

## Funds Allocation

# Survey Examines 'Best Fee We Pay'

By DREW GARDNER

*(This is the first in a series analyzing Student Activities Fee allocations—Ed.)*

With the initial results of the Student Council's "Student Opinion Survey" due to be released Tuesday, its potential effects are still widely unknown. While the acceptability of the Student Activities Fee is not questioned by the survey, the present distribution of the funds gained from the fee comes under scrutiny.

According to Student Council Vice President Larry Sabato, "The philosophy behind a student activities fund is to provide a reservoir of funds which will be readily available for students to use in extra-curricular activities. The basic merit of the fund rests on the fact that student organizations thereby know, provided they fulfill a number of criteria, that they will have a solid financial base from which to plan and operate."

### 'Service To The Students'

"Therefore the fund provides not only a means for students to participate in extra-curricular activities," he continued, "but also a service to the students."

Allocations of the fund are determined, or refused, by the Organizations and Publications Committee of the Student Council, which Mr. Sabato chairs.

Of the \$182 comprehensive fee paid annually by every student only \$12 of that sum is allocated to the Student Activities Fee. With that \$12 per student, or \$150,000 total, the Student Council allocates funds to over 90 student organizations.

The largest proportion of that total, 39 per cent, goes to the Publications and Radio Category, which includes WTJU, WUVA, The Cavalier

## News Analysis

Daily and the Virginia Law Review, among others.

Community service groups receive the next highest percentage (21.4 per cent), with club sports, academic and speaker organizations, as well as interest-oriented equal opportunity and musical groups receiving the rest of the funds. These are the eight categories, each with a specific fund ceiling, through which Student Council determines allocation distribution.

Despite recent criticism, Mr. Sabato claims, "This is the best fee we pay, for we get more from it than any other." The fact is, without that fee (and there are factions in the University who seek to abolish it) extra-curricular activities would virtually disappear.

In an attempt to inject the two-week herculean task of determining 'what organizations get how much'

with a bit more efficiency, Mr. Sabato has recently conducted a mild purge of the procedure. Student Council has altered the procedure of and affixed a specific time limit to the fund hearings at which each organization requests appropriations.

### 'One More Attempt'

Council classified all student organizations into the eight groups mentioned above. The questionnaire, mailed to seven per cent of all students, is one more attempt to upgrade the funding procedures.

As the first serious attempt to gage student sentiment on O&P's allocations, the 11-page questionnaire suffers from some inherent drawbacks, the most obvious being its long and comprehensive nature. Mr. Sabato, author and originator of the survey, admits "the whole thing is so damn long and complicated, and there is so much one has to know (about student organizations) to intelligently answer the poll, that it is going to be difficult to get a sufficient response rate."

### Student Indifference

Asst. Sociology Prof. Charles Longino, who acted as advisor for the poll believes the poll was a "good one." He thinks a 60 per cent return would be a low range acceptability level, while an 85 per cent return on the

questionnaire would be exceptional.

Mr. Longino, strangely enough, also thinks the survey is long and complicated. The majority of students don't



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Council V.P. Larry Sabato

really care a great deal about the funding, he said. Consequently they will feel imposed upon to sit down for half an hour and fill it out.

Mr. Sabato said, though, that he has at present a 65 per cent return on the questionnaire. Of the 924 questionnaires distributed, among a 12,000 student population, 600 returns would hardly, in itself, be a definitive indicator of student opinion. The questionnaires, though, are to be run through a computer at Gilmer Hall and weighted in proportion to the

composition of the student body.

What Student Council intends to do with the results of the survey exposes further inherent drawbacks. Since it is necessary for a student to have a reasonably sound knowledge of various University activities to intelligently answer the questionnaire, (a knowledge that is doubted to a certain degree even by the survey's originators) it is difficult to determine how confidently Student Council should act on the results. Indeed, just what amount of discretion the Council will use in evaluating the results of the survey is still in question.

### Student Input Needed

Mr. Sabato thinks "at the heart of the present discontent over Student Activities funding rests the fact that students don't feel they have a direct input into the use of the fee.

"The questionnaire is a good way to get a handle on student opinion," he said, "and to find out exactly what the Student Council should be representing." Therefore students are asked in the survey to give their opinions of the fund ceilings recently imposed by Council on the eight organization categories. They may also recommend ten organizations they would

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# Activities Questionnaire Aids Student Organizations

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most like to see dropped from the allocations list, as well as ten organizations they would most like to see kept on the list.

From the answers to these questions, a "pattern" is expected to develop, said Mr. Sabato. This pattern is somewhat dependent on the collective knowledge (or ignorance) about student activities questionnaire recipients are supposed to possess.

Organizations who are not reaching a broad base of students at the University will be those most unfamiliar to the

recipients," he explained. Consequently these groups are expected to be most likely to appear on the "drop list," whereas organizations known to the students should not.

While the students completing the questionnaire do not have any final decision on these questions, neither does Student Council, really, since their decisions are subject to appeal to, and reversal by, the Board of Visitors. The most recent example of this was the Board's reversal of Council's \$45 allocation to the Gay Student Union.

In this light, the present survey may, as Mr. Sabato

stated, "hurt some organizations." But it may also help others receive more adequate funding; or, in the long run, it may do little to actually change the present distribution of allocations. The worth of the survey, then, rests not in the results, but in the potential effect those results will have, if any.