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SGA PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO SPAIN PAID FOR WITH STUDENT MONEY

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Student Government Association President Antonios Avramidis was the sole beneficiary of \$2,200 of student money to subsidize his travel expenses for a spring break trip to southern Spain with Penn State Harrisburg.

According to Professor Jose Vargas-Vila, who is the Spanish Club adviser and was on the trip to Spain, and SGA financial documents provided to The Capital Times by SGA Treasurer Jacqueline Daniels, Avramidis was the sole beneficiary of \$2,200 for the trip from the SGA through a budget proposal submitted to the SGA finance committee by the Spanish Club.

Program participant Maresa McNeill reported the total cost of

the trip at \$2,400.

The Capital Times has not verified how the remaining \$200 of Avramidis's balance was paid for.

Spanish Club President James Speed, also a writer for The Capital Times, said he never requested the funds for the club and was unaware of the allocation.

When approached, Avramidis refused to comment directly on the funding he received; however, he directed The Capital Times to Student Court Chief Justice Eisler who also serves as treasurer of the Spanish Club. Eisler did not have a comment on the situation.

Two other students were awarded

a reported \$950 each through the university and a private donor, according to McNeill, one of the recipients.

In order to receive a large portion of their funding, clubs submit budgets each semester for major anticipated expenditures. A finance committee made up of senators picked by the senate leader considers the budgets and provides a broken-down budget recommendation to the senate for final approval.

According to SGA Adviser Donna Howard, the finance committee for the spring 2009 semester met at 10 p.m. shortly after budgets were turned in. Howard was not present at the meeting.

The finance committee later

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Photo courtesy of ANTONIOS AVRAMIDIS

Student Government Association President Antonios Avramidis

Student involved in confrontation with Spanish police

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Penn State Harrisburg students John Gronski and Ryan Strohm were involved in a confrontation with police in Spain over spring break on a trip with the university.

On March 6, a group of 19 students, faculty and other participants departed from Harrisburg, Pa., for a weeklong trip though southern Spain as part of a Penn State University international program.

A small group of students began drinking alcoholic beverages at an airport bar in Philadelphia, Pa., before boarding their

connecting flight to Paris, according to program participant Maresa McNeill. PSH Professor Jose Vargas-Vila said he reprimanded the students who had been drinking for loud and rude behavior on their flight.

The group was reminded there were "ladies and children" on the flight and to abide by a "code of conduct," said Vargas-Vila.

The students agreed and the remainder of the two plane rides and subsequent 10-hour bus trip went smoothly, according to Vargas-Vila.

Students reportedly drinking at bar before fleeing police; group avoids charges and having to leave hotel and city

Upon arriving at the first location of the trip, Sevilla, Spain, the group split into two parties. The first group consisted mostly of older attendees and Vargas-Vila and the second group was primarily of the younger students on the trip, said McNeill and Vargas-Vila.

According to Kathryn Berger, a student who was on the trip, the second group ventured to one of the local bars where Vargas-Vila believes the heaviest drinking of the night occurred.

Don Holtzman, senior director of student affairs and enrollment, confirmed he received reports of students drinking on the trip to Spain.

The legal drinking age in Spain is 18; however, all students participating in the trip agreed to abide by Penn State University Policy, which states the possession and consumption of alcohol is "subject to the laws of the Commonwealth (of Pennsylvania)."

Vargas-Vila was told by students

on the trip that throughout the night, some members of the group left the bar and returned to the hotel.

According to Vargas-Vila, at approximately 1 a.m. the Sevilla police attempted to stop the remaining group of students at the bar for a routine identification check. The remaining students ran from the police except for Ryan Strohm and John Gronski.

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