

Increased rent result of budget shortfall

On Sept. 1, University housing rents will increase. For students who live in family housing, rents will go up \$20 to \$40 a month. Students in the dorms can expect a \$221 jump for multiple rooms, \$244 for doubles.

So far, the plan has been received with varying amounts of outrage. At issue is not so much the rent increase, but how the University administration does its math.

University housing is expected to pay for the cost of its operation, meaning rent is determined by what it costs to provide the service. Since the program is self-supporting and receives little in the way of general University services, if the cost of those services go up, rents will — obviously — rise accordingly.

Complaining because increased maintenance costs and the like are bumping up rents seems to have little value. A sad, cold fact of inflation is that as time goes by, things will be more expensive.

That's the way it goes.

But where University housing residents have a legitimate complaint is the seemingly arbitrary \$300,000 assessment by the University for "administrative overhead" — the cost of providing the logistical and administrative support.

The failure by University officials to specifically account the costs of these "overhead" services has started the complaining. Housing residents feel they're being charged for an ambiguous service. It's not the principle of higher rents that's causing the problem; it's not knowing *specifically* what you're paying for that raises backs.

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The obvious reaction to all the turmoil is: What did everybody expect?

With tuition costs skyrocketing and Measure 5 wreaking havoc on the state budget, no one can expect to escape the inevitable crunch. As long as the state remains ambivalent toward higher ed funding, the costs of attending the University will go up. And up. And up.

No University service is immune to this inflation. Parking costs, health center costs, and yes, even housing costs, will all have to increase to make up budget shortfalls. Live with it, folks. It isn't going to go away until the state higher education budget stabilizes.

Complaining about rent increases attacks the periphery, not the problem. The choice facing students is to either regard these fee increases with weary acceptance, or try and fix the machine that spawned the fiscal shortfalls.



OPINION

Tuition due? Form a student group



The other day I woke up with the need to feel empowered. I also woke up broke.

Rent's coming due, Visa is doing nasty things to my credit rating and my auto insurance company has threatened to break my kneecaps. If all that doesn't make you feel like a helpless peon getting pushed around by powerful, bloated entities, I don't know what would.

So, given that, I've decided to gain some healthful empowerment and perhaps make a few bucks on the side. The logical solution, of course, is to create my own student group.

When the idea came to me, I was floored (literally: I wasn't stunned, I was actually lying on the floor at the time). "What a simple, cost-effective way for me to pay rent," I thought to myself, as thinking to someone else usually doesn't work too well.

Fact is, everyone else is doing it. The University society is now polarized, fractionalized, sliced, diced and divided into a myriad of special interest, cultural and ethnic groups. These groups were created because someone, somewhere felt they weren't adequately represented by an existing group.

There just isn't a student group on campus that I feel adequately represents me: a column-writing, beer-drinking, golf-playing, single WASP straight male baseball fan. Science Fiction Reading Group? Nope. American Marketing Association? Un-huh. Students for Creative Anachronism?

Forget it.

It's not that I don't feel these groups are worthy; they just aren't for me. The IFC doled out \$4.6 million last year (students coughed up \$106 per term) to various groups around campus. Since I've been at the University since furry lizards walked the earth, I figure I've contributed about \$1.2 billion in student fees; very little of which I've gotten back in the form of activities or activism.

As in a lot of things, greed overwhelmed me. If everyone else is gobbling pork, I might as well belly up to the slop trough, too.

I don't begrudge existing student groups their money. In fact, I encourage it. Given their existence, the ASUO and IFC will be hard pressed not to recognize my group.

Therefore, given my under-representation and the declining state of my bank account, I hereby formally create the I Want to Suck Up Student Funds Too Empowerment Group and Social Club, or IWSUSFTEGSC for short.

Tah-dah. Why that name you ask? Because it accurately describes my group, sounds really cool, and I want to see the *Emerald* write the name out in a news lead.

Creating a group and getting money out of the IFC is remarkably easy. It can be accomplished in a few short steps:

1. Write a lot of press releases. Following the example of other student groups, I plan to unload on the *Emerald* enough trivial press releases to wallpaper the EMU. ("The director belched! Quick, somebody alert the media!")

2. Create group bylaws. That's the easy part. The All-Grand Master Poobah (me) has complete control over the group's finances, fundraising and activities, and is appointed

for life or until he graduates college, whichever comes first. IWSUSFTEGSC members have no say in anything.

3. Do some ridiculous things to draw attention to your group. I plan to hold weekly meetings at Rennie's during happy hour. And maybe I'll picket something. What, I don't know, but it seems to work for everyone else.

4. Apply to the IFC for funding. Simple, yet tricky. During your hearing, you have to present your case in a firm yet gentle way. Examples of your group's activities are vitally important. I foresee my IFC hearing going something like this:

IFC CHAIRMAN: So, Mr. Peters, your group's sole purpose for existence is to get student funds.

ME: That's correct.

CHAIR: And your members have absolutely no say in group activities?

ME: You got it.

CHAIR: Mr. Peters, I don't see how we can fund IWSUSFTEGSC.

ME: Long live the glorious worker's revolution.

CHAIR (handing me a briefcase full of cash): Take all you need, pal.

See how easy that is? My first group meeting will be at Rennie's today at 5 p.m. I'll be the one on the sun deck wearing the Angels hat. Please be prompt.

I'm not doing this because I'm greedy. Heck, I think everyone should get in on the action. I encourage everybody to trot on down to the ASUO and form their own student groups. Get as much as you can while you can.

Don Peters is a columnist for the Emerald.

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