

DASB Senate slashes staff funds in stunning move

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The DASB Senate voted on Feb. 1 to defund staff positions in the offices of College Life and Student Accounts, freeing up more money to fund programs that benefit De Anza students.

The Senate's budget committee had recommended a budget based on the presumed revenue drop of \$91,000, to \$1.3 million for 2017-18.

But Senators voted to increase its total available funds by cutting \$191,000 from staff positions.

The college had fully funded the staff positions until 1998, when administration first asked the Senate to share the expenses of managing College Life and Student Accounts. 25 percent of the staff was funded by DASB.

The main reason for the cuts is to prioritize student activities by shifting funding of college staff to administration.

"The reality is we have \$91,000 less this year to allocate than what we had last year," DASB Advisor John Cognetta said. "That meant if you funded everyone at the level they got last year, we still couldn't balance the budget."

Cognetta said most of the lost revenue can be attributed to the enrollment drop, resulting in less sales at the Flea Market and DASB cards being sold.

"Short of raising the activity fee, the DASB fee, I don't know how else they could increase funds," Cognetta said.

De Anza groups had requested extra funding that totaled over \$500,000.

"We have to understand that cuts in this



Senators vote to approve a cut.

PHOTO BY YANE AN

situation are inevitable," student trustee of the Foothill-De Anza Board Elias Kamal said. "I think the Senate did what was best for our students."

Senate President Matthew Zarate's primary concern was the consensus in the Senate that the administration would agree to pick up the tab of \$166,000 from the Student Accounts Office staff and \$25,500 from College Life staff.

"I think personally it was irresponsible for us to propose such a drastic cut without being sure the cost would be covered," Zarate said. "People seem to think that the administration will give in lightly to \$200K and I don't see that happening."

Zarate did not vote on either the College Life budget or the Accounting cut because

of a conflict of interest.

Kamal did not share Zarate's concerns about the administration.

"We've had really good relationships with the administration in the past ... I look forward to doing that in the future," he said. "I trust that together we can all compromise and work something out."

Sara Elzeiny, vice chair of student rights and services, called the cuts "awesome." Elzeiny said the Senate shouldn't have been funding the classified staff in the first place

Zarate said, "I don't get the logic that we are forced to pay for our own services when colleges should be contributing to it."

Some staff members addressed the

Senate to talk about the importance of their jobs and why cutting their funding might be a problem.

"I manage the Office of College Life, I supervise students, I supervise the Ecopass photo program," said Dennis Shannakian, college life office coordinator. "I take care of a lot of DASB functions, I maintain a number of websites, I maintain parts of the student accounts website, and I put up all the accounts once a week."

Senate Vice President Stephanie Rigsby said, "Why isn't the administration paying Dennis [Shannakian]? If they really value him then they should be paying him."

In addition to the staff cuts, the senate also resolved to cut funding for food and refreshments at student gatherings all across the board.

Because of the Student Representative Fund (SRF) passed by students last spring, DASB had an extra \$39,000 to reward programs that fell under the advocacy requirement.

Groups such as VIDA are now receiving funding from the SRF budget instead of DASB, which shields them from the brunt of proposed cuts.

At the urging of many senators, services such as \$2,000 in credit fees for the Office of College Life and office supplies for the Senate were both cut.

Starting in Fall 2017, students will have to pay with cash for replacement Clipper cards, student ID and movie tickets, because credit fees will no longer be funded in College Life.

The senate will keep discussing the budget and vote on final recommendations in the coming weeks.