



104 Bayard Street, 5th Floor. New Brunswick, NJ. 08901.

Dear Mr. Swalagin,

Thank you for your summary of your and the University Senate Executive Committee's questions in regards to our Spring 2016 Concept Plan. Below is a draft our clarifications to the plan. We look forward to discussing these with you further before our formal submission, and including these revisions in future Concept Plans.

II. Funding Procedures for Special Student Organizations

These Organizations must demonstrate that they have exceptional circumstances that warrant a funding mechanism beyond that available to other student organizations.

The educational value provided by NJPIRG Student Chapters requires full-time professional staff and a national network of student organizations. Pages 21 & 22 of our Concept Plan specifically outlines why our staff are important for successful educational programming and successful campaigns. Our student Board of Directors allocates our funding to:

- Advocates in-state and in Washington D.C. who give students a voice in the halls of power and advise us in political strategy,
- Organizers on the ground who run course credit internships and give professional campaign direction,
- Scientists and researchers who write reports, collect data, and give students expertise on campaigns,
- Lawyers who provide legal advice to students on everything from how to write bills to how to use corporate logos without violating trademarks, and
- Support staff who administer our financials (work with auditors, file taxes, etc.), recruit and train our new staff, provide technical support for our websites, and more.

You can see in our budget short-hand that 80% of our budget goes towards staff and staff operating costs. The scale of these campaigns require a funding level that is above and beyond what student governments and other sources of funding on campus allow for, therefore we are seeking a referendum to approve a negative check-off for all voting units at Rutgers University. For a fee of this size, even if an allocation was available elsewhere (ie. through a student government allocation), we would still seek funding through a referendum. We believe that our support should be approved and reaffirmed by the students every 3 years because we want to be held accountable to the students that we serve. We believe the negative check-off, or waivable fee, is the most appropriate mechanism because our services are available to all students on campus, and our public interest campaigns benefit all students. The NJPIRG Students referendum is the largest student vote in the country with over 18,000 casting a ballot in the last referendum. The fact that over 90% of these students vote yes is a testament to the broad support that our program has.

We have provided examples of how our national campaigns and team of staff have been essential to our success in the past and expect that our future campaigns will be reflective of this. Given the nature of non-profit public interest campaign work, we believe that it provides more educational value and more value to students at Rutgers to choose our campaigns each semester. Each class of student leaders can choose campaigns that students at Rutgers are most concerned about and hire staff that have expertise in that particular issue area. Page 23 and 24 of our Concept Plans outlines how our campaigns are chosen each semester, and pages 25-28 outline the issue areas we expect to be working in in the next three years. The University Policy allows the Executive Committee to consider past performance, and we encourage the Committee to do so. Just like investors look at the history and past success of company before investing, we believe the committee should consider our 40 plus year history of serving the community successfully.

VI.B.1.c Demonstrate the need for financial resources and a funding mechanism beyond what is available to other student organizations. The petitioning student organization must provide a financial justification for the fee or an increase in an existing fee, including a forecasting of future income and expenses.

See above for justification for the negative check-off fee. As to our total assets, it is standard and smart business and non-profit practice to keep a reserve¹. This allows us to account for unexpected costs (like a landlord selling our building and having to move), and allows us to make the biggest educational impact on our campaigns as opportunities arise. For example, from 2009 – 2011 NJPIRG Students was offered an opportunity to partner with Americorps and run a bigger internship program geared at environmental studies, engineering, and education majors. This program educated 10,000 K-12 kids about energy efficiency and weatherized hundreds of homes and businesses. Our Board of Directors has been able to take advantage of educational opportunities because of this reserve.

¹ Our financial advisors recommend this, but so do the Greater Washington Society of CPA's, the Non-Profits Assistance Fund, The Foundation Center, etc. The standard recommendation in the field of non-profit management is a 6 month – 2 year reserve. We keep from 1 to 2 years in reserve.



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IV.B.2 The Senate Executive Committee, upon the recommendation of the Student Affairs Committee (or, in rare circumstances, on its own evaluation), shall review and approve the concept plan with the criteria of determining whether the educational value of the organization justifies the proposed investment in resources, and that the organization has demonstrated the need for the funding mechanism outlined in these procedures.

We take pride in cost effectiveness of the educational value we're able to provide to Rutgers University. Each year, we run four to eight campaigns that offer Rutgers students the ability to apply the knowledge they're learning in the classroom to real world campaigns. We are able to run campaigns that *win real results* that no other student groups on campus are able to accomplish.

Our campaign to save antibiotics is a prime example. We have been able to convince the two largest fast food restaurants in the country to change their meat sourcing policies because of hard facts provided by our research team, national coordination provided by U.S.PIRG staff, and on the ground guidance by our Campus Organizers. Our goal this coming year is to convince 5 more of the top 15 fast food chains in the country to implement policies that curb the overuse of antibiotics on factory farms. Ultimately, we are aiming to move the Food and Drug Administration to do the same. Just this week, we joined PIRG students from across the country and met with staff from the White House in Washington D.C. about this campaign. Our access and influence over decision makers, and ability to make the case for real policy solutions that benefit students, is in large part made possible by the advice, training, and work of our staff.

Staff salaries: Our incoming staff this year are being paid \$25,000. Our incoming staff in FY14 were paid \$24,000. Staff in their second year are paid \$1,500 more than their 1st year. After the 2nd year, salaries increase commensurate to our budget and performance. Our Organizing Director is paid \$37,000 in her 8th year on staff. This does not account for benefits like healthcare or 401k. For comparisons sake, entry level community organizer positions are typically \$35k and non-profit organizing directors with commensurate experience are typically at \$65k. Are salaries are admittedly on the low end, but we are a student funded non-profit.

In addition to in-state staff, we pay for a portion of the national Student PIRGs team (National Costs in the budget shorthand). This is a shared cost with other student chapters across the country from California to Maryland. This includes advocates that work on student specific issues, like the cost of higher education, and oversight for our organizing director. Depending on the campaigns we're working on, we also pay for advocates and researchers with U.S.PIRG, the federation of State PIRGs. This is a shared cost with both citizen and Student PIRGs for partnerships on issues that impact students and citizens, like the overuse of antibiotics. Our non-profit services are provided by The Public Interest Network, a network of non-profits that share services like financial administration and graphic design. Partnering with these non-profits allows us to cut our costs. It makes much more sense to share a lawyer who understands our work with other Student PIRGs than it does to hire our own. The non-profits that we partner with are by far the most cost efficient on the market for the services provided to students.

Other -

- We are seeking a negative check-off fee.
- In the future, we can send the Concept Plan to just the Executive Secretary of the University.
- In the future, we can replace "University Senate Guidelines" with "University Policy."

Sincerely,

NJPIRG Student Chapters

Nick Jermer, Arielle Mizrahi, Randi Stafford, Jordan Kizmann, Kristi Collemacine
Board of Directors Executive Committee