

Student Government FY20 SFAC Questionnaire

1. Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.

Mission Statement:

“The Student Government Association exists to serve as the official voice through which student opinion may be expressed and empowered in the overall policy, decision making process, and services offered at the University of Houston. As such, the Student Government Association is committed to understanding the needs of students and advocating on their behalf. **Through continuous interaction with students, faculty, staff, and administration, the organization works to improve and enhance the quality of the student experience.**” – Student Government Website

How the 55th Administration Accomplishes Our Mission:

The University Administration, generally, views the Student Government as its best proxy for student opinion. Of course, depending on the individual Student Government Administration, this can be more or less true, and no Student Government Administration perfectly captures aggregate student opinion, but the 55th Administration remains true to its mission: to involve students in the University's policy/decision making process.

The 55th Administration has engaged in an unprecedented effort to outreach to students and involve more students in the policy making process, in the most transparent way possible. The 55th administration engages in a policy of joint interviews, always inviting relevant student leaders to important interviews, such as: SFAC, Senate vacancies, Supreme Court Vacancies, Student Regent, Stipend Leader appointments, etc. We have also, as an Executive Branch, gone out of our way to invite concerned students and senators to relevant meetings only the Executive Branch has access to, such as meetings with: Auxiliary Services, University Services, the Office of Sustainability, etc. It is rare that a student emails the 55th Student Government with a concern and does not get one or a combination of the following: (1) an immediate, clarifying response, (2) a follow-up email with meeting notes from a relevant administrator explaining the problem and their response, (3) encouragement to apply for relevant University Committee and/or Student Government positions, or (4) an invitation to a meeting with the relevant administrators so they may introduce the problems they have themselves.

Justification of the Student Government's Fee Allocation:

The Student Government is one of the University of Houston's longest standing, student led, institutions, dating back to the early 1930s. Since then, the University of Houston's Student Government has transformed into one of the most in-depth and influential Student Governments in the United States. We focus on policy. That is what the Student Government Association at the University of Houston does. The 55th Student Government attempts to spend every dollar of Student Fees, with the mindset that we would be comfortable with every single student knowing what we have spent their money on.

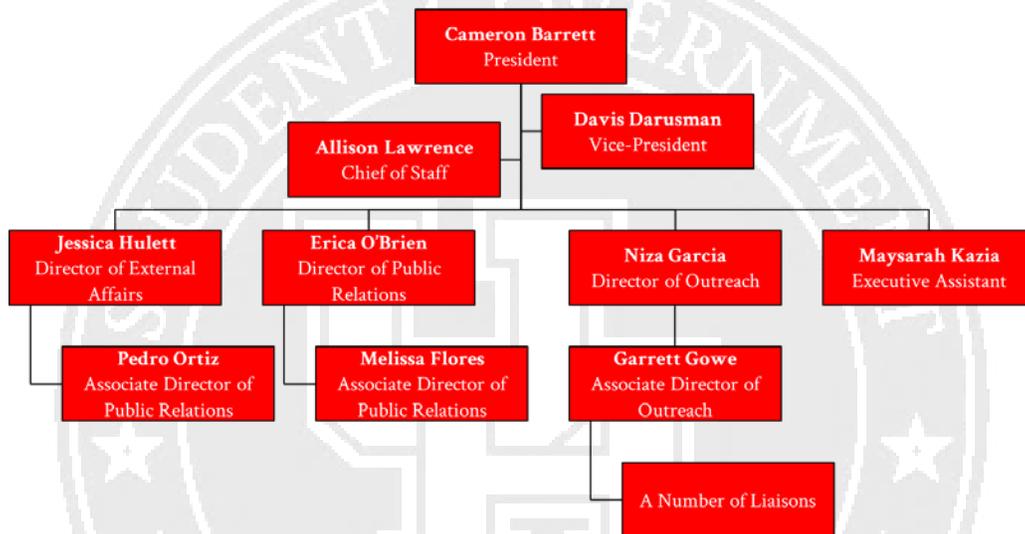
Through policies/events like the Student Government's blood drive, End the Stigma, the Houston Health and Safety Summit, the Library Textbook Exchange, the establishment of a reduced meal plan program, the establishment of the Cougar Pack program, etc., the 55th Student Government makes every dollar count, and even pays it forward through things like the Textbook Exchange, reduced meal plans, the Cougar Pack, etc.

2. Provide an organization chart of your unit. Large units may need to have an overview chart and then more specific charts for each program. Where you have multiple staff in the same position (e.g. counselor, advisor, etc.), note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.

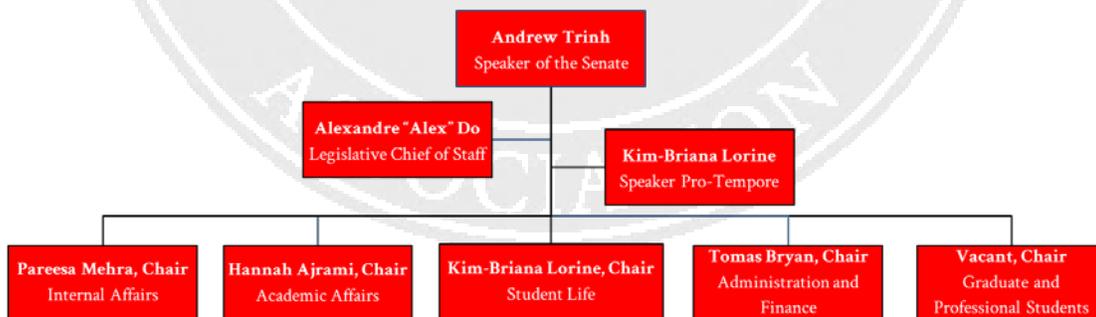
Overview:

The Student Government has three main branches: The Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the Judicial Branch. Each of these branches has an individual head, the President, the Speaker, and the Chief Justice, respectively. The Student Government also has a Justice Department which is newly independent from the Executive Branch, headed by the Attorney General. The Election Commission is also independent and overseen by the Chief Election Commissioner.

The Executive Branch:

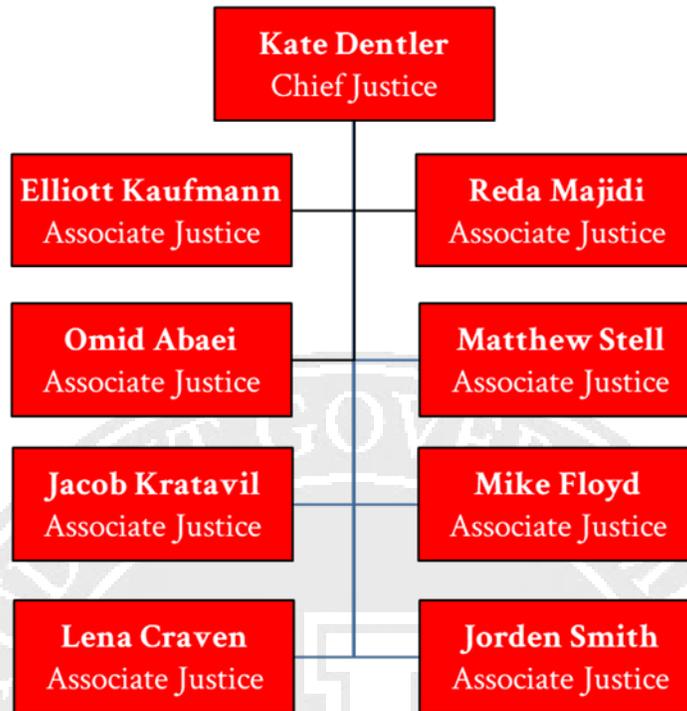


The Legislative Branch:

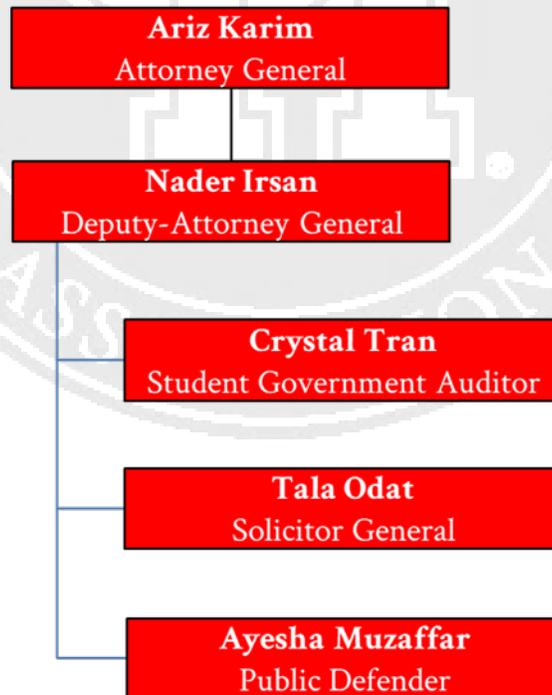


Senate Seats	
Undergraduate at-Large (4)	College of Law (1)
Graduate at-Large (2)	College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (7)
College of Architecture (1)	College of Natural Science & Mathematics (4)
College of Arts (1)	College of Pharmacy (1)
College of Business (4)	Graduate College of Social Work (1)
College of Education (2)	College of Technology (4)
College of Engineering (3)	Honors College (1)
College of Hotel & Restaurant Management (1)	College of Optometry (1)

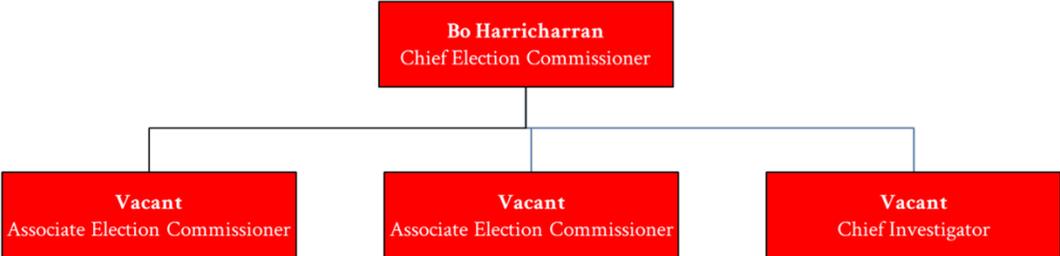
The Judicial Branch:



The Justice Department:



The Election Commission



- 3. List your unit’s strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2017-2018 academic year and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services (DSAES) Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate (links below). Please comment on your success in achieving these strategic initiatives/action steps. If a strategic initiative/action step changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new strategic initiatives/action steps, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these items.**

Mental Health:

Main Goals:

- Improve efficiency of service within the Counseling and Psychological Services Department
- Establish new, permanent location for the Counseling and Psychological Services Department
- Get University of Houston to hire additional C.A.P.S. Counselors
- Lower stigma surrounding mental health
- Connect students to mental health services, if needed

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”

DSAES Strategic Goals:

- “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”
- “Recourses: Evaluate resources to identify opportunities for efficiency, improvement, and transformation... Pursue and develop resources to address identified gaps and needs... Pursue and develop resources to address identified gaps and needs.”

Success:

- “Hired four new psychologists fully funded by the University”
- “Student usage [of C.A.P.S. had] ... a record increase [of] 64%”
- “Implemented same-day walk in service for quicker service”
- “Mandatory Counseling & Psychological Services segment implemented on every syllabus”
 - From “Year in Review Student Government”, posted by 54th Student Government Administration

Parking:

Main Goals:

- Implement parking counters in order to improve efficiency of oversell rates for parking passes

University Goals:

- #6 “Resource Competitiveness: UH will build a resource base that enables it to accomplish its mission and realize its vision.”

DSAES Strategic Goals:

- “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”
- “Recourses: Evaluate resources to identify opportunities for efficiency, improvement, and transformation... Pursue and develop resources to address identified gaps and needs... Pursue and develop resources to address identified gaps and needs.”

Success:

- “Contract finalized for real-time counters coming to all garages starting Fall 2018”
 - From “Year in Review Student Government”, posted by 54th Student Government Administration

Free Textbooks:

Main Goals:

- Implement open-source textbooks for students

University Goals:

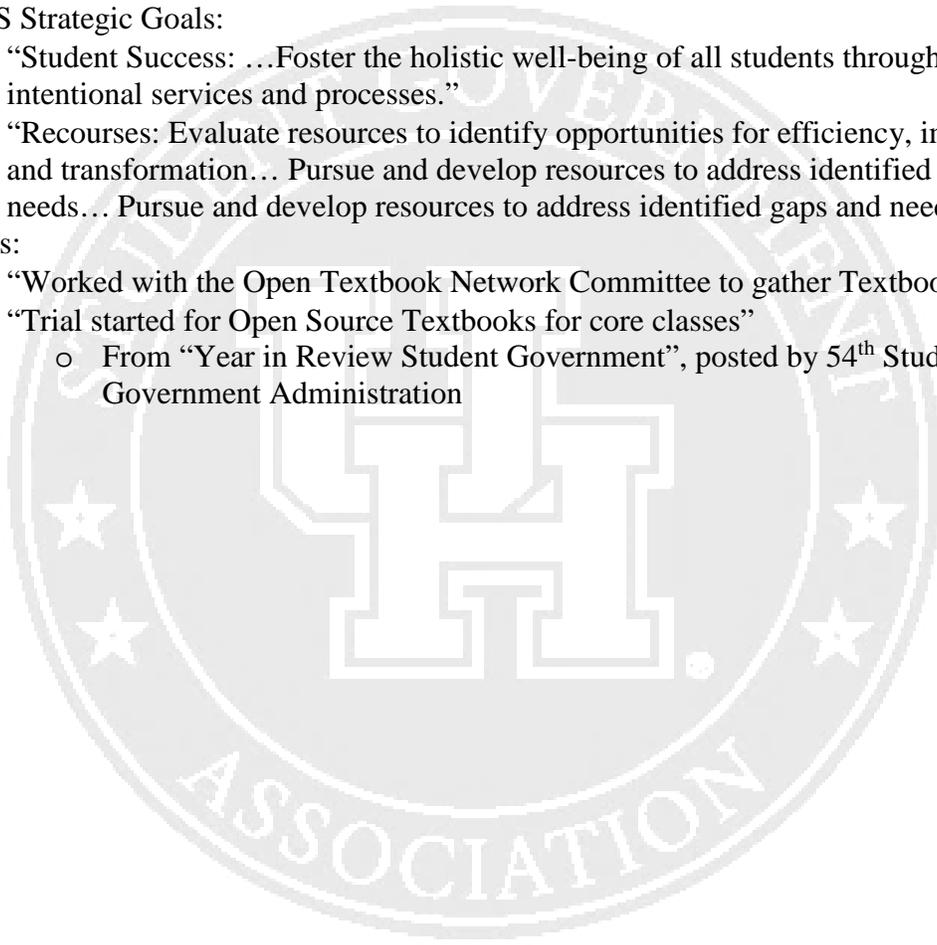
- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”

DSAES Strategic Goals:

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- “Recourses: Evaluate resources to identify opportunities for efficiency, improvement, and transformation... Pursue and develop resources to address identified gaps and needs... Pursue and develop resources to address identified gaps and needs.”

Success:

- “Worked with the Open Textbook Network Committee to gather Textbook Data at UH”
- “Trial started for Open Source Textbooks for core classes”
 - From “Year in Review Student Government”, posted by 54th Student Government Administration



- 4. Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons served by each of your programs and any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting these data. If available, please provide program benchmarking data from comparable institutions.**

The 55th Student Government attempts to capture as much production as possible. However, as is constant with Student Government, it remains a challenge to measure how effective each administration's advocacy is. "Advocacy" as a concept, the service the SGA provides, is always difficult to measure. However, the 55th Student Government took some steps to measure and/or provide transparency on every action we have taken.

Efficient turnover/turnaround:

The 55th Student Government is efficient. Rarely do we take "too long" to accomplish a goal. Deadlines are always met. Emails are always returned, and things are always put on paper, for all to see, should they desire. We appointed all SFAC members about a month "early", rarely have a Senate seat hanging for more than two weeks, and always keep our stipend positions filled. In the first meeting of the administration (three days after taking office), the entire cabinet was full, including the Speaker's office, which normally takes two or more weeks to fill.

Keeping Meetings:

The 55th Student Government Administration is fairly modular, in the sense that, if the President cannot attend a meeting, the Vice-President, Chief of Staff, Speaker, etc., will attend in their place. This has allowed our Student Government to be more present and representative than recent years.

Putting things on paper:

The 55th Student Government encourages all members to negotiate their initiatives with the relevant administrators, and, when achieving their goals, taking an extra week or two, writing a bill, and informing the Senate of their finalized initiative through legislation. Legislation does not have direct impact, but it serves two big purposes: (1) it allows the Senate/Public to be informed on what exactly we are working on/have accomplished, and (2) it allows for feedback, which can potentially make one's policy more targeted/effective. The Food Inclusion Act is a prime example of this, where originally the bill only included halal/kosher options, but many vegetarian/vegan members of the SGA expressed their concerns, and were able to alter the bill, be part of those meetings, and receive a better deal for their specific demographic.

Concrete numbers:

Despite all of this, there are some things we can measure, as a Student Government. We have put on several programs from April 1st to this questionnaire being submitted.

The Student Government in the first six weeks of the administration put on a couple of tabling events. One was a simple meet and greet, where we set-up in Student Center Plaza, where eighty-one (81) students attended, spoke with us, told us about themselves, etc. The Student Government also put on an event from 11PM-12:30AM, where we gave out Cinnabon to students studying late in the library, preparing for finals in early-May. Ninety-Five (95) students attended this.

We have also made a big voter registration push this administration. At the time of the October 9th deadline (to register to vote) we alone have registered around Seven-Hundred Seventy-Seven (777) students. We were a big part of a large collaborative voter registration drive on September 25th, involving the Student Government, the Graduate College of Social Work, and several Voter Registration organizations. This event recorded 252 students, and registered 411 students alone.

Additionally, after the Santa Fe school-shooting, the Student Government organized a blood drive, in partnership with several Fee-Funded organizations, performance artists, and the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center, to collect 22 donations, which is estimated to effect/save up to 66 people.



- 5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2019) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections.**

Budget Controls/Transparency:

The 55th Student Government saw the need for more strict budget controls, so the President advocated, and passed, a more rigid, transparent, and controlled Student Government Budget. This included a few strict budget rules: (1) a minimum of 10% of the controllable budget will go towards Senate Initiatives, (2) a minimum of 14% of the controllable budget will go towards the Election Commission, and (3) no more than 10% of the budget will go towards travel-related expense. The new rules also gave The Chief Election Commissioner and Speaker the executive authority over their respective budgets.

This has allowed for a more efficient and fair budgeting process, where the President can no longer control other Office's budgets.

New Positions:

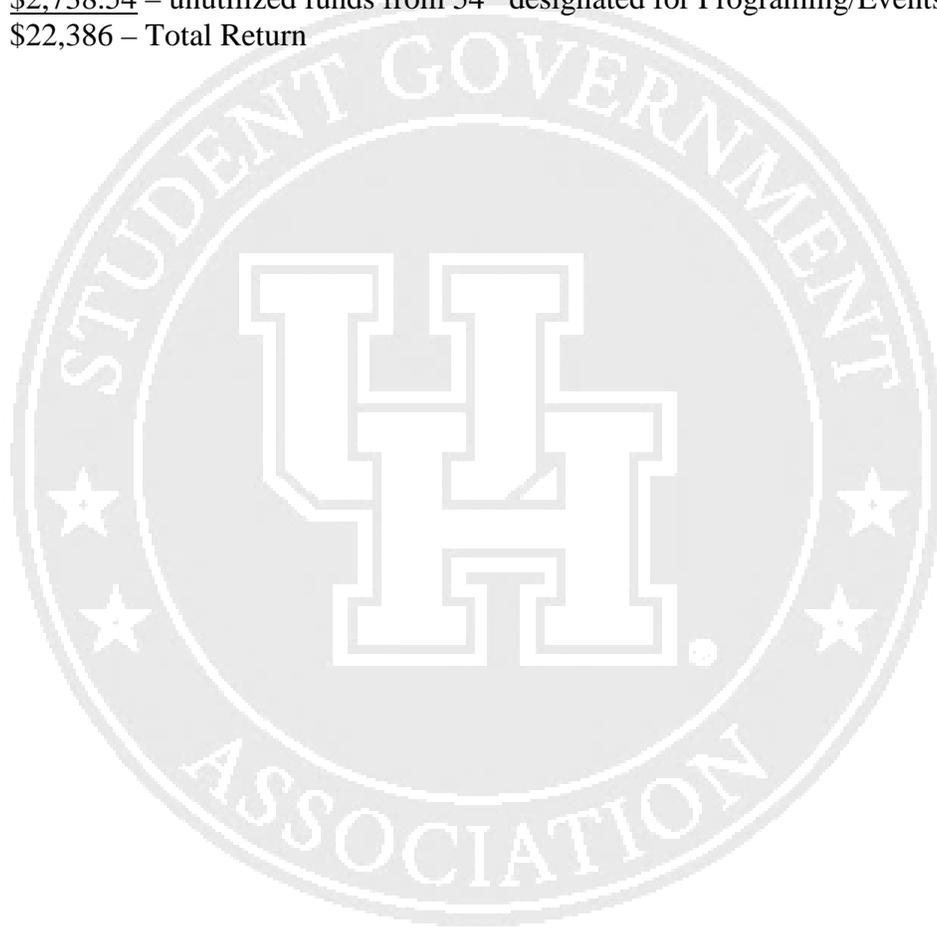
The Director of Outreach replaced the Director of Research. The Director of Outreach was created with the mindset that many organizations, unfortunately, only hear from the Student Government every eleven months, coinciding with the annual Student Government Elections. The Director of Outreach's job is to attend organizations' events, meetings, etc., and provide an ear for them to explain their issues and feel a more constant SGA presence outside of Election season.

The Executive Assistant also replaced the Deputy Chief of Staff. This position is more generic and provides support to the rest of the office. Instead of only assisting the President, they are the assistant of the entire office, while working on their own initiatives in the meantime.

6. **If your unit concluded FY2018 with a Fund 3 addition to Fund Equity in excess of \$5,000, please describe the conditions which caused the addition and provide a line item identification of the budgetary source(s) of the addition (i.e. lapsed salary, conference travel, etc.).**

The Student Government's experienced a period of around two months where we did not have an Office Coordinator. Therefore, we were not paying that position's salary or benefits at that time. There were also several positions unfilled from the 54th administration as well as residual money from programming/events.

\$10,223 – lapsed salary from the Office Coordinator position vacancy
\$9,424.46 – unfilled positions from 54th administration
\$2,738.54 – unutilized funds from 54th designated for Programing/Events
\$22,386 – Total Return



- 7. Please list your 2019-2020 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) that you intend to implement to accomplish your stated initiative.**

Overview:

All Student Governments run on a platform, some more unique than others. Typical themes for many past Student Governments Administrations and/or Student Government Parties include, but are not limited to: Better Parking, Better Textbook Prices/Schemes, Better Health Services, Better Advising, Better Food Services, etc. This makes it difficult to expand on FY20 goals because each administration comes with a more or less unique platform, completely dependent on the outcome elections, so the FY20 goals will be determined, largely, after the Spring 2019 Student Government Election. However, I have included the FY19/55th Administration's larger goals.

Food Insecurity/Homelessness:

Main Goals:

- Look into opening a sustainable Food Pantry to students
- Provide reduced or free meal plans to homeless students
- Provide additional housing aid to homeless students

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”

DSAES Strategic Goals:

- “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”

Action Steps:

- Work with on-campus partners to consolidate efforts and place a food pantry on campus
- Work with Auxiliary Services and the Department of Financial Aid in order to facilitate and manage the long-term process of providing low-cost meal plans to homeless students
- Work with relevant on-campus partners to give homeless students priority designation for the Cougar Experience Scholarship (a housing scholarship)

Providing a Safer Campus:

Main Goals:

- Implement a program to escort students from more precarious places on campus back to their cars or residence halls.
- Expand “Take Back the Night” to once a semester

University Goals:

- #2 “Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.”

DSAES Strategic Goals:

- “Student Success: ...Foster the holistic well-being of all students through coordinated, intentional services and processes.”

Action Steps:

- Work with Administration and Finance in order to schedule and hire several paid positions for the Cougar Pack (the safe-walk program developed by Vice-President Mendoza Darusman)
- Work with Chief Moore and UHPD Public Relations to establish a once per semester Take Back the Night event.



8. Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2020 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the new base budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5% in your total FY2020 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.

The Student Government would be greatly, and negatively, impacted by a 5% budget cut. The FY 19 budget SFAC allocated the Student Government is a base of \$150,452, meaning a 5% budget cut would total \$7522.60. However, this only comes out of our discretionary budget. Our, current, discretionary budget, as a result of several, previous, Presidents requesting a cut, is at a modern-day low of \$33665.00. This means a 5% cut in our budget would actually be realized as an over 22% cut in the money we get to spend to provide things for students directly. A Student Government discretionary budget of \$26,142.40 would likely mean one or more of the following:

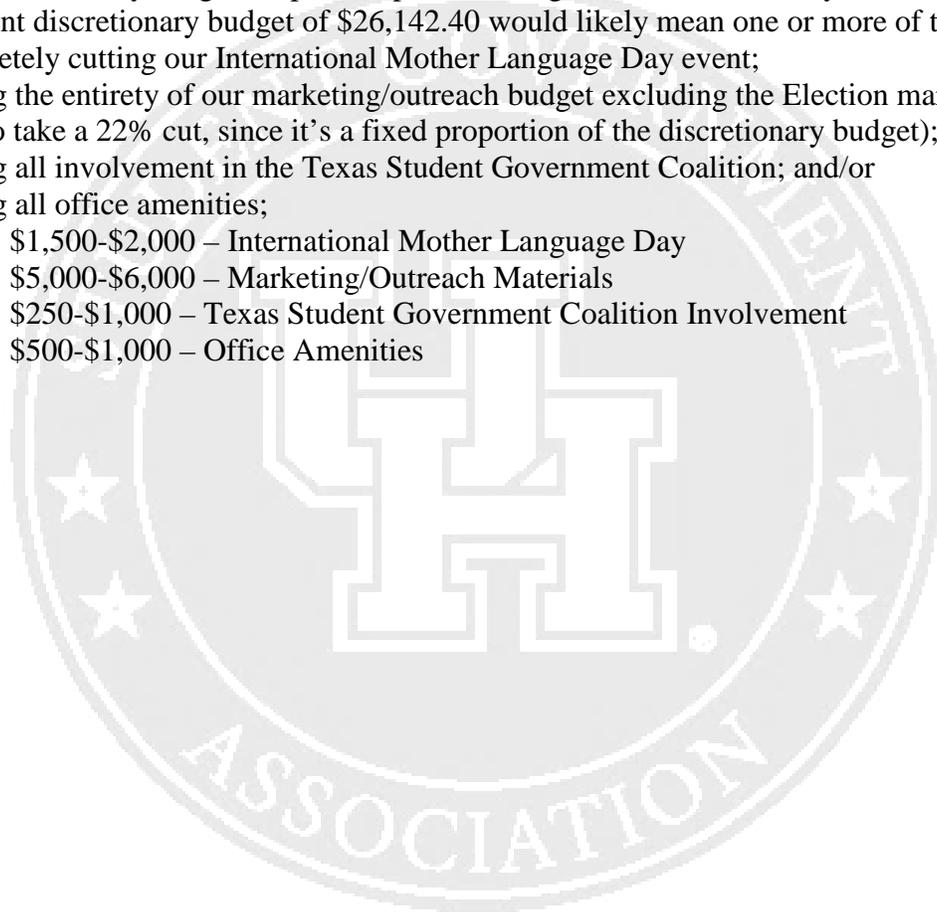
- (1) Completely cutting our International Mother Language Day event;
- (2) Cutting the entirety of our marketing/outreach budget excluding the Election marketing (which would also take a 22% cut, since it's a fixed proportion of the discretionary budget);
- (3) Cutting all involvement in the Texas Student Government Coalition; and/or
- (4) Cutting all office amenities;

\$1,500-\$2,000 – International Mother Language Day

\$5,000-\$6,000 – Marketing/Outreach Materials

\$250-\$1,000 – Texas Student Government Coalition Involvement

\$500-\$1,000 – Office Amenities



- 9. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.**

The Student Government receives no other sources of funding, other than Student Fees. The only other source of funding we have some experience with is small monetary and/or equipment donations from organizations/people generous enough to give. These are sporadic and inconsistent, and did not happen in the previous fiscal year.



10. Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.

We are very aware and sensitive of potential overlap between the Student Government and other fee-funded units. We attempt to collaborate with other fee-funded units, supplementing anything they need, without obviating the need for their unique services.

The Student Government does not, currently, overlap with any other unit's service, outside of voter registration efforts. This is a good thing, however, because it takes a massive effort to register all students on a campus of our size.

