Statement on Excess Funds
College Council Executive Board
March 11, 2019

Since the publishing of the March 6th, 2019 Williams Record article “CC discovers accounting oversight, to reallocate $225,000 into budget,” conflicting narratives about the source and purpose of this surplus have spread.

We, the College Council Executive Board, would like to both apologize for not conveying this information in a clearer manner and also outline the cause of this oversight and our plan to correct it.

As many of you know, the Student Activities Tax (SAT) is a $121 charge collected every semester from each student. The revenue from this money (approximately $230,000 each semester) forms the base of our budget each year, to be distributed to student organizations, individuals, and all-campus events.

The second key component of our budget each year is rollover. Contrary to popular belief, rollover spending is not money that has not been allocated by CC. In fact, we spend our funds down to the last dime, trying to equitably and fairly distribute money. Thus, the name “rollover” is sort of a misnomer.

Rollover originates when money is allocated to student groups and then some portion of that allocation is not spent. For example, a group may request $1000 for an event which ends up only costing $800. The extra money, in this case $200, stays in that groups’ account.

We cannot take back allocated money from student accounts, so across the span of over 300 accounts, small amounts of money add up to large sums, typically $50,000 to $90,000. This money is collected from these accounts at the end of the Spring and dumped back into our General Fund at the beginning of Fall. Thus, “rollover” consists of funds that we allocated to student groups who for whatever reason did not spend them.

This is the vein of the 225k in excess funds that was reported on by the Record. At the end of the 2016 fiscal year, this money appeared in the SAT allocation fund. As the amount is roughly the size of a semesterly SAT allocation, past Treasurers simply treated it as a semester’s worth of money that should not be touched. Upon further
inspection, Treasurer Jamie Vaccaro ‘21 along with the College Controller’s office realized this was not the case, and thus this week’s events have been set in motion.

There is no singular cause of this error. An explanation would begin with a lack of clear procedure, student oversight, and financial negligence. As student representatives, we have failed in this manner. We cannot state for sure why exactly this problem arose, but we can state in clear terms our plan to both remedy the current situation and make sure it never happens again.

The plan for the excess funds, currently approximately $225,000, is as follows:
1) We have already added $20,000 to this year’s General Fund, to be subsidized by this surplus.
2) We will add $75,000 to our accounts for the academic year 2019 - 2020.
3) We will add $70,000 to our accounts for the academic year 2020 - 2021.
4) We will add $60,000 to our accounts for the academic year 2021 - 2022.

This plan spreads out the money over a period of 3 years, ensuring that no one year is particularly bloated with funds, which would destabilize future years as student groups would request more money than we are able to give. We understand that we cannot please everyone, but we hope that by sticking to this clear schedule we can both fulfill our mission of funding student groups in the most effective ways and balance the changing needs of the Williams Student Body.

In terms of the future, Treasurer Jamie Vaccaro is establishing clear end-of-year procedures that will prevent this sort of error from happening again. Such procedures include very clear accounting and labeling of funds, working closely with the Controller’s office to ensure a smooth transition between years, and informing the Student Body of all important developments that necessitates their knowledge.

Again, we would like to reassure the Student Body about our plan for the spending of this unexpected surplus and apologize for our lack of communication on this issue until now. It is our pleasure to serve as your College Council.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns – about this statement, the surplus, or any other issues, please contact either Co-President, Ellie Sherman (eas6), Olivia Tse (cot1), or Solly Kasab, VP for Communications (sk17). And of course, best of luck to all on their midterms.