinterpretations of several club accounts. According to SGA Co-president Thaddeus Hollingsworth, "clubs thought that they were within their budget, but were not." In other cases, money was charged to the wrong clubs or extra SGA allotments failed to go through. At this point, the SGA’s course of action remains vague. "We do have enough money for current allocations," Miller said, "but there may be ‘less money to allocate to certain clubs and organizations.’"

Last year, $18,100—nearly 50 percent of the SGA budget—was allocated to the Campus Activities Council (CAC), the University’s largest club. The CAC’s funding is proportionate to its numerous subdivisions (such as the coffeehouse and film committees) and roles on campus. The SGA estimates that the CAC overspent by about $4,000.

SGA’s second-largest beneficiary is The Weather Vane, whose funding totaled $4,700 last year. The publication overspent by approximately $370.

Hollingsworth expressed concern that holding back money could "disable some clubs from doing much of anything this year." However, clubs with the ability to raise money on their own are more likely to receive less funding. Hollingsworth says the cabinet must ask themselves, "Who would the SGA or the clubs spend this money more effectively to benefit students?"

Once a complete adjustment has been made to the web-based accounting system Miller and future SGA treasurers will be able to keep closer tabs on club spending. Until then, said Hollingsworth, "[SGA] will be warning clubs this year that any overspending is likely to come out of next year’s funding."

Credit Card Use on the Rise

As credit card companies see the potential of Generation Y, college students are acquiring cards in record numbers. EMU is no different, though some students are finding the hassles of getting a credit card are not worth it.

"I feel as if it is easier than ever for students to get credit cards," said Ken Goyner, Member Services Supervisor at Park View Federal Credit Union (PVFCU). He cites that the reason for this is that credit card companies figure that "the one who gets [students’] business first will get more of their business over a lifetime."

Companies work to acquire a student’s business through many methods, the most prominent of which is telemarketing. In some states, companies can set up booths on campus, though this is illegal in Virginia. Phone calls, however, are a common occurrence on campus.

"It is easier than ever for students to get credit cards."

First-year Kristin Shoemaker received a call a few weeks ago from Visa asking if she wanted a credit card. After giving the caller her social security number and address, which she admits was probably a bad idea, Shoemaker assumed that the situation was over. Last week, however, she received a card that she now has to cancel.

"They actually sent me a card, even though I pointed out to [the telemarketer] that I wasn’t interested," she said. "I felt like [the conversation] was misleading and that the time I spent on it was worthless."

Many students are in agreement about the annoyances of applying for a credit card. First-year Maureen Gingerich tried to apply for a card before coming to school, but found it nearly impossible to get one because she has never had a card before. "They asked for..." See CARDS pg. 4