

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
Meeting Notes
April 15, 2005

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Friday, April 15, 2005 in 707 Rudder Tower. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

A draft outline of the University Fiscal Appeals Panel was distributed for review. The scope of the proposed panel pertained mainly to undergraduate students. However, some issues would include graduate students; therefore, the panel should include both graduate and undergraduates. In addition to the students, the panel would consist of faculty and a representative from each of the following: Bursar's Office, Registrar's Office, the Academic Operations Committee (AOC), and the Graduate Operations Committee (GOC). It was clarified that the AOC consists of the undergraduate associate deans of each college. Non-voting, resource members of the panel would include a representative from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities and one representative from Student Financial Aid. Members of the Council asked that a resource representative be added to the panel from Student Affairs. It was further suggested that the representatives from the Bursar's Office, Registrar's Office, AOC, and GOC be advisory, non-voting members, as well. The Council agreed that the students serving on the panel be indicative of the student population, e.g. students who pay their own tuition, students who work, students who are involved, etc. Student appointments to the panel will be made by application and chosen by the Student Body President and the President of the Graduate Student Council.

The arrangement of the panel would allow for two panels to convene, one for undergraduate appeals and the other for graduate appeals. If a student appointed to the panel submits an appeal, the student should recuse from the panel for that appeal. It is anticipated that the panel would meet two times during each of the Fall and Spring semesters: the first time would be between the 6th and 10th class day; the second meeting would be held after the 35th class day. Discussion ensued about including a time stipulation of the appeal, for example, no longer than one semester past the academic year in question. The Council decided to leave the time stipulation undetermined for the time being.

Students who wish to make an appeal must first approach the Bursar or Registrar representative who will determine if the appeal should go on to the appeals panel. A questionnaire will be developed for the students to complete upon request of an appeal. All documents pertinent to the appeal must be submitted together. All appeals will be in writing and the student will not be present during the appeal process. Therefore, current wording in the document such as "hearing" and "appear" should be changed to reflect that the appeal will be in writing only. Necessary forms for the appeal will be made available online.

Advisors will be made aware of the process as part of their advisor training. The Council suggested that a training manual be developed for the appeals panel and that the manual should include the tuition policy and the rules of appeal. Item #10 will be added to the handout which states that the decision of the appeal panel is final and no further appeal may be made. A brief statement as to the rationale of the appeal decision should be given to the student. Meticulous records will need to be kept for consistency and precedent of decisions. The question was raised

as to how staff support will be chosen for the appeals panel. A decision will be made after the chair of the panel is chosen.

Questions arose about the last paragraph of item #4 of the handout which would allow the panel full access to all records that pertain to an appeal. Some members of the Council believed full access would not be necessary if the information submitted by the student were certified by appropriate personnel. Before a final decision is made regarding access, the Office of General Counsel will be asked to review and offer input. The Office of Graduate Studies will be asked to review the draft for input on any part involving graduate students.

The Council discussed the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a refund policy for students who would take 30 semester credit hours in various combinations during an academic year, including Summer sessions, as opposed to taking 15 semester credit hours in the Fall and another 15 hours in the Spring. The majority of the students would like to see a refund policy set in place because it would likely encourage more students to take more classes during the Summer, while at the same time alleviating the burden of taking the additional hours in the Fall or Spring. One or two of the students of the Council would like for the University to move to a simple flat rate policy, which would not tie tuition to a certain number of hours. Most, if not all, other universities that have a flat rate tuition policy charge a flat rate regardless of the number of semester credit hours that a student takes in a semester. Concern was raised that a total flat tuition would not cause students to take more hours and graduate sooner. The perception of saving money by taking more classes would disappear. On the other hand, advisors will be retrained to work with students to encourage them to take more hours, stressing that it will lead to timelier graduation and tremendous cost savings. If a total flat tuition were adopted, a grace period could be offered to seniors graduating in December 2005, May 2006 and August 2006 to provide time for the students to finalize their degree plans.

It was pointed out that a refund policy of this type could have significant negative implications on the students because Student Financial Aid is paid based on the cost of the education. Therefore, if a student were to acquire a refund, it would be necessary for that student to repay a portion of the financial aid received because the cost of the education had been reduced. Additionally, a refund would likely create an additional tax burden for the student. Before the Council makes final recommendations to President Gates, it may be necessary for Student Financial Aid to make a presentation to the Council regarding the implications that a tuition rebate could create.

Income from fees can only be used in those areas in which the fee was intended, e.g. income from the library access fee may only be used for purposes of the library and a probable outcome of the increased revenue from the library access fee would be to provide 24-hour access to the West Campus Library. Students have suggested that the revenue from the computer access fee be used to increase the printing allotment. The Council was asked to think about areas that could benefit from fee income and send the chairman an e-mail with recommendations for uses for the fees.

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It needs to be clear in the Frequently Asked Questions that seniors in their last semester who have less than 15 hours left in their degree plan will not automatically be charged by the hour. They must submit an application for an exemption to the flat rate. The Council was asked to submit additional FAQ's so that they may be added to the web site.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.