

Thursday, September 27, 2007

New environmental center takes heat over fees

Voting process flawed, according to Green Fund committee member

By Jon Walczak
Staff Writer

At least two of the seven student members of the Green Fund, a \$30,000 environmental account funded through student fees and intended to create a more sustainable campus, were not included in a final vote authorizing \$9,000 in funding for the new Student Environmental Center, according to Ava Bace, sophomore ecology student.

Four paid student internships were created with \$6,000 of the \$9,000.

"The SEC is great, just not necessarily \$6,000 of \$30,000 coming out of the fund to pay their internships," said Bace, one of the committee members excluded from a final vote. "Over a thousand students signed a petition in favor of what eventually became the Green Fund, and I think they want every penny of that to directly go to making the campus more sustainable."

Student Affairs chose Joan Walker, senior environmental studies student, as one of the interns shortly after the vote to fund the SEC and the internships. Walker was also one of the five members who voted.

Interns receive a \$1,500 stipend for the year.

The internships benefit efforts to make campus more environmentally friendly, according to Walker.

"It wasn't ever my intention to create a situation that would benefit me economically," said Walker. "It's my intention to do whatever I can to work towards a sustainable future for our campus and our community."

John Bucher, director of Campus Recreation and SEC advisor, said the process for choosing interns was fair because every student received an e-mail advertising the open internships.

"I do not think there is a conflict of interest. Joan applied for the internship position, just like the other three interns that were hired," Bucher said. "The interns were hired by Student Affairs, not Green Fund members."

Members of the Green Fund were supposed to draft rules governing voting procedures before the end of the year. This never happened, according to Bace.

"There are no official rules other than state statutes and university policies governing the expenditure of student activity fees," Haggard said.

Many students vocally opposed



CLINT LATHINGHOUSE - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jonathan Barnes, senior environmental management and policy student and co-director of the new Student Environmental Center, sits in the office, located in the Highsmith Student Union. The SEC is funded by student fees, which the university raised \$9 in order to compensate for the center and the new Green Fund, a fund focusing on creating a more sustainable campus.

the use of student fees to pay thousands of dollars for other student's internships, according to Kaitlyn Dorsky, sophomore literature student.

"The Green Fund committee was set up to use student fees to help make the campus more sus-

tainable, not to pay for people's internships," Dorsky said. "The fees that students agreed to pay should go to what they want them to be used for, not to pay other students."

Using Green Fund dollars to pay student interns is appropriate,

according to Bucher.

"There are several examples of student fees paying for student wages," Bucher said. "If student fees could not pay for student wages, Underdog Productions would not exist. Highsmith and the Health and Fitness Center would

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AVA BACE
Sophomore ecology student

have very limited hours and Intramural Sports and Outdoors would not exist."

Paying students to be on-campus employees is not the issue, according to Dorsky.

"Student fees going to pay people with on-campus jobs is fine," Dorsky said. "But in terms of the Green Fund, it just doesn't seem fair that student fees should be used for something that they weren't allotted to with an agreement from the students."

Between nine and 12 students applied for the internships, according to Jonathan Barnes, senior environmental management and policy student and co-director of the SEC. Interns work 15 hours a week and are subject to monthly reviews.

All committee members were e-mailed a copy of a finalized version of the Green Fund budget before the end of last semester, according to Walker.

"The budget was broken down, and it was made clear to everyone on the committee that the paid interns would come out of the green fee," Walker said. "Honestly, I didn't get responses back from several people."

According to Bace, she did not receive any e-mails pertaining to a final vote on how to spend remaining Green Fund dollars.

"We had to go home over the summer to get jobs and work," Bace said. "We couldn't stay in Asheville. During the summer, I didn't get any e-mails dealing with the vote or the Green Fund in general."

Had she voted, Bace said she would have supported appropriating funds to the SEC, but not to paid internships.

"I definitely wanted my opin-

ion to be stated after all the logistics had been worked out," Bace said. "We talked about other things to do like composting, recycling programs, things like that, or even putting the money towards a bigger, long-term fund."

The Green Fund originated from the Green Campus Initiative, a movement by students to make UNC Asheville a more sustainable campus.

"Last year, some students got a petition together for other students to sign basically agreeing that \$9 would be added to their student fees to make our campus more sustainable," Bace said. "It was originally intended to go towards buying green power somewhere else, but we decided to keep it on campus. That fund became the Green Fund."

In addition to the \$9,000 dollars the Green Fund allocated to the SEC, \$13,000 was allotted for a GEM vehicle to be used for parking enforcement [by campus police], \$3,000 for signage and prompts informing people of current energy-saving initiatives in buildings and to educate people on energy-saving behaviors, and \$5,000 for new lighting fixtures and technology other maintenance funds cannot cover, according to Haggard.

Students should know exactly what their fees are paying for, according to Bace.

"I'm hoping now that the Green Fund is entering its second year things will become more organized and students will become more aware of where their money is going," Bace said. "I think the SEC is great, but everybody should have been included in the final vote."

SDS

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CLINT LATHINGHOUSE - STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Anna Krippenstapel, senior environmental science student, reads a sign posted by Students for a Democratic Society as part of their Quad art display. Each white flag represents a casualty of the war.

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DOUG MICHEL
Junior, SDS member

Montes, a leader in the immigrants' rights movement, to speak on campus for Hispanic Heritage Month," Ketz said. "We're also mobilizing to go to the School of the Americas protest in Ft. Benning."

The current display on the Quad, which symbolizes the number of deaths caused by the Iraq war, is one recent display of protest SDS organized. Some students, however, think the display is unnecessary.

"The Quad is a place for me to sit and enjoy myself, and I don't like it when it's covered in little white flags that I have to weed

through," said Michael Vinzani, junior student. "I have no problem with free speech. I just find the display a nuisance."

Other students agree with the message that SDS is trying to send through the display, but think UNC Asheville students are already educated on the situation in Iraq.

"The display makes you realize the amount of death in Iraq, and it definitely makes me sad," said Maloree Byrd, senior student. "But the people here are not the ones that need to be reminded of it. Most of us already know what's going on."

Although some students on campus oppose the displays and protests organized by SDS, the organization prides itself on being a radical organization that tries to unsettle those in power by mobilizing students.

"It makes perfect sense why we're labeled as radical, and I think of it as a compliment," Michel said. "It means that we're doing something right."

SDS invites anyone wanting to move from being passively against the Iraq war to actively opposing it to join the organization.

"SDS promotes direct democratic ways to get involved in changing the system we live under to make it more equal and humane," Michel said. "Students and youth should get involved if they have a passion to change the world we live in."

Looking to make a change?
Contact Doug Michel or Katie Ketz via e-mail or Facebook to learn more about UNC Asheville's Students for a Democratic Society.