

University Officials Present:

Laurie Melville – Contoller

Laura Artwell – Director of Procurement and Distribution Services

Beth Nochomovitz – Director of Auxillary Services

Laurie Melville started the forum with an introduction of an overview of the University and the responsibilities of the different offices. Mandatory items such as tuition, housing, health + tech fees fall under the supervision of the SIS system while non-mandatory fees are handled by an external system because of legacy issues. The current semester is the 1st full semester with SIS, and the general theme of the forum was stated that the SIS system needs to be stable before any other capabilities are added to it. Therefore, many issues of billing graduate students are going to have to wait a year to allow for upgrades to the system.

The format of the forum largely followed the list of questions that were generated from graduate student input (see <http://gss.case.edu/documents/2008-2009/Agendas/Agenda.10.23.08.pdf>).

Currently, there are a couple of monthly billing options available, on an application basis: TMS (Tuition Management Systems) and Tuition Made E-Z. TMS is a third party system that costs \$65 to use, and allows bills to be paid by credit card, or any other form of payment. This is basically like a loan, where TMS pays the bill immediately, and you pay TMS back every month. Tuition Made E-Z, on the other hand, is an in-house payment arrangement that allows you to pay these bills on a monthly basis. These are done only as withdrawals directly from your bank account. For further details see the Bursar's page: <http://www.cwru.edu/finadmin/controller/bursar.htm>. The applications for both programs are available on the Student Accounts Receivable page:

http://www.cwru.edu/finadmin/controller/st_ar.htm.

The issue of using a credit card to pay university bills was also discussed. Basically, credit card companies charge 2-4% for using their service. On a university-wide basis, this would mean a loss of revenue, which would have to be charged back to the students in the form of an increase of tuition and fees. The decision was to keep the usage fee so that only those using the service would pay the fee. Currently, there is an option to use a Discover card (because they charge the lowest fees) to pay your bill, but you have to pay an additional fee, which covers the money that the university has to pay the credit card company. Some graduate students insisted that adding a Visa or Mastercard option would help billing flexibility, and Laurie Melville said the decision would be reconsidered. Paypal is currently not an option due to accounting and auditing issues.

Another issue that was discussed was the classification of graduate students in the eyes of the University and government. Graduate students, as it stands, are not classified as "benefits eligible employees", as defined by the IRS rules. This restricts our access to the staff health care plan and pre-tax deductions for parking (stay tuned for a possible Human Resources forum in the future). The parking



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interface between the parking system and PeopleSoft is another upgrade to be expected in the new year that should allow extra flexibility to work towards monthly billing of graduate students. The relationship of Standard Parking and the University was clarified as in the University pays Standard Parking to manage the lots only. All other funds and decisions are internal. The fact that graduate students are not employees also prevents reimbursements from being directly deposited into our checking accounts, since the reimbursement (accounts payable) system does not interface with the student module. This is going to be investigated, but the current method is to drop by the cashier's office to see if our check has arrived. An automated email mechanism will be investigated.

There are many pre-payment options that should prevent us from having to put up our money for things like travel and conference fees. There are three university payment mechanisms: the p-card, d-card, and T&E card. See <http://www.cwru.edu/finadmin/matsupp/pdfs/pcardpolicy.pdf>. The document goes on to describe how they differ. P-cards can be used to pay conference fees up front, and the university's preferred travel agents can directly charge speedtype numbers. Larger purchases should be done with a P-Card or D-Card, and your department should be consulted on proper usage. Taxes can be reimbursed on purchases below \$75, but for purchases greater than that, we should use the university's purchasing methods to make sure that we use the university's tax exempt status. This policy of not reimbursing taxes is apparently driven by IRS rules. Additionally, IRS rules prevent graduate students from getting paid on a 12 month schedule for certain types of work. In certain cases where a purchase is made for the University, a tax-exempt form is available from the University: Certificates of Exemption are provided to vendors by the Purchasing Department upon request. The customercare_pds@case.edu email address was also offered as a way to figure out issues involving procurement and long reimbursement times. Anecdotally, long reimbursement times are an issue at the departmental level.

We are encouraged to use these travel agents (can be found on the travel website: <http://www.case.edu/finadmin/security/travel/agencies.htm>), because, though they charge a small fee, they have access to group rates that can't be found elsewhere as well have guarantees to find low fares. While many departments might not advance travel funds unless you ask, the current policies allow you to fill out the paperwork to get a travel advance to minimize financial burden.