

Last November, I went to SFPIRG to find resources around grassroots organizing. I wanted to know how groups of people with different work schedules, life experiences, and skill sets can get together and be effective in making change. I wanted to apply those ideas to help student unions be more effective in serving their members' needs better. I went to SFPIRG because the SFSS doesn't have those resources. And, I don't think they ever will because they lack the capacity and desire to be public advocates for students. When you consistently budget more on events than advocacy (2:1 this year), that tells you what the SFSS values. I guess it's more important to throw a party for 10% of the student population than fight for lower tuition for everyone.

SFPIRG staff were able to find me relevant resources and gave me useful advice to start me on the right path. Their resource library is quite extensive and I wish I had gone to them sooner as they have resources on issues that are dear to me like network neutrality, open data, etc. In fact, I believe that SFPIRG could be an effective ally for SFSS advocacy efforts and vice versa. Which is why I'm disappointed (but not surprised) by the board's decision to exclude them from the SUB. By being in a central student space like the SUB, SFPIRG could provide students interested in various social causes the resources, knowledge, and connections the SFSS lacks. The SFSS is not the be all and end all of student organization and support on campus. They can and should be allying with different groups to provide programs and services that "improve the undergraduate student experience". I understand the SFSS board wants to prioritize student unions and clubs, and they do need dedicated space, but as an ex-board member who served in a BuildSFU working group, the Student Union Building was never designed for that purpose. There are 300 clubs and 30+ student unions. Having them vie for four(!) spaces every year is stupid. The SUB was designed to provide those groups with lots of bookable meeting and event space, and that's about it. If the SUB was supposed to house student unions and clubs, it needed to be 2x the current size. No, those four spaces should be used to house organizations that offer students new services and opportunities.