COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL STUDENT SENATE

The Budget Process at a Glance

The Student Senate collects the activity fee of each student and looks to allocate funding for events that enrich the academic, social and career exploration aspects of student life here at the Law School. We do everything with this as our ultimate goal.

The Request:
For a request for an event to be complete and eligible for funding, it must have (1) an event title, (2) an amount requested (an itemized list of expenses is even better!), (3) your priority for funding this event, (4) a descriptive event description, (5) your current account balance, (6) the event’s expected attendance, (7) your current organization membership and (8) the treasurer contact information. The budget committee will use discretion in reviewing events with missing or inconsistent information.

The Process:
1) A mandatory Treasurer Orientation session will take place over lunch on September 12th. Another member of the Executive Board should attend if the Treasurer is unavailable. If no one from your group can attend, please contact George Zhang, the Student Senate Treasurer, at gz2177@columbia.edu.

2) Each group will be assigned a Budget Liaison. Your budget liaison will contact you to arrange a meeting and work on your funding submission. Treasurers should attend the initial meeting with a first draft of the funding request. Funding request forms, as well as past budget allocations, can be found at the Student Senate website.

3) Student group treasurers will work with their budget liaisons during a one week period in order to develop each group’s final funding request. Budget Liaisons will provide guidance throughout the budget process, and will ultimately present each group’s request to the Budget Committee.

4) Final budget requests must be emailed to Budget Liaisons and CLSFunding@gmail.com in order for groups to receive funding. You will also need to fill out an on-line request form, which can be accessed at the Student Senate website. Tentatively, the deadline for these three steps will be 8PM Friday, September 21st. Any groups experiencing problems must contact the treasurer at least 24 hours before the deadline to resolve the issue.

5) The Budget Committee will meet in late September to set the fall budget. Each group’s request will be presented to the committee, and will then be put to a majority vote. The Budget Committee will then make the proposed budget available and groups will be able to see the funds that have been allocated. The full Senate will then vote whether to approve the Fall 2012 budget soon thereafter.
6) In rare cases a group may wish to appeal the Budget Committee’s decision to the full Senate. Groups wishing to file an appeal may do so by sending an email notice of appeal to the Senate at senate@law.columbia.edu by 5PM on Tuesday after the Fall 2012 budget has been approved by the full Senate. Please contact the Treasurer and your Budget Liaison with concerns.

7) Please review the Facilities Fee policy before submitting your Budget Request. That information can be found in the Student Organization Handbook, 2012-2013 ed. and under the Funding Guidelines links on the Student Senate website.

8) The Senate only allocates funding one semester at a time. There will be an identical process early next semester to fund events and activities in the spring. Please do not request funding for events that will take place in the spring. They will not be funded in the fall.

9) Please feel free to contact your group’s Budget Liaison or the Treasurer with any questions. The Treasurer’s email is gz2177@columbia.edu

The Budget Committee takes the following into consideration when evaluating budget requests:

- the clarity and presentation of the funding request, including names, dates, itemized cost lists, and as much detail as possible;
- the efforts of the group to communicate with the Budget Committee in an open and timely manner;
- the size of the group and how membership is calculated;
- whether the event is readily accessible to all students, or only to members of the group;
- the number of students likely to benefit from the event;
- the availability of alternative funding from other sources, including firms, associations, and member dues;
- the depth and impact of the organization’s events and programs on the Law School community;
- and the extent to which the event in question will expose students to exceptional opportunities which would prove unavailable without Senate backing.

The Committee typically does not fund events or items such as the following, though all requests are evaluated on an individual basis:

- events that are limited to group members and not open to the entire law school;
- membership meetings;
- requests for tentatively scheduled events, without confirmed details;
- fundraising, publicity, or advertising costs for any event;
- events or items where a large amount of money benefits only a small number of students;
- hotel accommodations for speakers;
• transportation costs for speaker, absent extraordinary circumstances;
• transportation and accommodation requests for students, absent extraordinary circumstances;
• requests in excess of $5 per expected student or $250 for speaker-centric lunch/dinner events;
• more than two film screenings per group per semester, or film screenings without named films or other details;
• personal items for individual group members, such as t-shirts or hats;
• expenditures that appear unnecessary or wasteful.

**A word about co-sponsored events:** When two or more groups co-sponsor an event or activity, they should coordinate before making requests, and one group should request the entire amount for the event, clearly noting its partners, while the other groups make a note of their participation, but refrain from requesting funding.

We look forward to your help in making your student activity fee go further, and in creating the most active and vibrant Law School community possible! Thank You!

George Zhang
Treasurer 2012-2013
Columbia Law School
Student Senate