Academic Opportunity Fund Application Revision

Description: Revision of the Academic Opportunity Fund application’s Policies and Procedures section to clarify the academic opportunities this fund can support.

WHEREAS the introduction of the Policies and Procedures section of the Academic Opportunity Fund Application reads, “The purpose of the Academic Opportunity Fund (AOF) is to provide financial support to undergraduate students who wish to present research or to participate in an academic competition at a reputable event;”

WHEREAS the Conference Information section of the Academic Opportunity Fund Application recognizes poster, paper (presentation), exhibition (art), academic competition, performance, and other as legitimate forms of presentation;

WHEREAS the Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee has recognized discrepancies between these two sections;

WHEREAS these discrepancies have caused confusion during multiple Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee meetings;

WHEREAS the Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee finds it appropriate to reconcile these discrepancies;

BE IT THEREFORE ENACTED THAT the first paragraph of the introduction of the Policies and Procedures section of the Academic Opportunity Fund Application be rewritten as, “The purpose of the Academic Opportunity Fund (AOF) is to provide financial support to undergraduate students who wish to present research, showcase creative work, compete in an academic competition, or actively contribute to another reputable academic event;”

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee shall award funding according to this new Policies and Procedures section effective immediately;

BE IT FURTHER ENACTED THAT the Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee will clarify this new Policies and Procedures section to any individual or group presenting to the committee who has already applied for funding under the old Policies and Procedures section.

Tags: Academic Opportunity Fund, AOF

Sponsors: Erik Olson, USUSA Engineering Senator
**Co-sponsor:** Dallin Johnson, USUSA Administrative Assistant; Rebecca Thomas, USUSA Natural Resources Senator
Policy Paper

Committee: Academic Senate
Absent: None.

History:
The Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee first recognized a problem with the Academic Opportunity Fund Application in an October 2, 2017 meeting. The committee was not able to award funding to a group attending the American Society of Landscape Architects National Conference because their attendance did not qualify as “[presenting] research” or “[participating] in an academic competition at a reputable event” under the Policies and Procedures section of the application. This issue was discussed with Linda Zimmerman on October 16, 2017 and in Academic Senate meetings on October 9, 2017 and October 16, 2017. Linda and a majority of the Academic Senate were not in favor of adjusting the application’s requirements, but some indicated initial favorability to changing the name of the Academic Opportunity Fund itself. However, due to the infrequency of the problem and a lack of plausible ideas for a new name, the Academic Senate voted in a straw poll that they did not favor a name change and the issue was tabled.
The Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee recognized the problem again in a November 13, 2017 meeting. The committee hesitantly awarded funding to a group attending the Mountain West BFA Actor Showcase because their attendance qualified as a performance under the Conference Information section of the application, but not necessarily as “[presenting] research” or “[participating] in an academic competition at a reputable event” under the Policies and Procedures section. Following the meeting, a number of committee members recognized the need to revisit the issue to reconcile the discrepancies between these two sections.

Purpose:
This bill reconciles discrepancies between the Policies and Procedures and Conference Information sections of the Academic Opportunity Fund Application to provide the Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee clearer guidelines on what types of events they are able to award funding to.

Pros:
The Academic Opportunity Fund Allocation Committee will have clearer guidelines on what types of events they are able to award funding to. Additionally, students applying for the Academic Opportunity Fund will have clearer guidelines on whether their events qualify for funding.

Cons:
A shift from old guidelines may yield initial confusion. Additionally, it will take time and effort to update the application.