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Program assisting students of color receives substantial cuts

By Ludella Awad (<https://www.dailylobo.com/staff/ludella-awad>) Published 01/10/18 9:30pm

SFRB Funding to PNMGC	
Fiscal Year	SFRB Funding
2003-04	\$7,500
2004-05	\$10,500
2005-06	\$7,500
2006-07	\$7,500
2007-08	\$17,881
2008-09	\$17,881
2009-10	\$25,928
2010-11	\$31,000
2011-12	\$34,443
2012-13	\$64,443
2013-14	\$73,931
2014-15	\$74,000
2015-16	\$56,000
2016-17	\$50,160
2017-18	\$9,907
2018-19	\$5,000

The Project for New Mexico Graduates of Color seeks to assist students of color on their path to graduating. Recently, the organization's funding has been nearly cut in half, based on the University of New Mexico Student Fee Review Board's decision on Dec. 12, 2017.

From the 2017-2018 fiscal year, PNMGC was granted \$9,907 — for the upcoming fiscal year, the organization will be granted \$5,000, according to information distributed during a Board of Regents meeting in December.

PNMGC is no stranger to budget cuts, as the group has faced major funding decreases since the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

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This data was provided in an information packet on SFRB during a BOR meeting.

"In 2014, PNMGC was fully funded (with) \$75,000, last year (nearly) \$10,000 and this year \$5,000," said PNMGC mentor and Ph.D. candidate Andrea Abeita during a speech at the BOR meeting. "That is not only criminal, but is unethical."

SFRB is a student committee, composed of both graduate and undergraduate students, including ASUNM President and SFRB Vice Chair Noah Brooks, that allots funding to many organizations on campus. SFRB has funded PNMGC for 17 years, according to a speech given at the BOR meeting.

Each year SFRB opens application submissions, which is when organizations apply for annual funding, Brooks said. After the applications are processed, each organization that applied will attend a hearing. A three-day deliberation period follows.

The funding allocated to each group comes from annual mandatory student fees, he said.

The largest PNMGC reduction happened last year and the board made a decision to cut because they thought there were duplication services among PNMGC, according to Brooks. Duplication services refers to when multiple organizations fulfill the same role.

SFRB gave recommendations to PNMGC, such as finding full-time funding outside SFRB, but the board felt the organization did not follow them, he said.

Brooks said that a decrease in funding can be attributed to many factors, including a lowering enrollment rate.

"Sometimes on SFRB, really hard cuts have to be made, because we have a lack of funding, so I urge students of anywhere across campus to apply to be a part of SFRB," Brooks said. "Overall all units were treated fairly and equally."

PNMGC has served hundreds of students from a variety of backgrounds through different workshops, scholarships, networking and guidance, according to Abeita.

More funding for PNMGC could mean more funding for programs for project assistance, scholarships, faculty of color awards and planning for materials, but due to these funding cuts, there are now spending limitations, according to Edith Sanchez-Saenz, graduate student and PNMGC graduate project assistant.

"Since (funding) has been reduced, we have cut food, so we mainly use it for scholarships and for (our) salaries," Sanchez-Saenz said.

"I feel that PNMGC is so important, because it really does represent a lifeline. This is a place you can go when you're bawling, because your papers are due, you feel overwhelmed, you don't have any money or sleep and you just need a hug," Abeita said.

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