

Officials look for answer to conference fee dispute

By Diana Elliott
Of the Emerald

A University administrator, the student advocate and the director of the Crisis Center are all working to rectify a mistake that resulted in 275 students paying hidden fees for a conference last weekend.

The error was discovered Monday when University student Heinz Klein complained to Student Advocate Bill Kittredge because he was prohibited from attending the Self Health Conference that he had signed up for during registration.

Klein failed to buy a \$7.50 packet at the bookstore that he thought was optional. In fact, the packet was required and contained a registration verification card that needed to be turned in prior to the conference.

Kittredge concluded the fee was unjustified because it was not listed in the Fees and Fines Book. All courses that require extra fees must be listed in this book, as well as the course time schedule.

Susan Snyder, organizer of the conference, says she wasn't aware of the procedure. Snyder inherited the project last fall when she took control of the Crisis Center, which sponsors the annual health conference.

"I inherited the structure from my predecessor," Snyder says. "The rule was just overlooked. It was overlooked by myself, the counseling department and the registrar."

But there was no foul play involved in charging the fee, according to Paul Holbo, vice provost of academic affairs.

"Sue is an innocent victim," Holbo says. "It's a real unfortunate situation."

University officials and Kittredge have been working to clear up some of the problems caused by the confusion over the fee, including the possi-

ble "failing" of students who did not attend the conference when they learned of the extra charge. These students will not be penalized with a withdrawal or no-pass notation on their transcripts, Kittredge says.

Kittredge and Holbo are still uncertain about what to do for students who were shut out from the conference, yet need the credit in order to maintain full-time status.

"The University can't offer students credit if they didn't attend the seminar," Kittredge says. "Something else will have to be worked out, but I don't know what."

This presents a difficulty for students who need to retain their full-time status in order to be eligible for financial aid. But Kittredge is hoping that problem won't come up.

"So far no student has approached me with that problem," he says.

Holbo, Kittredge and Snyder are looking into solutions to other conference-related problems that have emerged. The most pressing question is what to do about students who request reimbursement for the unapproved fee.

At present, however, there are no plans to alert all participants that they are eligible for reimbursement, Kittredge says.

Hopefully, participants will make an informed choice before they demand their money back, Snyder says. "The packet fee covered the cost of the conference," she says. "I don't know where the money will come from."

Snyder says she is sorry about the way things have turned out and is concerned about how this mistake might affect the future of the conference. "This conference serves such an important need for students... It will be really unfortunate if future conferences are affected."

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