



November 30, 2011

To: President Huddleston, VP Cannon, VP Rubinstein & the USNH Board of Trustees

Re: FY13 mandatory graduate student fees

On November 22, the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) reviewed the proposed FY13 mandatory fees assessed to graduate students. At this meeting, the GSS voted to approve seven of the nine proposed FY13 fees: SHARPP, Campus Recreation, Counseling, Health Services, Transportation, Technology and Dining. The lack of approval for the housing fee reflected ongoing concern over the viability of on-campus graduate student housing. While the Memorial Union Building (MUB) staff has worked to increase its relevance to graduate students, the MUB fee was not approved and the associated discussion was indicative of the general disconnect between graduate students and the MUB. Ultimately, though many of these fees were approved, there was concern over the continued reliance on mandatory fees and total cost of attendance increases to balance the UNH budget.

Foremost, **the GSS would like to commend all of the auxiliary units for their efforts to cut costs and constrain their budgets to minimal increases during USNH's current fiscal crisis.** The Central Administration's Separation Incentive Package and the associated hiring freeze were effective in limiting the need for fee increases for many labor intensive auxiliaries. In spite of the mandated increases in the general and facilities assessment rates and non-faculty salaries and fringe benefits, Health Services was able to avoid increasing their fee this year. Transportation was also able to keep their fee increase to a minimum, while increasing services because of their aggressive pursuit of external funding. That being said, we need to do better. We recommend that Transportation explore the possibility of increased revenue generation by having faculty contribute to the cost of the Wildcat Transit buses and by instituting a graduated parking permit system, where permits for central campus lots would cost more than permits for satellite lots. Many small changes such as this may be necessary to reduce the cost and increase the value of a UNH degree.

The GSS did not pass the MUB fee because many members felt that **the MUB can do more to reduce costs and increase revenues.** The MUB is often underutilized, resulting in low energy efficiency and missed opportunities for increasing revenue. In order for the MUB to become more financially sustainable, we recommend that they consider leasing more space to outside parties and converting the space necessary to make the MUB a viable conference venue. Additionally, many GSS members feel that some MUB sponsored programs are poorly attended and reductions could be made to the programming budget without affecting student satisfaction. **We recommend that future MUB cost increases be met with service reductions or non-student-fee based revenue increases.**

This is the second consecutive year that the GSS has not approved the increase in rents for Forest Park and Babcock Hall. Our reason this year is much the same as last year: **the rate of increase in the cost of on-campus housing is vastly outpacing the increase in funded and unfunded graduate student incomes.** The proposed rent increase is 4.2% for FY13 and it is difficult to support this increase without knowing that graduate student incomes will increase enough to offset this added cost. Additionally, many graduate student living on-campus are international students and cannot rely on loans or outside employment to augment their income. While UNH is exploring alternative funding models for subsidized on-campus graduate student housing through its Campus Master Plan update, these long-term changes will not help current students pay for food after they pay between 55% and 80% of their pre-tax stipend in housing costs and mandatory fees. **We recommend that the University**

administration work with UNH Housing and the Graduate School to ensure that current on-campus residents will be able to continue their degree at UNH or find alternative housing.

Concern over the total cost of attendance, UNH budget priorities and the competitive value of a UNH degree have dominated several GSS meetings this year and this concern extended to our mandatory fee discussion. Full time, full academic year fees will increase by 2.0 % from \$1,666 in FY12 to \$1,699 in FY13. This increase was modest relative to recent years; however, **full-time graduate assistants will still pay approximately 11 % of their pre-tax stipend in mandatory fees during FY13.** If the current trends in mandatory fees and graduate student compensation continue, graduate assistants will pay approximately 15% of their income in mandatory fees by 2040. This trend is not sustainable and hurts the competitiveness of our graduate programs and research efforts.

All of the auxiliary units with the exception of Technology and SHARPP attributed their cost increases to changes in the general assessment and facilities assessment rates mandated through the Responsibility Centered Management model. The GSS feels that it is difficult to justify asking academic units to cut their budgets while the budgets of the auxiliary units and Central Administration, through the growth in the general assessment rate, continue to increase. In addition, we are concerned that the increase in the general assessment for auxiliary units is a cost shifting mechanism intended to mask an increase in the total cost of attendance by allowing for a smaller increase in tuition. In the future, **students and the University as a whole may be better served by shifting the focus of the annual fee oversight discussion from a discussion of individual mandatory fees to a discussion of the total cost of attendance and budget priorities.**

Should you have any questions regarding this statement or if you wish to work with us to address the specific issues we have identified, please contact us.

Sincerely,

The UNH Graduate Student Senate

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