

# The Money Trail: Contributions to the FA Budget

If you are making contributions to the FA or considering making contributions, you may wonder where the money has gone. This is certainly a fair question, so let me offer an explanation.

## Managing Your Money

One of my first decisions as FA president was to create the position of treasurer and appoint Scott Fallstrom to that position. As a mathematician and guy who has a mild obsession with keeping expenses down and income rising, Scott was an obvious choice. While the FA Bylaws give the responsibility for expenditures to the FA President, having a Treasurer provides the FA with much greater budget security. This semester, Scott and I added a Budget Committee as an advisory panel, and so now we have yet another set of watchdogs.

Since the first bit of income came into the FA, all new, minor expenditures have been discussed and approved by the FA Executive Committee, and all major expenditures have been discussed and approved by the FA Council.

The first fiscal year for the FA was lasted only a few months, and formal budget was created. For 2015/16, however, the Budget Committee devised a budget proposal, and the budget was approved by the 20+ members of the FA Council.

## The Budget: Here is How the FA Spent (and saved) in Year 1

### 1. Building a Reserve

As soon as the FA began to receive contributions, we concluded that defending our current working conditions should be a major priority. When labor disputes arise-even relatively small ones-legal costs can quickly exceed \$100,000 annually. While we don't anticipate any major disputes it is crucial to maintain a strong reserve. To that end, 92% of the FA's 2015 income went to building a reserve. By the end of the 2015 fiscal year our reserve reached \$20,415.91. It's my feeling that-at minimum-our reserve should exceed \$100,000, so we will continue to make building this portion of the budget a major priority.

### 2. Overview of Year 1

In our first year, the FA received \$22,000 in revenues and spent just under \$1,800. When considering this first year, it's important to recognize that we will have a very different year two, both in terms of revenues and expenditures. Until March of 2015, we had no significant revenues available. Our tiny budget prohibited us from spending on legal advice, negotiation training, organizational memberships, and other costs commonly associated with employee organizations responsible for collective bargaining.

This year's budget will provide a very different reality. FA income is looking up, and now over 50% of faculty are contributing to the FA. No doubt our annual legal costs and other expenditures will rise significantly in the years ahead, but as that occurs we will maintain a focus on building a substantial reserve.

Year One Expenses: In addition to legal expenditures of just a few hundred dollars, the only other significant expenses were for educational materials such as the printing of materials distributed to faculty (\$691), and travel costs for two of our members to attend a community college labor conference in Sacramento (\$359).

***Total expenditures for fiscal year 2015: \$1,799.***

## **Overview of Anticipated Spending in 2015/16**

### **Legal Costs**

As we all know good legal advice is not cheap and can rise dramatically if major disputes arise. This is the major motivation for continuing to build a substantial reserve in 2015/16 (nearly 60% of our projected revenues will go toward building a reserve). Fortunately, MiraCosta has had an excellent track record with regards to labor disputes (only two major ones that I can recall), but when such disputes arose in the past the lack of a substantial legal fund restricted leadership from using the courts to defend our rights. Disputes could involve contractual disagreements between the FA and the district, or may be related to disciplinary actions taken against one or more individuals.

### **Training**

The FA will also use funds to better prepare our leadership for the challenging assignment of protecting faculty member rights and negotiating fair and reasonable agreements. Over the years, negotiations at MiraCosta have become increasingly complex, and with that change training has become increasingly important. For that reason we need funds for travel (district funds cannot be used by the FA for travel), training, and association memberships. For example, the FA has joined with the other 13 community college faculty "independents" (employee organizations that are not attached to formal union structures) in an association known as the California Community College Independents (CCCI). Membership in the CCCI is very inexpensive compared to large umbrella unions like the CTA or CFT (our entire organization dues for this year are \$1200), but offers tremendous opportunities for collaborating with and learning from working conditions leaders at other colleges. In fact, if things go poorly the CCCI leadership will come to the college to provide guidance in much the same way that statewide union leaders would do.

### **Political Causes**

At this point the FA has not contributed funds to any political causes. However, in the future this is an issue we will need to consider. I believe it's safe to say that every community college union across the state contributes to political causes of one sort or another and that those contributions are often the difference between maintaining reasonable faculty salaries and suffering through the nightmare of widespread layoffs. Locally, we are fortunate to have a very reasonable Board of Trustees who have supported faculty in many ways. It should be

pointed out, however, that our Trustees have often needed our support to stave off opposition from individuals with political agendas that presented a direct threat to our working conditions. Providing support for Trustees when needed could go a long way towards ensuring that competent, caring Trustees remain in place.

### **Community Relations**

While we have yet to make or plan any expenditure in this category, small expenditures towards student initiatives, scholarships, or other causes could go a long way towards maintaining a positive image for the faculty throughout North County. Nearly every faculty union across the state supports students through a scholarship fund and through contributions to a range of other student-centered causes.

I hope this overview provides you with a better understanding of how we intend to spend FA income. However, if you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact me at [bbyrom@miracosta.edu](mailto:bbyrom@miracosta.edu).

Brad Byrom  
FA President