

Fee cards cause health insurance mix-up for GTFs

By Colleen Pohlig
Emerald Reporter

University fee cards issued to international graduate teaching fellows show a charge for ASUO health insurance, which has led some GTFs to believe

they do not have a choice among the plans available to them.

Diane Rao, a union representative of the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, said that despite the charge for ASUO International Student Health In-

surance, "this does not mean international GTFs are locked into buying one kind of insurance."

All international students must carry ASUO health insurance, except for international GTFs, who may choose between the ASUO plan and one offered through the GTFF, called Preferred Health Northwest.

The two plans differ significantly in price and benefits.

The ASUO International Plan costs \$406 for an unmarried GTF, whereas the charge for the union plan is \$372.

"Everybody needs to compare insurance plans and see which fits them best," Rao said.

The Federation plan requires GTFs to complete an application about their health history. According to Preferred Health Northwest, it has approved about 97 percent of GTF applications.

In contrast, ASUO insurance

has no application process. Anyone who enrolls and pays the fee is automatically accepted.

"I think this program is really good," said ASUO student health insurance coordinator Cathy Curran. "There is no deductible at the Student Health Center and this year they have increased the benefits to Club Sports and increased mental health coverage from \$300 to \$1000."

The ASUO health plan was criticized last year for being unresponsive to student questions.

"In general, this year they have been more responsive with student claim questions and problems," Curran said.

The charge listed on the fee cards may have led some GTFs to purchase a plan without knowing they have a choice between two health insurance plans, Rao said.

"For international students who pay for ASUO insurance

and discover they want to choose the other plan, they should see about a refund," she said.

International GTFs who purchased ASUO insurance can request a refund and will receive a check for the full amount in about a week or two, Curran said. The Federation has begun attempting to clear up things.

"We have attended international student orientation meetings and we have also noted their options in our newsletter," Rao said. "It's a shame because the whole issue causes frustration among the international GTF community."

Article 22 of the collective bargaining agreement between the University at the Federation — the GTF labor union — allows all international GTFs a choice in insurance coverage.

"We are not trying to sell people insurance by any means," Rao said. "We are just making sure their rights (to have a choice) are protected."

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