

Students speak out on incidental fees

Editor's Note: It often seems that the opinions of a few active people on campus appear on these pages while the majority of students go unheard. To help rectify this, we decided to ask some randomly selected students for their opinion on a current campus topic — whether mandatory incidental fees should be used for groups that engage in "political" activities. (See related story below).

Some of the students we talked to were not familiar with the issue. Several times we had to explain much of the background and had to present, as objectively as we could, both arguments on the issue.

We admit this is by no means a scientific way of gathering opinions, and the opinions expressed do not represent the student body as a whole. Nevertheless, we do hope this offers a fresh perspective on an issue of concern to all students.



Scott Thompson

Ingrid Petersen, a sophomore majoring in journalism, says she does not agree with all the views espoused by funded groups, but believes that funding groups with a variety of views is important.

"I think keeping a broad political mind is important," she says. "It's important to have these groups on campus. You have to have these groups on campus if it's going to be a liberal arts university."

"It's like paying taxes. You can't choose all the time what your money is going to go to," she adds. "I think it's just like paying taxes and having it go the military. I don't like any of my money going to the military, but it has to go."

"There are certain groups I don't like, but they have the right to their money," says Scott Thompson, a senior in geology.

"I think it's the fairest system you can have. I think it's fair to all people and all groups."

But Thompson, who considers himself a political moderate, believes a wider range of views should be represented by student funded groups.

"I am for free speech, free expression, but when I only get one point of view funded by my money, I wish I could get both points of view," he says.

"That's never been a problem with me. I don't have a problem with where my money goes," says Andrew Johanson, a general science sophomore.

"I'm sure that anyone who wanted to start an opposing group could start it and get (incidental fee) money," he says. "Nothing's stopping them. I don't see why they should have a complaint. They would be just

as eligible as any other group."

"I don't think the average student really cares," says Karie Stradley, a junior in pre-journalism. "It's only an issue if you think it's an issue. I don't think it's worth the time and effort that it takes to fight it, to try to change it."

"Frankly, I never thought about it," says Margaret Shin, a business senior. "It is such a small percentage that I don't really care."



Margaret Shin

Shin says she has no major objections to the groups that do get student funding.

"I guess it's OK for them to use the money, as long as they don't claim they represent the whole student body."

"I don't know where it goes. I just pay the money and forget about it," says Kerry Young, a sophomore majoring in psychology and business. Young believes that he is typical of students at the University, and that most are

too busy to keep informed on many student issues.

"I don't think I should have to pay for groups that I don't necessarily agree with," says Barbara Workman, a chemistry senior. "Sure, some are doing good things, but they don't affect me."

Many of the student funded groups only appeal to specialized groups, she says, adding that it is often difficult to find out about many groups and exactly what they do.

"It doesn't seem like there's a lot of information around unless you really look for it."

"Since it's everybody's money, it should go into something everybody can benefit from," says Albert Nichols, a sophomore majoring in interior architecture. Though he says he supports many of the groups and services supported



Barbara Workman

through incidental fees, Nichols believes that SORD does not represent the views of a majority of students and "is definitely a one-way thing."

Disagreements continue over use of student mandatory fees

Each term, all students are charged a mandatory fee of \$59. Roughly half of that is used to maintain the EMU Building and its services (see chart on right). Another \$16.50 goes to the athletic department and is used to subsidize student tickets and to support women's and minor sports.

The remainder goes to support the ASUO and its programs. The ASUO Constitution gives the Incidental Fee Committee the authority to allocate incidental fee dollars. The ASUO funds more than 70 programs.

The IFC is a seven-member committee elected by the student body each spring. The IFC determines the level of funding for each program after hearing recommendations from the ASUO Executive and representatives of the program.

The ASUO president has veto power over all IFC decisions, but the IFC can override a veto with a vote of five of its members.

Since the incidental fee is mandatory, some students have objected to the funding of certain groups that take stands on political issues. The Student Campaign for Disarmament, Students Opposing Registration and the Draft, the Survival Center, and Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group have been cited as groups that use mandatory fees to advocate political views.

College Republicans, a conservative group that does not receive IFC money, has led the opposition to funding these groups. Its leaders argue that no one should be forced to pay for groups that espouse ideas they find objectionable.

Those who support funding of these groups argue that they educate students on important issues that are not dealt with in the classroom. They say that students have a voice in how their funds are used by voting for IFC members.

In the next few months, Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer will give a formal opinion on the legality of using mandatory fees for

"political" groups.

Though it is illegal to use incidental fees, which are considered public moneys, to advocate a political candidate, the attorney general will also give an opinion on whether such groups can take definitive stands on ballot measures, legislation, administrative rules of state or federal agencies, or issues before state or federal courts.



Slicing up the incidental fee pie

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