

Appendix B

May 5, 2004

Dr. Sam Curl, Dean and Director
Division of Agricultural Sciences
and Natural Resources
CAMPUS

Dear Dr. Curl:

The Faculty Council of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources wishes to express concern with recent actions and future plans in the administration of the student Technology Fee. Proper expenditure of these funds is critical to our academic mission and we request that you present this matter to Dr. Strathe at your earliest convenience.

The technology fee system was developed to answer the many complicated issues associated with integrating new technology into the teaching program. At its heart was a desire to fairly distribute both costs and authority. A base fee is paid by all students to provide a basic service level, but Colleges such as Engineering and Veterinary Medicine could levy additional fees to ensure their students' higher demands for computing were met. Approximately one-half of the fees were retained to support general services. The remainder was passed back to the various colleges to decide how to best use the moneys in support of their programs. Until last year, a University-wide Technology Fee Committee with both student and faculty members from each college provided guidance for the general services expenditures. In fact, it is our understanding that the technology fees were initially approved only after the State Legislature was reassured that students would be given a voice in their use. This was reflected in the committee bylaws that required a quorum of the student members before any budgetary matter was approved. While a little messy, the system worked well as evidenced by the numerous improved computer labs and multimedia classrooms throughout campus, some of which were paid for with a combination of University and college funds. It is our opinion that the fees were well managed and that the students greatly appreciated these improvements.

We are gravely troubled that the Technology Fee Committee was dissolved last summer. No explanation for this action has been provided by the administration, nor have we been told of any plan to replace this function. We cannot determine how the decisions are currently being made for the expenditure of the fees. We are also troubled by reports that the allocation of money to the colleges will end and the Information Technology Division (IT) will decide all expenditures. It makes sense to keep these decisions close to the academic units, since the deans, department heads, faculty, and students are the only persons who have intimate knowledge of both the current use and future needs in the teaching programs. Why should decisions that go to the heart of our academic mission be deferred to IT staff who do not have major academic experience or responsibilities? No

supposed efficiency in purchases can possibly justify the probable weakening of academic programs.

We strongly recommend that the student technology fee committee be reestablished and the current fee structure and distribution methods be maintained. Thank you for your timely attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Marcia L Tilley, J.D.
Chair, DASNR Faculty Council

cc: University Faculty Council