The Pokémon League #3005

January 24, 2014

Student Services Fee Request for the 2014 - 2015 Academic Year

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“We acknowledge that the Fee Committee does not award actual dollars, but rather a penny fee that earns dollars based upon student enrollment levels. Any differences between anticipated and actual income resulting from changes in enrollment are the responsibility of the student organization, not of the Fee Committee.”

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Is your organization an IRS 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit? Yes_______  No  X
If yes, please provide proof of your organization’s 501(c)(3) status.

Funds are being requested for (check all that apply):

General Operating Support:  X  Start-Up Costs:  X  Capital:

Project / Program Support:  X  Technical Assistance:  
Other (List):

Budget

- SSF Dollar Amount Requested  $5635.00
- Total Annual Organization Budget  $9041.86
- Total Program Budget (apart from General Operating)  $5205.00
Important Note: All Student Services Fee applications will be evaluated using the Guidelines for Decision-Making found on pages 20-21 of the Student Services Fee Handbook. It is critical for your application to address these guidelines in your written application. Please reference/describe how your organization meets particular/applicable guidelines in Section 1, Section 3 and/or Section 5 of the written portion of your application and in your program breakdown included in the SSF budget worksheet.

Section 1: Narrative
Describe your organization’s relationship with organizations of like mission

The Pokémon League is interested in working with other student groups that share similar interests and goals. The group was sponsored by Pokémon Showdown during the fall of 2013 and both cross-promoted and helped plan events with the Minneapolis Pokémon DS League. Currently, there are plans in the works to host a Pokémon Convention on campus in conjunction with the Minneapolis Pokémon DS League in September of 2014. The officers have talked to Glitch Gaming (#2556) about co-hosting events, since both groups are related to video games, and The Pokémon League will partner with SUA to co-host the 90’s Theme Night in the Saint Paul Student Center. Other ideas that the group is excited to try include working with the Yu-Gi-Oh club (#2547) to learn more about other collectable card games and anime from the 90’s as well as working with the Manga and Anime Society (#502) to watch some of the Pokémon anime.

Brief summary of organization history, including date of establishment

In the summer of 2012, the group started off with 6 students with a common interest in Pokémon. Surprisingly, despite the fact that groups like Glitch Gaming, Yu-Gi-Oh, Manga and Anime Society existed at the time at the University, there wasn’t a group dedicated to Pokémon. Pokémon is more than the sum of its parts: video games, the trading card game, TV show, movies; it is a subculture. It has a dedicated community of loyal fans that have been active since their childhood. To create an outlet on campus for this subculture, the six students decided to step up and establish an environment where students, members of the University community, and others could gather to discuss anything related to Pokémon. It started with a Facebook group, flyers and chalk, and word of mouth. The students reached out in as many ways as they could to bring in as many new faces as they could. Painting the Washington Avenue bridge panel was a huge success and made the group’s presence known. The first meeting was mostly getting to know each other. The major focus was and still remains making members feel included by introducing everyone through a name wave at the beginning of each meeting and having icebreakers to allow people to get to know each other. Throughout our first semester, the group hosted many new event ideas and many were hits that have been repeated since. The semester ended with a Jeopardy trivia night, which has become a tradition for the group. Over winter break, the officers came up with a Pokémon themed version of the game Cards Against Humanity and made a set for the group. This became a huge hit and is used often at meetings. In the spring, to gain a greater presence on campus and get new members, Pokémon League began keeping a contact table in Coffman Union every few weeks. This practice garnered many emails for the mailing list and brought in many new members to both the Facebook group and weekly meetings. A new activity in the spring was Live Action Role Playing in the Northrop mall common area. This is a very visible and fun activity that has brought people in and raising interest in the group.

In the summer of 2013, the group remained semi-active hosting at least one event each month for members who remained in the area. These were mostly social events to maintain the group members’ new friendships over the summer break which included a picnic and a pool party. The first event of the fall semester was the largest event Pokémon League had hosted yet, an ice cream social to welcome back old members and introduce new members to the group. Over 75 students attended, and the event was a huge success. Once again the group did Paint the Bridge and created an amazing design that many praised was the best on the bridge that
year. Due to the nature of the group, there was much excitement over the newest Pokémon game that came out in October 2013. There many events to go along with it. Overall, over the last year and a half, the group has built a community that allows people to express their knowledge of and love for Pokémon as well as meet and connect within a safe space.

Illustrate the need for your organization within the University community, inclusive of how your organization meets this need

Many students at the University grew up with Pokémon, either playing the games or watching the show, and it is an important part of their childhood. Pokémon League gives students a way to share this interest with others and build valuable friendships based on a common hobby. The group provides a safe space and a small, friendly community meant to allow students to relax and get away from their studies and de-stress, something that is important for a student in maintaining their healthy academic life. This environment gives those who attend an opportunity to get to know each other and build connections beyond those made within their own colleges, which might otherwise have been very challenging given the size of the university.

Pokémon League sets itself apart from many groups because it welcomes a diverse population of fans and all levels of commitment. Pokémon League allows for members to learn from the different perspectives of other students in a casual, friendly environment. Many students of various backgrounds and interests come to the meeting each week, and whether they come to one meeting or ten meetings, Pokémon League will always present a welcoming environment with activities to do and people to do them with. While there is a planned activity at each meeting, those attending are free to just observe or find another activity. A few attendees might just want to sit and play the card game or battle each other with the Pokémon they trained on their handheld games and are not required to participate in the main event. Through the handheld games especially, all players can interact with each other in many ways by trading, teaching, and competing. Taking the span of everything that goes on at a meeting, everything is meant to encourage a relaxing experience in which members of the University community and others can de-stress, have fun, and make friends among a diverse and friendly group of people.

Detail the student benefit derived from your organization, whether or not students utilize services

Students who take part in the Pokémon League are offered many benefits by group membership. They have access to a vast pool of knowledge on all things Pokémon related since there are so many members all interested in different aspects of Pokémon. Members learn a lot from each other and Pokémon League provides the perfect place to meet and share this information. Even those who cannot attend the meetings directly can take part via the group Facebook page, and this is where a lot of information and fun things are shared as well. By providing a safe meeting place for people all with the same interests, Pokémon League also helps students make new and lasting friendships. Members bond over Pokémon and have fun and de-stress. Since Pokémon has many multiplayer aspects, such as trading and battling, Pokémon League provides a community in which to take part in these.

All students benefit from a wealth of different types of student groups on campus. The University’s diversity of student groups allow everyone to have their own place to express themselves and find friends that share their interests. The Pokémon League is open for everyone to join and come to our events, and the group is very welcoming and tries to make everyone feel included at every meeting. The group also hosts events such as Pokémon LARP-ing or picnics in common areas (the Northrop Mall) when the weather permits, and these events give the campus a fun, active feel that adds to the atmosphere of the University.
Organization mission/vision statements, inclusive of organizational goals

The Pokémon League was founded out of the need for students to meet, interact, and connect with others in the University community and beyond through the shared interest of Pokémon. As a group, meetings encompass all of the various aspects of Pokémon from the trading card game to the video games to the online community, and to the nostalgic discussions of the TV show and movies most grew up with. Pokémon League does this through hosting different types of events throughout the semester. One of the group’s popular events is game night where members participate in playing Pokémon themed board games. As a result, members are able to experience and enjoy a new aspect of Pokémon they never tried before. Pokémon League also host trading card game nights, where members are able to borrow and build decks from the group’s set of Pokémon card, and tutorials of how to play the card game are given at the beginning of the meeting. Members are also encouraged to expand their knowledge of Pokémon by learning through discussion with other members. The most important goal of the group is to provide a friendly, welcoming, and safe environment for students to express and embrace their passion while also alleviating stress accumulated throughout the semester. Pokémon League has become a community where students can build friendships based on a shared enthusiasm for Pokémon. The group’s mission is simple: to be the very best like no one ever was.

Describe student involvement within your organization

The diversity of backgrounds within the group allows for engaging conversations about Pokémon to take place while also encouraging socializing between members to build lifelong friendships. Some members arrive with expertise within a certain field of Pokémon, others better rounded, and still others with no expertise but are still fond of Pokémon. The Pokémon League encourages members to share their knowledge of Pokémon with others and teach fellow comrades how to create strategic Pokémon teams for competition, how to EV/IV train Pokémon in order to maximize their power, how to breed Pokémon and pass down certain traits, and how to play new forms of Pokémon such as the board games.

The features of the video games themselves facilitate interactions among members such as trading, battling, and exchanging friend codes for the ability to capture new kinds of Pokémon in the Safari Zone. Events are also hosted to celebrate the upcoming release of a new game. Members share their excitement over what new aspects of the game they look forward to. Student can participate in scheduled themed tournaments during the semester as well. Themes are meant to challenge members and can vary from utilizing Pokémon from a certain generation, type, or Pokémon obtained from Wonder Trade.

The group hosts a plethora of events, not limited to the video game aspect of Pokémon, throughout the semester to introduce to members a variety of ways to enjoy Pokémon. Pokémon Live Action Role Playing (LARP-ing) where members engage in real life Pokémon battles and act as either the trainer or Pokémon. At the end of every fall semester, two rounds of Pokémon Jeopardy are organized, and members can test their knowledge of Pokémon related trivia. Members are split up into two different teams and work together in their team to come up with the correct answer. Students are encouraged to use their imagination during the “Make your own Pokémon” event. Students work in small groups to design their very own Pokémon down to every detail such as type, name, weaknesses, its location, cry (unique Pokémon sound), evolutions, dimensions, and Pokédex entry. Pokémon Evolution Game: Starting with an simple image of a Pokémon, a person tries to replicate and draw the Pokémon as best they can in 30 seconds. The next person then builds off the previous drawing and tries to copy it in less than 30 seconds. The person who is drawing can only see the most recent drawing, so the original Pokémon becomes completely unrecognizable as it “evolves”. The succession of “evolutions” continues throughout the duration of the meeting, and at the end the meeting, the evolution of the Pokémon is unveiled for all the members to see. Pokémon Cards Against Humanity has been one of the most innovative and important parts of game night. It has provided endless nights of laughter and priceless memories among members of the group, and a very good ice breaker for new members. The Pokémon version of this card game was created by the officers who were inspired by the original Cards Against Humanity game. Cards Against Humanity is essentially the “adult” version of Apples to Apples.
The Pokémon League’s Facebook group started as a means of communication among members, but has expanded into an online forum and community where members can participate in the Pokémon League without having to come to weekly meetings. This is particularly convenient for students who are often busy or have conflicting schedules. Members generally submit interesting, funny, cool, or touching images, comics, videos, news, and other related Pokémon miscellany to share with others which continues to build on the sense of belonging and community within the group. More importantly, a Facebook group for Pokémon League makes it easier for members to stay connected and maintain friendships as opposed to having a separate website which can be more easily forgotten or overlooked by potential members. The main purpose of the Facebook group is to post important updates about upcoming events, evaluation surveys, and polls and allow members to voice their opinions, questions, and concerns about the group.

Section 2: Organizational Chart

Section 3: Performance report

- At the very first meeting of the group fall 2012, about 20 people, outside of the officers, showed up. It was a budding club, but many shared an interest in forming a Pokémon Club. Meetings that semester typically ranged from 14-15 members outside the officers.

- While relatively small, there was a diverse crowd of Pokémon lovers ranging from people who battle competitively and play the trading card game and have actually entered Nintendo’s Video Game Championships and local tournaments to those who like to just like to discuss their favorite Pokémon.

- In the spring 2012, numbers rose to 18-20 per meeting as students who had heard of the group planned accordingly to attend meeting times. The highest turnout occurred during retro gaming night with about 25 in attendance.

- In fall of 2013, the group held their first ice cream social and had over 75 in attendance, gaining a few more prominent members, including one person that runs the Minneapolis DS League. Following the event, meetings consisted of more new core members who attended consistently.
As of Spring 2014, there are 157 contacts on our e-mailing list, 127 members in the Facebook group, and 73 likes on the open community page (allows members not within the University to stay updated).

Quotes about Pokémon League from members

“Great group of people ranging from all different walks of life, majors, but with one common thing connecting us all...”

“It’s been a great way for me to meet new people as a transfer student, since when I got here I had a hard time connecting with other people outside those I already knew.”

“I always love Pokémon Jeopardy, especially when my team is named after me.”

Section 4 Reserve Accounts

The Pokémon League does not have any reserve accounts. However, as of the beginning of Spring Semester 2014, Pokémon League has a group checking account with a balance of $357.52.

Section 5 Fees Request

Since this is the first year that Pokémon League is applying for Student Services Fees, and the group is still fairly new, some of the items in the request are one time startup costs. For example, the group would like to start a gym leader program in the group where members can challenge gym leaders and earn badges. The group plans on buying a button maker and supplies to make the badges. Furthermore in order to increase the variety of activities available during game night, the group is requesting money for Pokémon themed board games and a Nintendo Wii with Pokémon games and controllers. Many of the Pokémon themed board games are out of print and difficult to find, so they are also very expensive. Other expenses include money to help pay for food at meetings, advertising costs, including printing Pokémon business cards for contact purposes, and supplies for specific events, group t-shirts, and a locker in Coffman Union to store contact table materials. Member contributions are used to help pay for food. Meetings run during dinner time, and without food at meetings, the group would lose membership attendance because people would have to choose between Pokémon League and eating dinner. Other sources of income in the past have included MSA operational grants and SUA event grants. Student Services Fees will partially fund these expenses, but the Pokémon League will reach out to other grant sources both internal and external as well as other means of fundraising to help pay for food and entertainment.

Pokémon Convention

The Pokémon League, partnering with the Minneapolis Pokémon DS League is planning to host a large convention in September of 2014. The convention will comprise of a dealer room and an artist alley where attendees can purchase Pokémon artwork, plushies, and other merchandise. Activities will include a gaming room where attendees can play various Pokémon video games on different platforms. There will also be tournaments for the video games, trading card game, and online simulation. Another event will be guest speaker panels where attendees and the guest speaker will have discussions and Q&A session. The convention will take place in third floor of Coffman on Saturday and Sunday the 20th and 21st of September. Reservations of a majority of the available spaces on the third floor of Coffman Union, including the Mississippi room, will be made. For the entire length of the convention, the total cost of reservation for the Mississippi room is estimated to be $990. The group is currently discussing special discount rates with Coffman reservations staff. With the help of the Minneapolis Pokémon DS League, a group experienced with conventions and specifically, our contact the President of the Minneapolis Pokémon DS League. He personally has many years of organizing conventions and is on staff for many
conventions, such as Anime Detour and Anime Fusion, throughout the year. With his guidance, the help members of his group, as well as volunteers from the Pokémon League, the event will be a huge success.

Other costs of the convention include food for staff and volunteers throughout the convention ($300 for sandwiches and ramen), food for the speakers that we plan to bring in to the convention ($200 budget for the 2 days), costs of advertising ($400 for an ad in the Daily and $200 for fliers, chalk, and staples), travel budget for the speakers ($800 for potential airfare, gas money, or honorarium for 3 speakers), hotel costs for two nights for the speakers ($150 a night for two nights for three speakers = $900), T-shirts to distinguish staff ($200), printing pamphlets that contain information about the convention and the surrounding area such as where local restaurants are ($100), printing badges ($100) that will be used for admission and proof that people have paid and belong at the convention, equipment ($200 for power strips, adapters, and other cables), and an emergency fund ($200) to help pay for last minute things that we cannot predict in advance.

Only part of the cost of the convention (about half) will be paid for with student services fees. The rest will be paid for with the money from badge purchases from attendees. The badges will cost $15 if paid in advance or $20 after a certain time (to be determined). The convention will draw at least 150 expected attendees, but the event could be larger if well advertised, which the Pokémon League has shown it is good at in the past.

Section 6: External Funding

Pokémon League is a fairly new group and is still establishing itself in the community. Over the past two years the group has been supported by group members, and later on also by some event and operational grants. The Pokémon League has applied for and received SUA event grants and MSA operational grants in the last year. Other sources of income have been member contributions. This has helped subsidize food at meetings, something that is important to maintaining our membership at meetings since our events run through dinner time. The operational expenses of the group, however, have grown beyond what can be met by MSA grants and member contributions, so the Pokémon League is reaching out to Student Services Fees in order to help meet these needs. A consistent source of funding, such as Student Services Fees, is vital to set the foundations of the Pokémon League in order for it to continue thriving as an active student group for many years to come.

The group is always trying to create and host innovative events. With additional funding, the group plans to host larger scale events such as a scavenger hunt and a Pokémon convention. These events will help expand the group and its presence on campus. The Pokémon League provides a strong community value to the student body and campus as a whole. Pokémon League has yet to receive Student Services Fees, but if the requested budget is granted, then Student Services Fees will make up 62.3% of the group’s total budget.