Student Fee Revenue Critical to Campus Infrastructure and Services

Submitted by John Carnaghi, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration
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Students enrolling at state universities pay tuition for educational instruction and they pay fees associated with various aspects of receiving that instruction or to off-set costs related to the whole campus educational experience. Projected credit-hour enrollment numbers are key to any calculation when establishing fees for specific funding purposes. However, we continue to receive requests for waivers of required fees.

The Transportation Access Fee became effective in fall term 2000 and has incrementally increased to the current $7.90 per credit hour. Fees are used for the provision of parking lots and parking lot maintenance, as well as for bus transit service on campus and around the city. The forecasted student fee revenue is essential to cover bond indebtedness for construction of parking garages, of which we will soon begin Garage Six.

The Student Facilities Use Fee was implemented fall term 2008 for the purpose of constructing/renovating campus facilities for student services. In accordance with the Student Government Association’s request, initial revenues were to be used to construct a Health and Wellness Center. The Center, operating under the oversight of Student Affairs, will allow Thagard Student Health Center, Leach Center and the College of Nursing to address serious overcrowding issues, thereby ultimately benefiting all students. When fee revenues are sufficient, revenues will be allocated for construction of a new student union as directed by the Student Government Association. A campus committee made up of students and staff will make allocations for subsequent projects. *The assessment is currently $2.00 per credit hour plus $20.00 per term assessed to all main campus students.

Exemptions or waivers of a particular fee have the effect of reducing the revenue base developed to fund a particular campus component. Realistically, dollars must be extracted from whatever statistical basis was used to set a fee and the potential for funding gaps occurs – whether it is dollars to support construction of student health-related facilities or to satisfy bond debt pertaining to construction of parking garages.

This same rationale would apply to a new Student Security Support Fee that we are considering for implementation fall term 2011 to produce additional revenue toward student safety and security services. As a result of recent legislation, University Boards of Trustees are authorized to establish a fee for security, access, or identification cards.
To prevent jeopardizing the financial support for campus infrastructure and services, we recommend that requests for waivers of university fees (Transportation Access, Student Facilities Use Fee, Technology Fee, and Student Security Support Fee) be denied effective Fall Term 2010, except as required by Florida Statute or Board of Governors Regulation, or Florida State University Regulation.

SUBMITTED AND APPROVED JULY 2010 TO THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUESTEES

Reference:

*See FL Statute 1009.24 - State university student fees. – (e)

The sum of the activity and service, health, and athletic fees a student is required to pay to register for a course shall not exceed 40 percent of the tuition established in law or in the General Appropriations Act. No university shall be required to lower any fee in effect on the effective date of this act in order to comply with this subsection. Within the 40 percent cap, universities may not increase the aggregate sum of activity and service, health, and athletic fees more than 5 percent per year, or the same percentage increase in tuition authorized under paragraph (b), whichever is greater, unless specifically authorized in law or in the General Appropriations Act. A university may increase its athletic fee to defray the costs associated with changing National Collegiate Athletic Association divisions. Any such increase in the athletic fee may exceed both the 40 percent cap and the 5 percent cap imposed by this subsection. Any such increase must be approved by the athletic fee committee in the process outlined in subsection (12) and cannot exceed $2 per credit hour. Notwithstanding the provisions of ss. 1009.534, 1009.535, and 1009.536, that portion of any increase in an athletic fee pursuant to this subsection that causes the sum of the activity and service, health, and athletic fees to exceed the 40 percent cap or the annual increase in such fees to exceed the 5 percent cap shall not be included in calculating the amount a student receives for a Florida Academic Scholars award, a Florida Medallion Scholars award, or a Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award. Notwithstanding this paragraph and subject to approval by the board of trustees, each state university is authorized to exceed the 5-percent cap on the annual increase to the aggregate sum of activity and service, health, and athletic fees for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. Any such increase shall not exceed 15 percent or the amount required to reach the 2009-2010 fiscal year statewide average for the aggregate sum of activity and service, health, and athletic fees at the main campuses, whichever is greater. The aggregate sum of the activity and service, health, and athletic fees shall not exceed 40 percent of tuition. Any increase in the activity and service fee, health fee, or athletic fee must be approved by the appropriate fee committee pursuant to subsection (10), subsection (11), or subsection (12).