

Allocations Board Annual Report

2014-2015 Academic Year



CONTENTS

(1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
(2) POLICY CHANGES AND UPDATES	4
(2.A) TRANSITION TO ORGSYNC	4
(2.B) RETROACTIVE FUNDING	4
(2.C) FUNDING DEADLINES	5
(2.D) UPDATES TO BYLAWS	5
(2.E) UPDATES TO HANDBOOK.....	5
(3) INTERNAL OPERATIONS.....	5
(3.A) MEMBERSHIP REPRESENTATION.....	5
(3.B) OFFICE HOUR TASKS	6
(3.C) CAPITAL PURCHASES	6
(4) BUDGET ANALYSIS	7
(4.A) BREAKDOWN OF REQUESTS	7
(4.B) TRENDS	8
(4.C) OPERATING BUDGET	10
(4.D) BUDGET CORRECTION.....	10
(5) INTERNAL ANALYSIS.....	11
(5.A) BU COST ANALYSIS	11
(5.B) FAIRNESS TO GROUPS.....	12
(5.C) FIGURES	13
(6) CHALLENGES	15
(6.A) DENIED EVENTS	15
(6.B) ORGSYNC TRANSITION.....	15
(6.C) DATABASE.....	15
(6.D) TRANSPARENCY	15
(6.E) BYSTANDER TRAINING.....	16
(6.F) PERCEPTION	16
(6.G) MEMBERSHIP.....	17
(7) CONCLUSION.....	18

(1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Allocations Board (AB) is an organization tasked with distributing a portion of the Community Service Fee (previously the Undergraduate Student Fee) to on and off campus events organized by Boston University undergraduate student groups. The AB is composed of undergraduate students from Boston University's various schools, residence halls and student organizations. The Dean of Students office oversees the AB, while we work in conjunction with the Student Activities Office. While our members are all present for weekly Monday evening meetings and hold office hours at our desk within the Student Activities Office, members receive no monetary compensation, just the pleasure of encouraging great student programming.

The purpose of this report is to provide detailed and transparent updates on our internal and external operational changes. Our primary goal is to make programming easier for student groups. In previous years, the AB focused on long standing policy changes to help stretch our budget. However, we have spent the majority of this year in transition to SAO's new processing system, OrgSync. The transition to OrgSync has provided several obstacles for the board, but our process updates and policy changes from last year have helped the AB support a system that is ultimately better for programming on campus.

Throughout the course of the funding year (beginning May 20, 2014), the AB reviewed 477 regular and travel requests. Of the 477 events reviewed, 422 were approved for AB funding. The total amount requested was upwards of \$1,420,000, an \$80,000 increase from last year. The Board mentioned in the 2013-2014 Annual Report that we had seen a decline in the number of events requesting AB funding after the implementation of the Charitable Funds policy. Although there are more requested events and funds this year, many of the events denied by AB were from groups not being aware of the Charitable Funds, Food, and/or International Travel policies.

In addition to receiving an additional \$53,383.68 from the Student Activities Office, the AB was able to substantially stretch our budget compared to previous years. This year the AB started with an adjusted initial budget of \$688,324.48, a net increase of \$41,155.97 from 2013-2014. Our rolling audit allowed us to increase our total allocated amount to \$880,965.87, effectively extending our budget by \$192,641.19. This led to an increase in the overall amount funded from last year by \$153,976.89. We believe this increase is from severe over-requesting and under-spending by student groups, especially from the number of events cancelled due to snow. While the amount of requests we receive always exceeds our budget, the AB strives to fund the essential costs of an event to guarantee it can happen.

(2) POLICY CHANGES AND UPDATES

The Allocations Board continually reexamines our policies to best fit the needs of student organizations; our goal is utilize the CSF as best as possible and minimize red tape for student programmers. Below we discuss our transition to OrgSync, process changes with Retroactive Funding and Funding Deadlines, as well as updates to our Bylaws and Handbook.

(2.A) TRANSITION TO ORGSYNC

This year SAO, along with all student groups, switched to a new electronic filing system called OrgSync. The transition has been a learning process for the AB and we have continued to look for increased efficiency and ease-of use within the system. Funding applications still require detailed information for proper regular, travel, and appeal forms. Rather than submitting a Regular or Travel Request Form through our website, groups can go on OrgSync and create a Budget that lists out each cost as separate line items and attach the required regular or travel form as a .PDF file. Every Monday, the board reviews those Budget requests and determines an appropriate allocation in accordance with our policies.

We realize the transition to OrgSync has caused difficulties and misunderstandings for student groups. We are working to create a simplified step by step guide for groups to follow so that we can reduce the number of uncompleted and/or incorrectly completed Budget requests. Additionally, we are going to create a similar guide that explains how to make Payments from a Budget and how to properly submit appeals if the group feels they deserve more funding or their costs have increased. We believe the addition of these visual guides will eliminate most of the confusion groups are having in regards to receiving and using funding through OrgSync.

(2.B) RETROACTIVE FUNDING

In the past the AB has permitted retroactive funding in order for groups to receive funds after their events have occurred. Starting next semester we will not be able to consider retroactive funding for groups. Budget requests must be submitted at least 2 weeks in advance of the group's event and will not be considered if submitted after the event has occurred. After the transition to OrgSync, AB funds no longer pass through the student group's account to pay a vendor. Now SAO directly pays internal and external vendors from the AB account and it is not possible for payments to be processed or approved after an event has already happened.

(2.C) FUNDING DEADLINES

Due to the transition to OrgSync, event planning deadlines are becoming more important and we cannot stress enough that early planning is much better than late planning. We do not want groups to miss out on having events so we encourage groups to submit their Budget requests as early as possible. From our experience, groups have had the most ease of planning when submitting their Budget requests at least one month in advance. Furthermore, SAO will not approve paperwork for an event if it is within the 2-week deadline.

(2.D) UPDATES TO BYLAWS

This year lacked substantial policy changes and as a result there have not been any major updates to our Bylaws. After spending the spring semester mastering OrgSync, the AB can now spend the summer updating our Bylaws to reflect our functional and membership improvements. During the update we plan on reviewing some of our internal processes, specifically how we seek and bring on new members to the board.

(2.E) UPDATES TO HANDBOOK

In addition to updating our Bylaws, we plan on updating our handbook over the summer to ensure that our policies are reflective of our funding process as an organization. Along with this review and update, the AB plans to collaborate with SAO to provide student groups condensed resources on how we fund. While the handbook will always be the most comprehensive tool available to student groups to understand how AB funds, we believe we can provide more succinct and easy-to-digest resources to ensure student groups understand our policies before submitting requests.

(3) INTERNAL OPERATIONS

In the past year, the Allocations Board has made an effort to improve our overall efficiency during our transition to OrgSync. The AB is able to function with the help of a 1% operating budget. With the operating budget and collaborative leadership of Board members, the AB has been able to leverage OrgSync in order to better our internal processes.

(3.A) MEMBERSHIP REPRESENTATION

This year we had several new members join the AB, each representing a different perspective of student life. The AB strives to remain diversified in order to have the best understanding of how student groups function, ensuring our views are distinct and representative of the undergraduate community. The AB has rolling membership and has continued to reach out to groups that are not currently represented on the Allocations Board. Students interesting in applying to the Board are welcome to attend our office hours, reach out to us via email, or attend one of our weekly meetings to learn more. Currently, the Board is comprised of students from all years, with members in CAS, ENG, SMG, and

SAR. Furthermore, our current membership represents over 40 student groups and other on-campus involvements, ranging from Greek-life to teaching fellows.

(3.B) OFFICE HOUR TASKS

We have also made an effort to increase member responsibilities during our office hours. Previously, the AB was not responsible for allocating events by line item or reviewing Program Help requests. This became condensed under AB's sphere of influence with the transition to OrgSync. To manage these new responsibilities, we integrated a request review to our regular office hour tasks. By allowing individual AB members the ability to review Budget request details, they can immediately approve Program Help requests. With this change, minimum required costs are easily funded in a timely fashion.

By having groups enter costs by line item on OrgSync, AB members are able to review specific details alongside the completed request form .PDF file. This task allows members to provide feedback to groups about an upcoming request. Any questions, concerns, or comments the AB may have are highlighted quickly, rather than waiting until Monday to do so.

(3.C) CAPITAL PURCHASES

During each of our open meetings, on Mondays at 6PM in the GSU Academy Room, we begin by introducing the Board members and then the representatives from each presenting group. After groups have presented the details of their events, the Board takes a short dinner break. A dinner break is necessary since most AB meetings last four to five hours, some even pushing nine consecutive hours. The length of the meetings presents an issue of efficiency where the Board loses valuable deliberation time to the necessary break. In order to gain back the lost time, the AB utilizes its operating budget to supply dinner for the Board on a bi-weekly basis. By doing so we are able to work through the 15-30 minutes that would otherwise be lost for a small cost to our conservative operating budget.

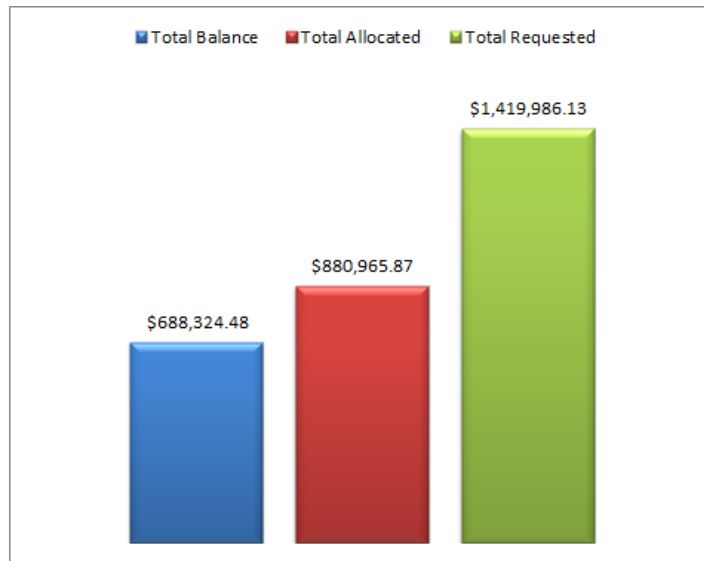
Last year we used our Operating Budget to purchase an AB projector. Now during the meetings members are able to read the Budget requests alongside the AB Chair. The projector has been used in every meeting for the past two academic years. From both the purchase of bi-weekly dinners and a projector, the AB has been able to effectively reduce our deliberation time by an hour per meeting. The board continues to look for future capital purchases that can increase our efficiency.

(4) BUDGET ANALYSIS

The Allocations Board is tasked with overseeing a portion of the Community Service Fee. Below is our analysis of the 2014-2015 funding period and a description of how we funded.

(4.A) BREAKDOWN OF REQUESTS

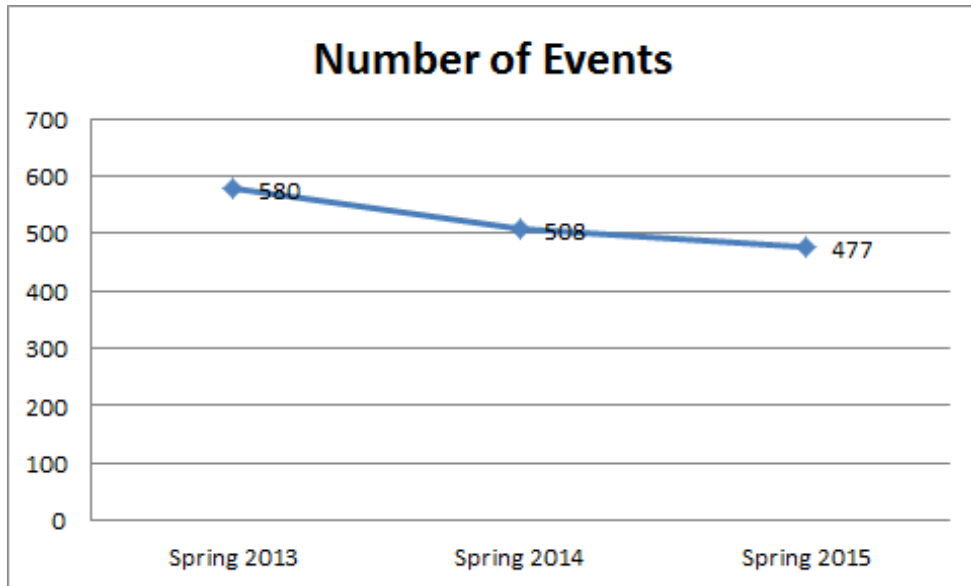
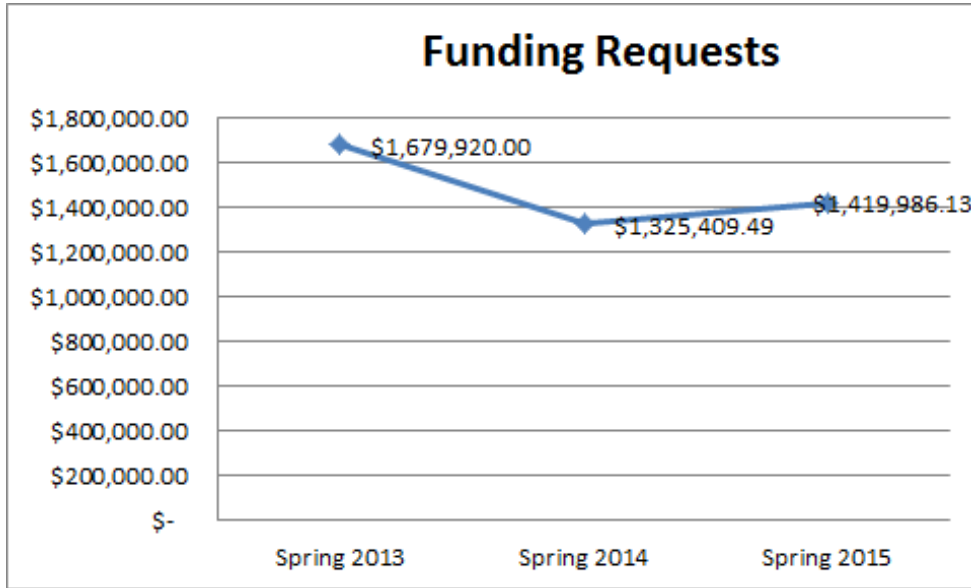
This academic year we received 392 regular event requests and 85 travel requests. Out of the total requests, 346 regular and 76 travel requests received funding. Out of \$1.42 million in requests, we were able to allocate \$880,965.87, or 62%. At the beginning of the year, we are given \$634,940.80 to allocate to groups. Through our experience we have learned that at least 8% of our budget will come back through the rolling audit and as a result our initial budget became \$688,324.48. As mentioned in the Executive Summary, throughout the year we were able to extend our budget by \$192,641.19 from our adjusted budget and \$220,771.53 from our initial budget by taking unused funds via our rolling audit.



**Breakdown as of 4/22/15*

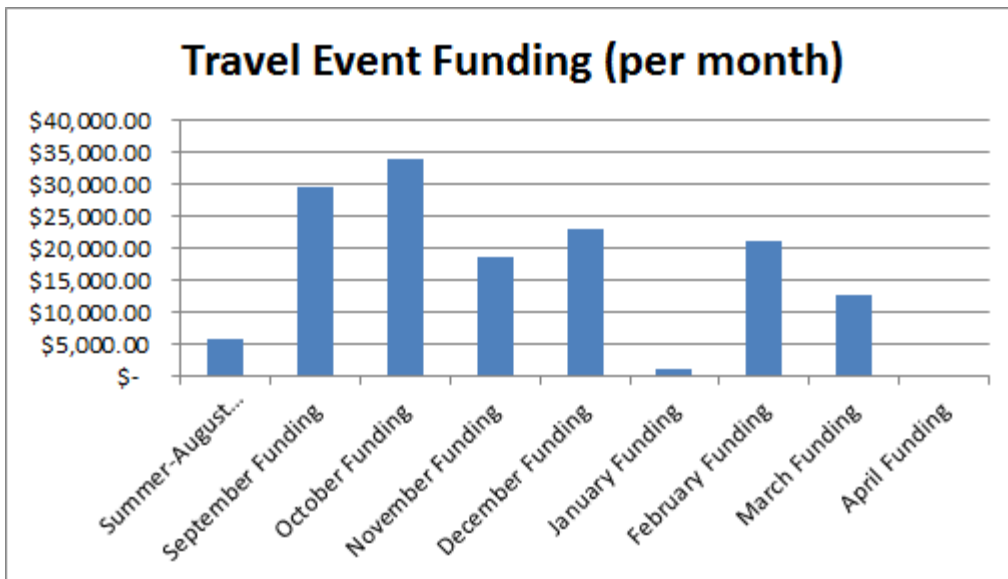
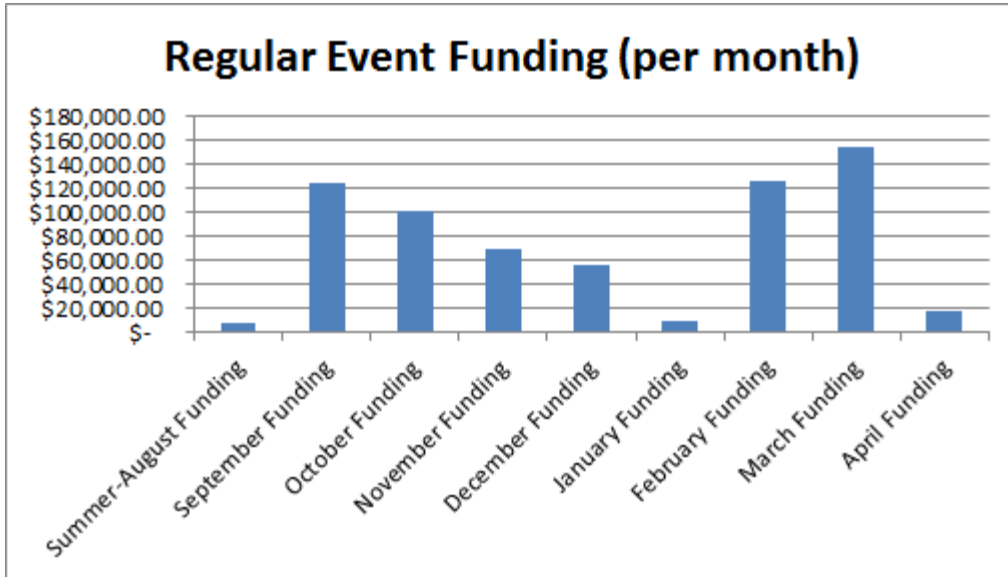
(4.B) TRENDS

While the Allocations Board does not have a sufficient database to track individual costs across multiple years, we aim to do our best to track trends in requests, spending, and overall programming on campus. The major trend worth noting between this year and the last academic year is the evident increase in the cost of programming. There has been a 6.2% drop in number of requests while the total amount requested has increased by 7.14%. The AB believes this could imply that the cost per event has increased over the past two years.



**Trends as of 4/22/15*

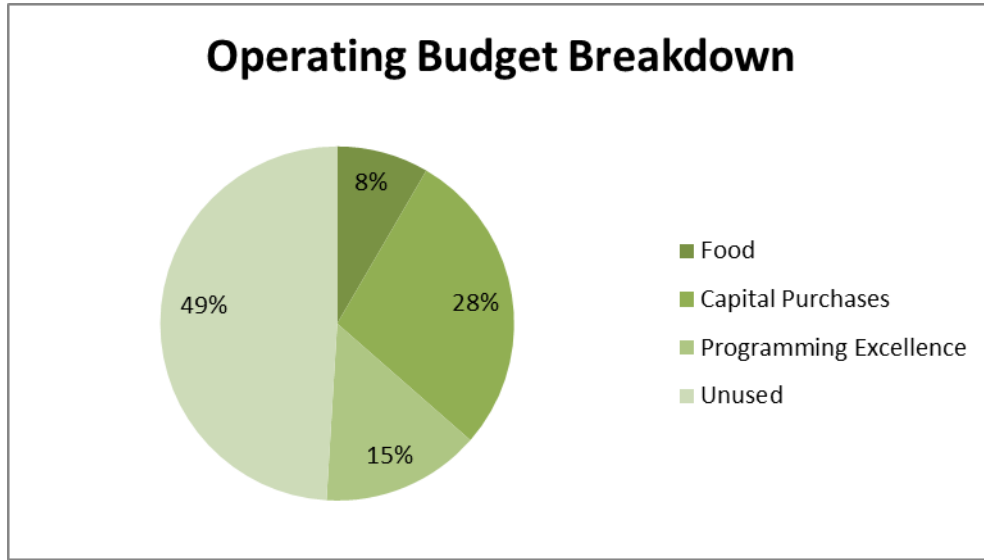
Below you can also see the spending trends of the Allocations Board month by month for the past year. These two graphs show that there is a distinct increase of amount requested for regular events within the first month of school, decreasing until February, rising from February to March, and decreasing again until the end of the semester. On the contrary Travel funding appears to be sporadic, increasing and decreasing month by month with no real pattern.



**April Funding as of 4/22/15*

(4.C) OPERATING BUDGET

As explained in Section 3.D, the Allocations Board can use up to 1% of budget for operating/overhead expenses. Our operating expenditures for this year are shown below. As mentioned in section (3.C), the AB uses our Operating Budget to improve our efficiency. In addition to internal purchases, the Board also uses the Operating Budget to provide Program of the Month and Program of the Year awards to outstanding events on campus.



**Breakdown as of 4/27/15*

(4.D) BUDGET CORRECTION

At the end of March, the AB updated its criterion for regular and travel events within our budget. After transitioning a handful of groups within our budget, the size of our regular and travel budget were no longer proportionate to our original breakdown. The Allocations Board begins the year with 80% of our budget solely dedicated to regular events, while our travel budget which starts out at 20%. In late March we noticed the travel budget was almost three times larger than the regular budget. This can also be explained by groups sending less people to travel events and as a result a greater proportional amount comes back to the travel budget through the rolling audit. The board felt that the excess in travel funds was an inappropriate use of the CSF, especially so late in the year when there was still over a month of programming that could be done on campus. To correct the updated numbers, the AB chose to combine the two budgets and reset the 80%-20% allocation. This resulted in an additional \$20,000-\$25,000 in the regular budget with the intention of improving programming on campus.

(5) INTERNAL ANALYSIS

This year the AB worked to address common concerns from both student groups and administrators regarding our funding habits. With recent data analysis, we are now steps closer to answering questions based on our concentrations of spending, whether we neglect or favor groups, and ways we can improve our process as a whole.

(5.A) BU COST ANALYSIS

Starting in 2013, the AB started tracking the amount of funding that was spent on BU costs. BU costs include the categories and proportions listed below. Our analysis from the 2014-2015 academic year shows that 24.19% of our budget was returned to BU for on campus costs. We believe it would be beneficial to the AB, SAO, internal vendors, and student groups to further subsidize these costs. The AB is a strong proponent of the philosophy that students should be able program on campus without financial struggle.

Further, the AB would like to propose an increase in either the AB or Program Help budget to cover all requests of Emergency Services (BUPD and RSIG) as well as Venues (FM&P, Tsai, etc.). Unlike Advertising, Catering, and the other categories listed, Emergency Services and Venue quotes are determined by SAO and student groups are unable to search for external vendors that may be cheaper without moving their event off campus. Currently Program Help covers up to four hours of service from internal vendors, but many groups require services beyond that amount.

We believe an 11.90% increase of the AB budget would allow us to better allocate student groups throughout the year while still paying for these necessary costs. In addition, increasing the initial AB budget would further extend the amount pulled back through our rolling audit. In the end this would provide a huge boost for student programming on BU's campus.

Category	Proportion
Advertisement (Warren Posters, Kinkos, etc.)	0.59%
Catering	2.35%
Emergency Services (BUPD and RSIG)	1.77%
Eventbrite Fees	0.05%
Production (SPS, Media Services, etc.)	6.23%
Travel (BCD Fees, Auto Insurance)	3.06%
Venue (FM&P, Tsai, etc.)	10.13%
Grand Total	24.19%

(5.B) FAIRNESS TO GROUPS

In an effort to better understand the distribution of how we fund, we decided to analyze our spending (as of April 13th, 2015) and see how much groups received compared to what they requested. We were able to break up groups by the 17 SAO designated categories and calculate the percentage of the requested funds that were allocated by the Board. The goal behind this analysis was to see if there were any major discrepancies between categories - - i.e. is there a type of group that the Allocations Board funds more (or less) than the others? The data-level results of this analysis (the groups/categories and their requested vs. allocated proportions) are shown in figures 5.1 and 5.2 of section (5.C) below. To give a general summary of this data, we created summary statistics and a histogram which are also presented in figures 5.3 and 5.4 below.

It's important to note that the "amount requested" data that was used to create this statistic is a raw number – it hasn't been corrected for costs requested that AB doesn't fund (things that are for the exclusive benefit of the group, things that are sold back to BU students, etc.) While the overwhelming and diverse majority of student group categories see a large proportion of their requests funded, the ones that are on the lower end of the spectrum can largely be explained by this fault in the data. Regardless, we still see that by in large AB is funding student groups on average anywhere from 2/3rds to 3/4ths of their costs, and this is seen throughout all different types of groups. The small variations we do see (where some groups get slightly more or less) is largely explained by what the group requested, and it being out of our funding boundaries. For example, Student Governments are not eligible for AB funding since they receive their own budget from the university and are denied immediately.

We hope to be able to expand this analysis and drill into specific group data. This will only be possible if we are able to either increase the reporting features of OrgSync or get an improved database. When this analysis is done, we can see the true proportion of allocated funds vs. requested funds controlling for how well a group knows the AB funding process/rules.

(5.C) FIGURES

FIGURE 5.1 (PROPORTIONS)

Category	Allocated vs. Requested
Academic and Professional	52.31%
Comedy	80.23%
Community Service and Volunteering	43.75%
Community Support and Education	68.55%
Cultural	70.30%
Dance	66.09%
Fraternities and Sororities	66.30%
Global Initiatives and Philanthropy	72.79%
Honor Societies	27.26%
Media Arts	82.01%
Peace and Justice	89.33%
Political	73.79%
Recreation	47.42%
Religious	55.50%
Student Governments	0.00%
Theater	83.28%
Vocal and Music	68.08%
Grand Total	62.04%

FIGURE 5.2 (PROPORTIONS)

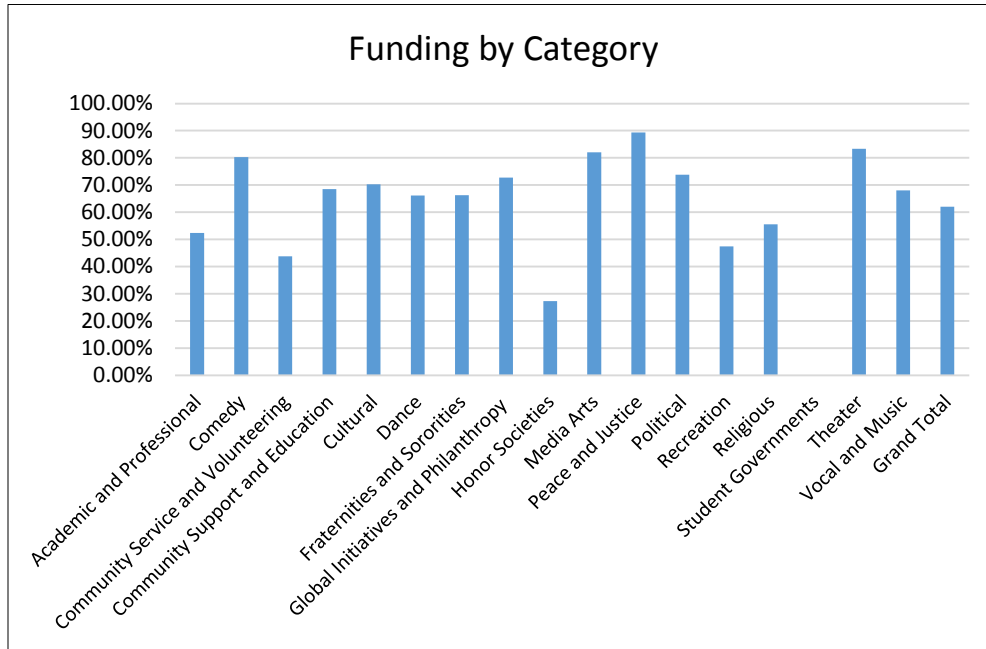
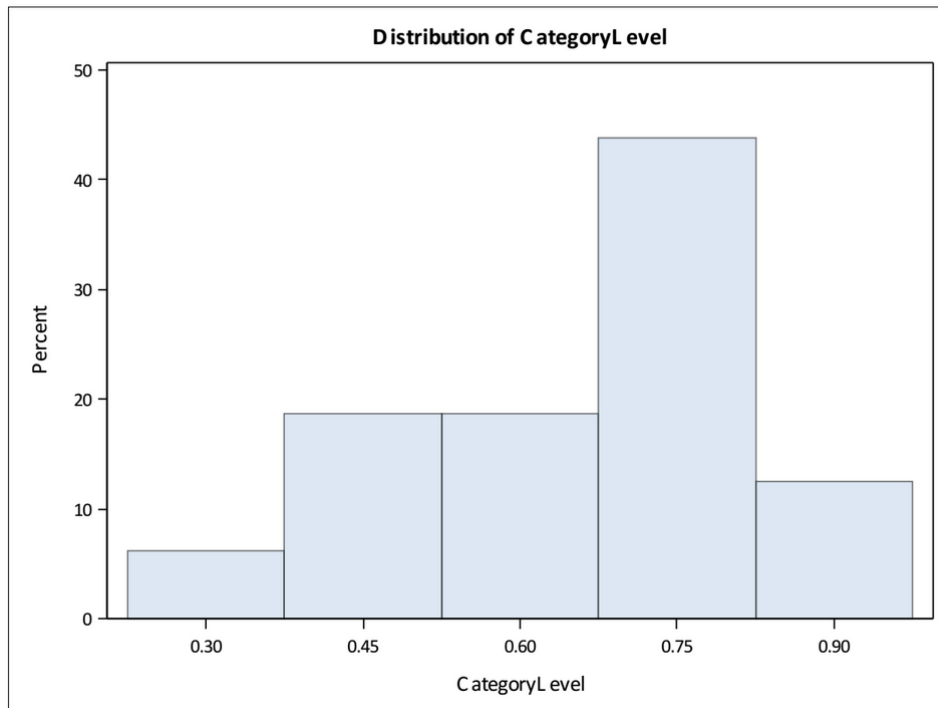


FIGURE 5.3 (SUMMARY STATISTICS)

Basic Statistical Measures				
Location		Variability		
Mean	0.654369	Std Deviation	0.16475	
Median	0.683150	Variance	0.02714	
Mode	.	Range	0.62070	
		Interquartile Range	0.23105	

Tests for Location: $\mu_0=0$				
Test	Statistic		p Value	
Student's t	t	15.88721	Pr > t	<.0001
Sign	M	8	Pr >= M	<.0001
Signed Rank	S	68	Pr >= S	<.0001

FIGURE 5.4 (HISTOGRAM)



(6) CHALLENGES

Each year the Allocations Boards faces several challenges including having to deny requests from student groups as well as adapt to changes in SAO. This year the board has tried to leverage OrgSync to help address some of the challenges we have faced for several years.

(6.A) DENIED EVENTS

This year the AB denied 55 events out of the 477 events that requested funding. When we deny events, we generally do so on the basis that these events request funds that improperly use the CSF (with expenditures solely benefiting the group), or attempt to violate other SAO policies. Additionally, if the scope of the event is not within the mission of the organization, the AB does not fund the event. In other cases, events may not be open to the student body as a whole, which may constitute an improper use of the CSF considering every undergraduate pays the CSF. By denying events that improperly use the CSF, AB can further use our funds to benefit more groups on campus. When we deny events we do not aim to discourage groups from programming, but rather to express that the Allocations Board is not the appropriate source of funding for the given event.

(6.B) ORGSYNC TRANSITION

OrgSync has been very efficient in various aspects, however, it does not support the reporting features we would expect from a full database. In an attempt to guarantee that we did not lose any data through the transition we continue to perform parallel testing with our old database. The AB is working closely with administrators and OrgSync professionals to determine ways to improve the reporting features available to us.

(6.C) DATABASE

The Allocations Board has requested a replacement database to our previous system for several years. This year we were excited to hear that OrgSync will eventually transition to become our primary database. With this eventual transition, the AB will be able to work with SAO to make periodic database updates that we have been hoping to make for some time. These updates include the reporting features that would make the analysis performed in section (5) automated and more frequent.

(6.D) TRANSPARENCY

The AB has always struggled with maintaining constant transparency, especially as student groups have new executive boards each year. This year we have been able to send a member of our executive board to new group trainings. This allows the AB to get valuable face time in front of student leaders and answer questions we would not normally get from groups that are used to our policies. New questions allow us to adapt our documentation to be easier to understand for students who have never dealt with the AB before.

Additionally, SAO has worked with all student groups to provide formal OrgSync training. This training includes a description of how to apply for AB funding and how to make Payments on approved Budgets. We hope that SAO continues to include the AB in future trainings so that we can continue to improve our transparency among the student body.

(6.E) BYSTANDER TRAINING

All student groups looking to be eligible for AB funding must complete Step Up Step In (Bystander) Training workshops. While these workshops do not directly relate to the purpose of AB, requiring them for funding eligibility helps the school ensure each group completes the proper training and raises awareness for sexual assault. Because the training is a requirement for funding, the AB is responsible for providing SAO with a list of groups that have used AB funds without attending the training. These groups have been offered several chances to make up their training and if they fail to do so they will be required to return all funds used from the AB.

It is only possible for us to review these violations at the end of each semester. This is inefficient and results in groups using ineligible funds. The AB believes the only solution to this problem is to require SUSIBU training for re-registration. As a result, only groups that have received the training will be registered through SAO and will be eligible for AB funding. This solution will also help train the hundreds of groups that do not request funds from the Allocations Board.

(6.F) PERCEPTION

This year we heard of a serious concern on campus that we aimed to address in section (5) of this report. We heard of a negative perception among students and students groups on campus regarding Allocations Board funding and whether or not the board neglects student groups. We do not want student groups to feel that we are a body that works behind closed doors without transparency. We are students aiming to make programming better on campus and we recognize this as a major problem that we need to address. The AB hopes to do this within the upcoming year by being more proactive in our marketing and social outreach. Some of the things we plan to do is rebrand the AB, use OrgSync to blast announcements about our group, have a better presence on social media as well. Additionally the AB plans to create a new tutorial on how to apply for funding via OrgSync, mentioned in sections (2.E) and (6.D). We hope that with increased marketing and development we can encourage more groups to interact with the Allocations Board. The negative perception towards the board has been an issue we have tried to address for several years and we hope that OrgSync can serve as a solution to this common problem.

(6.G) MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Allocations Board is initiated by its rolling admissions process. Any undergraduate student, at any point during the year, is welcome to begin their membership. The idea of membership stems from two major facets: the initial interest, and the desirable result. Students may first become interested in the AB through word of mouth or may even present at a Monday meeting. Regardless of how they hear of AB, what will excite students to be junior members is their interest in the organization and passion to improve programming on campus.

In volunteering our time, we support the student life on campus. The long Monday meetings may not result in a successful charity event or a boastful competition trophy. Instead, our work culminates itself in countless experiences for students. Whether it be on or off-campus, the AB helps shape student life at BU.

We encourage more students to look into joining the Allocations Board as a junior member. This year we have gained valuable new members and hope to expand our membership further. Many students believe the AB is a group that only deals with money. In contrast, the Board provides a unique opportunity to all students by focusing on fundamental policy changes surrounding the financial challenges of programming for the 400+ groups on campus.

(7) CONCLUSION

The Allocations Board continues to strive to improve programming on Boston University's campus while serving as a proponent for student leaders in the administrative decision making process. Above all we aim to be a transparent and accessible for all students on campus.

Last year our goal was to improve the quality and efficiency of our internal membership. We strongly believe this year was a success in that regard. However, the transition to OrgSync has shown the AB that there are many other challenges that student groups face. Next year, we aim to finalize the transition to OrgSync and provide detailed visual aids to students. We would also like to increase the reporting functionality of OrgSync to allow us to further report on our funding habits to the student body. Finally, we hope to provide sufficient evidence to administrators to further subsidize the cost of hosting an event on campus. We believe these steps will help us in maximizing the funds given to student groups and minimizing the number of denied requests.

We know there is always room for improvement and rely strongly on student and administrative suggestions and feedback. If you have any suggestions, comments, feedback or questions regarding the Allocations Board, please contact us at allocate@bu.edu.

Thank you for your continued support and best of luck programming in 2015-2016!

Sincerely,

Allocations Board
Boston University

Rohan
Vaswani

Chair

Adam
Wolberg

Vice Chair

Adam
Duda

Treasurer

Harshel
Aggarwal

**Director of
Operations**

Gurvir
Dhaliwal

Secretary