



Student Organization Budget Guidelines

The Joint Council puts forth the following guidelines under the Office of Student Life (OSL) to help guide both student organizations requesting money and council members voting to disburse money.

Key Guide

OSL - Office of Student Life

SAF - Student Activity Fee

FSA - Faculty Student Association

Joint Council - Graduate Studies Student Council, Medical Council, Nursing Student Council, School of Health Professions, School of Public Health Student Council, Student Center Governing Board, University Council & Future councils formed on-campus

1. Purpose:

1.1 - These Guidelines exist to:

- Provide a clear, transparent framework for how student organization funds derived from the Student Activity Fee are requested, allocated, and used.
- Support equitable, mission-driven programming that benefits the student body and the Downstate community.
- Ensure compliance with institutional and Faculty Student Association regulations.

1.2 - These Guidelines apply only to student organizations and student-led initiatives recognized by Downstate and eligible for SAF or related Joint Council funding.

1.3 - The Joint Council reserves the right to grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis when justified and documented.

1.4 - The Joint Council should review and update these guidelines at least annually.

2. General recommendations to student leaders:

2.1 - Planning & Continuity

- Submit an annual budget for the upcoming academic year at your council's Spring budget meeting (exact date set and announced by each council).
- Ensure smooth leadership transitions so incoming officers understand budgets, obligations, and reporting.

2.2 - Use of Funds

- Funds must be used for specific purposes approved in the organization's budget or subsequent approved requests.
- Organizations are expected to manage funds responsibly and avoid unnecessary depletion early in the year.

2.3 - Seeking Additional Funding

- If you responsibly deplete allocated funds or develop new programming not in your original budget, you may submit additional requests at regular council meetings.

2.4 - Publicity & Acknowledgment

- Any event funded in whole or in part by Joint Council/SAF must:
- Clearly state sponsorship (e.g., "Sponsored by Joint Council, funded by the Student Activity Fee") and include the appropriate logo provided.

2.5 - External Support

- Organizations are encouraged to seek co-funding when appropriate (e.g., departments, Alumni Association, national organizations, fundraising), but all spending must follow these Guidelines

and FSA rules.

3. Annual Budget meeting:

3.1 - Separate Hearings; Shared Standards

- Joint Council holds its own Spring budget meeting
 - Coordinate meeting dates with the Office of Student Life
- Core expectations, documentation, and evaluation criteria follow these unified Guidelines.

3.2 - Attendance

- At least one representative from each organization must attend the relevant Spring budget meeting to be eligible for funding for the following year.
- Organizations that miss the meeting may apply at an early Fall meeting; funding in that scenario is not guaranteed and may be partial.

3.3 - Evaluation Criteria

Funding decisions consider:

- Available funds;
- Organization's activity and reliability;
- Inclusivity and benefit to the student body;
- Feasibility and clarity of proposed events;

3.4 - Binding Decisions

- Decisions made at the Spring budget meeting guide allocations for the upcoming year.
- Rejected or significantly reduced proposals will not generally be fully reconsidered later unless key circumstances change.
- Funding will be taken away if an organization does not complete the minimal requirements for the year
- Organization must complete their club registration by May 31st

4. New/reactivated clubs:

4.1 - Newly recognized or reactivated organizations that did not participate in the Spring process may:

- Request start-up funding during the year.
- Standard starting allocation: up to \$300, determined by the relevant council(s) based on available funds and proposed programming.

4.2 - New organizations may submit additional requests later in the year if they demonstrate active programming and responsible spending.

5. Allowable & Restricted Uses of Funds

5.1 - Generally Allowable

- Educational events, workshops, panels, and journal clubs.
- Community service or outreach is directly tied to the institution's mission.
- Modest food for on-campus events.
- Reasonable publicity materials.
- Approved student travel, conferences, and competitions as outlined in Section 7.
- Approved speaker gifts and honoraria as outlined in Section 8.

5.2 - Generally, Not Allowable

- Alcohol, cannabis, or other controlled substances.
- Personal gifts, gift cards, or cash equivalents.
- Donations to external organizations in place of programming
- Expenses that violate institutional, FSA, or state regulations.
- Retroactive funding for events or commitments made without prior approval (except where explicitly allowed in Section 7 and 8).

5.3 - All expenditures must follow FSA purchasing/reimbursement rules and institutional policies.

6. Food & Event Funding:

6.1 - *On-Campus Events*

Food may be funded when it:

- Supports attendance and engagement at educational, wellness, or community-building events.
- It is reasonable in cost and portion.
- The following price ranges are offered as a guide for student leaders when deciding what is a

reasonable amount of money to spend on food (cap of \$400 per month spent on food for general membership club meetings):

- \$150-\$400 for introductory/interest meetings
- Up to \$500 for large Campus events
- \$100-\$200 for general meetings and journal clubs

As a general guide (not strict caps), organizations should:

- Use economic vendors.
- Estimate attendance realistically (e.g., RSVP or past event data).
- Avoid repeatedly maxing out budgets on food-only events.
- Giveaways/Prizes for events need to be approved

6.2 - *Off-Campus Events*

- The Joint Council cannot fund more than 50% of the total cost of off-campus events or food for off-campus events.
- Off-campus events must:
 - Have a clear educational/organizational benefit.
 - Be financially reasonable (e.g., not luxury venues).
 - Must submit Off-Campus Event Request Form at least 2 weeks before the event
 - If money is to be collected from members, it must be done through the OSL
 - Must have a cap/end date on when students can sign up

6.3 - Organizations are expected to prioritize inclusive, mission-aligned programming over high-cost Catering.

7. **Travel, Conference & Competition Funding:**

7.1 - *General Principles*

Funding is not guaranteed

Students must:

- Seek external funding first (e.g., Alumni Association, departments, conference scholarships)
 - Recommended to do fundraising
- Disclose all other funding sources when applying

Funding is typically limited to:

- Registration (if not covered elsewhere)
- Lodging
- Transportation
- Poster printing through approved campus services
- No food or entertainment expenses

7.2 - *Eligibility*

Priority is given to:

- Students presenting original research, scholarly work, requirements by their national organization or serving in a formal role (panel, workshop, leadership position).

Requests for purely attendance-based conferences (no presentation/role) are lower priority and funded only as budgets allow.

7.3 - *Request Requirements*

A complete request must include (no separate outdated forms required):

- Organization name and # of attendees
- Conference name, dates, and location.
- Role at the conference (poster/oral/lead author/panel/etc.) with documentation (acceptance email, program link, etc.).
 - Is this conference mandatory by their national organization
 - If so, how many people are required to go (please share written documentation from their parent group)
- If not presenting/mandatory - what are the benefits of your organization attending the conference
- Itemized projected budget (transport, lodging, registration, poster).
- Disclosure of applications to and outcomes from other funding sources (including fundraising).

Students should present their request at the next available council meeting before incurring expenses Whenever possible. Retroactive requests will be considered case by case.

7.4 - Lodging & Transportation

Lodging:

- Typically limited to one night unless able to justify why the conference is multiple days
- Students are expected to share rooms when feasible and select reasonably priced options (may use alternatives to the official conference hotel).

Transportation:

- Choose economical options (public transit, advance-purchase fares).
- Taxis/rideshares are funded only when public transit is clearly impractical.

8. Speakers, Gifts & Honoraria

8.1 - Speaker Gifts

- Speaker gifts are tokens of appreciation, not compensation.
- Maximum value: \$45 per event.
- Gifts:
 - Cannot be gift cards or cash equivalents.
 - Should preferably be institution-branded or professional items.

8.2 - Honoraria

- Honoraria may be considered on a case-by-case basis, generally up to \$300 per event, subject to available funds and justification.
- Conditions:
 - No retroactive honoraria for previously completed events without prior approval.
 - The speaker must request or accept the honorarium; organizations should not pressure or inappropriately incentivize.
 - Honoraria are not permitted for:
 - SUNY/State employees (including Downstate employees), in accordance with institutional policies.
 - Honoraria should only be considered if:
 - No qualified Downstate faculty/affiliate can reasonably provide the same content.
- Process:
 - Organizations must obtain prior approval from the relevant council at a meeting before confirming an honorarium with the speaker.
 - Requests must include:
 - Event title, date, topic.
 - Speaker name, affiliation.
 - Rationale for selection and honorarium amount.
 - Confirmation of eligibility per institutional rules.

9. Non-SAF & External Funding

- All funds (SAF and non-SAF) managed by recognized organizations must:
 - Be reported to and approved for use through the appropriate council processes.
 - Must be deposited into your FSA Account through the Bursar
 - Must email the council your receipt after the deposit
 - Comply with FSA and institutional financial policies.
- Current year externally raised funds:
 - Organizations have more flexibility but must still:
 - Use funds for mission-aligned activities.
 - Follow institutional policies.
 - Used for the purpose stated during the fundraiser
 - Disclose balances when requesting Joint Council funding.
- Prior-year carryover funds:
 - Subject to the same oversight and approval standards as SAF funding.

10. Co-Sponsored Events

- Co-sponsorship between organizations and/or councils is encouraged to support:
 - Collaborative, high-yield programming;

- Efficient use of limited funds.
- Requirements:
 - Each co-sponsoring group may only commit funds they already have approved, or that are approved at a council meeting before publicizing the commitment.
 - Funding responsibilities must be clarified in writing (email is sufficient) between groups.
- Co-sponsorship should reflect:
 - Shared planning responsibilities;
 - Not just “logo-stacking,” but genuine collaboration.
- References to a single council (e.g., “Med Council only”) in prior documents are replaced by Joint Council language.

11. Request & Reimbursement Procedures

Each council will publish its own operational details (forms, deadlines), but all processes follow these Principles:

- Before the Event / Expense
 - Submit a clear request at least one council meeting prior (or per posted deadline).
 - Await formal approval before committing funds or contracts.
- Documentation
 - Keep itemized receipts and invoices.
 - Maintain attendance records where relevant.
 - Provide brief post-event reports when requested.
- No Retroactive Surprises
 - Retroactive reimbursement for unapproved expenses may be partially or fully denied.

12. Exceptions, Enforcement & Review

- Councils may make exceptions when:
 - Justified in writing, financially feasible, and consistent with institutional regulations.
- Misuse of funds (e.g., unauthorized spending, falsified documentation, persistent non-compliance) may result in:
 - Denied reimbursements, freezing of organization accounts, and/or ineligibility for future funding.
- These Guidelines should be reviewed annually by representatives from each council with the OSL and updated based on:
 - Budget realities, inflation, student needs, and university policy changes.

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