

## Increase funding for student organizations

**S**tudent group funding is one of the few issues which affects every single person at Yale for two reasons.

First, we are all members of at least one student group. The amount of funding available to student organizations directly correlates to the number and quality of activities those groups can produce.

Second, we are all affected by the activities and projects of other student groups. We are thrilled by the performances of dance groups like Rhythmic Blue, singing groups like the Alley Cats, and improv comedy groups like Just Add Water. The Black Student Alliance, Despierta Boriqua, and the Taiwanese Students Association introduce us to a wealth of cultural diversity.

The Yale Literary Magazine enlightens us with the words, thoughts and art of our peers. Yale Club Wrestling, as a national champion team, gives us yet another reason to be proud of our athletics. These activities, though widely varied, all share a common thread. Their quality is determined, in part, by the amount of student group funding available.

In order to foster the quality of these experiences for the dedicated members of these and other groups, and also to provide the rest of the Yale community with the fruits of their endeavors, Yale must significantly increase the amount of student group funding.

The Yale College Council has been lobbying the administration about this important issue. We have made student group funding a priority in our discussions with the Yale Corporation, the

**Adlya Dixon** is chair of the Undergraduate Organization Funding Committee. **Zach Kaufman** is president of the Yale College Council.

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Association of Yale Alumni Board of Governors, President Richard Levin and other administrators.

Based on both our conversations with fellow Yalies and our own experiences, we propose the following improvements to the current system of student group funding:

1. The Undergraduate Organizations Funding Committee budget should be raised to \$150,000, from the current \$44,635. Based on funding proposals submitted during the 1998-99 academic year, the average student organization operating budget request is approximately \$1,500. It has been our experience that most of these requests are valid and worthy of University funding. Unfortunately, however, the guidelines set by the Committee on Undergraduate Organizations only allow for \$1,000 per student group per year. Despite the fact that only 150 out of Yale's 250 student groups request funding, Yale does not even fully fund all of the 150. This shortfall requires organizations to pay for expenses out of pocket, or more often, abandon the goals they had set for the year.

2. UOFC funding guidelines must be changed to respond to the actual needs of student groups.

If the budget for the UOFC is increased, the guidelines can be changed so that items like food, honoraria, transportation to off-campus events, and telephone and fax expenses can be funded. These items constitute a large portion of organizational expenses, but presently the CUO does not permit the UOFC to fund them. Furthermore, the current maximum funding allowed for any single item is \$250 which puts a strain on groups who seek to purchase more expensive

pieces of equipment, which often costs well over \$250. Increasing the budget would enable the committee to raise, if not eliminate, this limit. Finally, there is currently a \$750 cap on funding for any one event. Those who have either experienced or organized a major conference or activity are well aware that events of this size cost anywhere from five to 10 times the amount permitted by the CUO. Therefore, this cap must be raised or eliminated as well.

3. Other groups who are not funded by the UOFC should also receive an increase in their budgets.

There are several groups that have their own General Appropriations accounts at Yale, and, so, are not funded by the UOFC. These groups include the Cultural Centers, Yale Dramatic Association, residential college student activities funds, the Women's Center, and the Yale College Council. The Student Budgetary Advisory Committee (the SBAC is a University standing committee) recommends to the Dean of Yale College specific increases in these groups' budgets. The SBAC and the Dean of Yale College should significantly increase the funding of these organizations, as they are all vital to Yale College student life.

4. In previous years, campus publications have received financial support from residential college Sudler Funds. Unfortunately, though, a new University policy dictates that Sudler Funds may not fund publications. The UOFC is also restricted from funding publications. Thus, this leaves campus publications battling against each other for local advertisement money. This is an especially challenging situation for newer campus publications,

such as Vyrtrigo, which do not have the established contacts that older campus publications do. It is important that these new publications exist — to provide a forum in which new ideas on new topics may be expressed — both for the writer and for the reader. Yale should help promote these publications, not stifle them. As with other student groups, Yale should offer funding opportunities to both older and newer campus publications to thrive.

5. Under the auspices of the Payne Whitney Gymnasium, club sports struggle for survival. Fledgling groups such as the Club Lacrosse teams, face the difficulties of recruiting players, arranging transportation to and from events and purchasing equipment with little or no budget. More established teams also endure the challenges of operating from year to year. Currently, dues from players constitute the majority of team funding, supplemented by a contribution from the Club Sports office. This latter grant ranges from a generous sum to a mere pittance, with first year teams receiving no funding. This system inhibits growth and often stifles success of club teams. Yale University should allocate more money to the Payne Whitney Gymnasium for the purpose of supporting club teams. Participation in club teams promotes school spirit as well as the physical health and virility of students.

In sum, it is crucial that Yale increase funding for student groups. These activities have a positive effect on every student at Yale. Increased funding would ensure high quality projects and events, which would be beneficial to organization leaders, participants and audiences alike. Student group funding is the lifeblood of student activities at Yale, and Yale should contribute much more generously to it.