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Energy fee increases

Despite campus conservation efforts, students can expect to pay \$20 per term this year

Jillian Daley
Family/Health/Education Reporter

The University's energy fee will increase this fall to \$20 per term, up from the spring term fee of \$15, despite the "Doin' it in the Dark" student-led conservation effort this past year.

The ASUO campaign, led chiefly by former ASUO President Nilda Brooklyn, lowered the energy fee from the original proposal of \$30 per term, but she had hoped to eliminate the fee.

The fee was originally inspired by Oregon's move to ration energy to alleviate the California energy crisis in 2001. The state also had, and continues to have, lower-than-normal levels of available energy. Eugene Water & Electric Board officials said that the decreased availability and increased use of energy continues to cause prices to rise.

"EWEB found it necessary to raise rates three times in 13 months: April 2001, November 2001 and May 2002," EWEB spokesman Steve Hill said.

EWEB contracts with the University for energy, so when EWEB's rates go up, it affects the University.

"The terms of that contract allow the rate of the contract to be adjusted when EWEB raises its rates," he said.

Brooklyn says it is the use of the

money that seems unfair, not the fee collection.

"I think that one important aspect is that when the energy fee was collected, it could be used for anything under facilities, so it wasn't slated just for energy costs," Brooklyn said.

She said that the energy fee is an unnecessary and unwelcome addition to student costs.

"If we have to get an energy fee, then what exactly does our tuition pay for?" she said. Brooklyn said the fee makes little sense when students are already shelling out so much money per term.

Vice President for Student Affairs Anne Leavitt explained that Provost John Moseley is keeping the energy fee separate from tuition because of its undesirable quality.

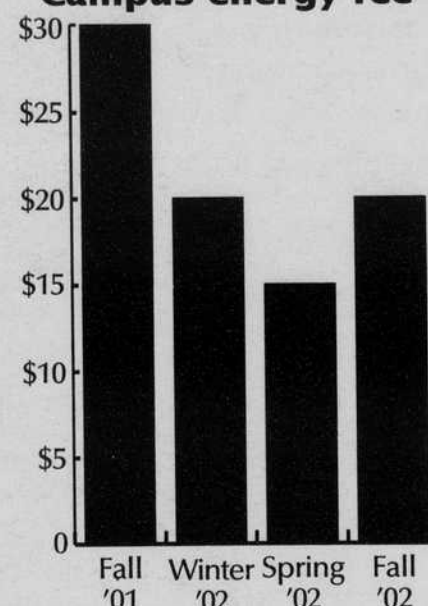
"If the Provost had his way, he'd do away with it. He keeps it separate from tuition and other things because he'd like to get rid of it," Leavitt said.

The Oregon University System approved the energy fee levy at the University's request. OUS spokesman Bob Bruce said the fee increase lessens the University's financial burden.

"Tuition covers instructional costs and a small part of operating costs," he said. "The ongoing costs of operating campuses continues to rise, and the universities have to pay for that."

Bruce also said that a number of other universities have energy fees.

Campus energy fee



However, Washington courts deemed the energy fee illegal in recent proceedings, which Brooklyn said makes the practice questionable.

Despite reservations about the fee, Brooklyn worked with the University to limit the financial impact on students, and the campaign succeeded in reducing energy usage. Yet the price of energy continues to go up, hamstringing efforts to eliminate the fee.

The ASUO conservation efforts reduced energy use from between 11 and 15 percent, but energy costs for the University still went up by \$1 million, which is discouraging, facilities director George Hecht said.

"The cost of those unprecedented increases have been passed on to the students," he said.

Contact the news reporter at jilliandaley@dailyemerald.com.

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