

UPAC raises cap

Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2006

By Kevin Horan
Collegian Staff Writer

In an effort to increase funding to student groups for activities and programs, the University Park Allocation Committee (UPAC) has raised the limits of how much money groups may receive for travel expenses as well as media production and equipment purchases.

In June, UPAC Chairman Greg Heleniak outlined changes to UPAC policy that would take effect for the 2006-2007 academic year in a letter to the presidents and treasurers of Penn State's student organizations.

The new policies put more strict limits on many areas of funding that UPAC provides. As recently as last year, organizations could ask for \$10,000 per year for travel. According to Heleniak's letter, organizations would only be able to ask for \$3,000 for the 2006-2007 academic year.

In an interview Thursday, however, Heleniak said the committee has decided to allow groups to ask for up to \$5,000 for travel.

"We decided that we should adjust the caps to make it easier for the student organizations to work with the money," Heleniak said. "Our estimate of \$3,000 was a little low before."

According to UPAC's handbook, "all travel must accomplish an organizational function and/or improve service offered to all students by bringing materials and information back to University Park."

UPAC staff assistant Galen Chelko said UPAC fielded a total of 120 requests for travel funding last year from Penn State's student organizations. Thirteen of those groups requested \$10,000, and five of the groups received it: Habitat for Humanity, Navigators, the Glee Club, the Kinesiology Club and Allies.

Former Allies President Ed Rowe said his organization used the \$10,000 from UPAC to attend a National Gay and Lesbian Task Force conference last year in Oakland, Cali.

"The trip was almost entirely paid for," Rowe said. "It was the only way that a lot of people from Allies were going to be able to go."

Allies recently changed its name to "SpeakOut." The new president, Christina Swomley, said her organization has requested travel funding for this year's conference in Kansas City, Mo. She added that they are still waiting to hear from UPAC to see how much of the trip will be funded.

"Depending on how much they give us, that's how many people we can send," Swomley said.

Chelko said last year, 25 groups made requests for travel funding that UPAC could not supply because all of their travel funds had been allocated.

Heleniak's letter also stated that UPAC would only provide \$1,000 to groups for "media production and equipment purchase." That category, he said Thursday, will be bumped up to \$1,800.

Last year, "media production" and "equipment purchase" were two separate categories funded by UPAC and had different monetary caps. Heleniak said those categories make up "a very small portion" of UPAC's budget. He estimated that, last year, UPAC allocated \$22,000 total for "media production" and \$20,000 total for "equipment purchases."

"It's not a huge proportion of all the funds that we allocate," Heleniak said.