

“What’s in a fee”

As tuition rates have vastly increased over the last few decades, hidden fees are something that students can no longer be left in the dark about by universities and colleges. Like many other students around the United States looking at higher education, Ohio University students not only have tuition costs, but they also must contend with different fees that are categorized as broad based, academic or course related, or user charges and fines.

“We (Ohio University) have over 600 class fees among our six campuses,” said Sherry Downs, from Ohio University’s Bursar office. “New class fees and requests for increases to existing class fees are reviewed and approved each year during the University’s budget cycle.”

One of the most controversial and misunderstood of these fees is the general fee that every student must pay, whether they are undergraduate, graduate, or online students. It is considered a broad-based fee that is charged to all students to finance activities that benefit the student body.

“The general fee was something I was not told about nor informed about what it consisted of,” said first year VisCom graduate student Marlana Sloss. “When we are accepted, we are told our tuition is covered but we are responsible for fees. Of course, we know certain classes have fees, but those are normally small and we were not aware of the general fee and how much it was and what it went towards.”

When it is broken down the general fee, as of 2013, finances different campus operations. The largest portion, 34 percent, of the general fee funds much of the athletic

operations on campus. Other things funded are student affairs (20 percent), campus recreation (18 percent), and Baker University Center (16 percent). The other 12 percent goes towards the graduate student fee waiver, Halloween safety, student senate, Marching 110, resident life, and the multipurpose facility.

“The break down and how it is all split is very confusing to many,” said former president of the graduate student senate Eddie Smith. “The general fee consists of things that we do need, and it also includes things that do not seem to be necessary for academic learning. When you boil it down, it is like a government bill with bloat that will only pass when other things are added to it to make everyone happy.”

For the 2015-16 academic school year, Smith and the rest of the student senate tried to get the general fee reduced for graduate students, not eliminated. Smith and the graduate student senate, along with support from the undergraduate student senate, talked with Ohio University President Roderick McDavis on how to reduce the general fee.

The objective of Smith and the student senate was to reduce it by 50 dollars, since many of the athletic events are not attended by graduate students. “We do not have time to participate in many extra-curricular activities,” said Smith. “We are too busy with our educational pursuits.”

According to Smith, McDavis said he could not do anything about the general fee directly and it would have to be put through the general fee committee that makes recommendations to McDavis. “The committee, which is selected by President McDavis, approved and recommended the reduction of the general fee to President McDavis, but he refused to lower it,” said Smith.

After the refusal, Smith and other graduate students tried to put pressure on McDavis by holding rallies and protests in front of athletic events but had no success.

For the 2016-17 school year, the graduate student senate, under the leadership of new president Ian Armstrong, is trying a different approach. The graduate student senate is trying to make the general fee fairer and not reduce it but re-organize it. "One of the main things we can propose is to redistribute how the general fee is paid," said Armstrong.

The breakdown of the fee right now is students on campus pay 78 dollars per credit hour and online students pay three dollars per credit hour. "We just want to make the fee more fair," said Armstrong. "The students who get degrees online get the benefit of the Ohio University name and degree so they should have to pay the same as everyone else."

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