

New QuikPAY billing system saves paper, time and money

Students now receive tuition statements online; while some appreciate this, others are skeptical

BY EVA SYLWESTER
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

The University did its last-ever mass-mailing of tuition bills this month.

People who owe money on their student accounts must now log on to the Internet every month to find and pay their bills.

To use the University's new billing system, called QuikPAY, a student must access the DuckWeb site and go to the category "QuikPAY Student Account." There, he or she will see the amount owed.

The bill can either be paid via electronic check or by printing out the bill and mailing it to the University with a paper check. Credit cards are still not allowed.

Billing statements are produced around the 15th day of the month, and payments are due on the first day of the following month.

Parents or other parties who pay students' tuition cannot use DuckWeb, but they can use another Web site with a similar interface. Students must set up those accounts.

Implementation of QuikPAY began about six months ago.

Accounts Receivable Supervisor with University Business Affairs Dave Doerksen said the billing department began the transition process by sending out both paper bills and e-mail notices when bills were due from June through September.

Now only e-mail notices will be sent out. Any student who wants to continue receiving paper bills must submit a petition to the student billing office.

"Student response has been overwhelmingly positive," Doerksen said. "The group of students coming into the University now are very computer literate."

Some University students interviewed in the Oregon Hall lobby said they had not heard of QuikPAY. When it was described to them, they expressed concern about whether the system is easy to use.

"I guess it's better if it's faster, but if you don't know how to do it, it's

confusing," sophomore Tyler Stearns said.

"I am completely computer illiterate, so it bugs me when things go online," junior biochemistry major Sarah Hoffman said.

Another concern is that tuition bills could be lost in the cavalcade of e-mails that many people receive.

"I'll forget about it if it's online," Hoffman said. "If I have a hard copy, I'm more likely to remember."

Doerksen said parents are more apprehensive than students about the new system, adding that he guided numerous parents through the process of setting up QuikPAY accounts during orientation week.

Of the 10 or so petitions to continue receiving paper bills that have crossed his desk, Doerksen said the main reason cited was that the students' parents had limited computer access or literacy.

"That's pretty unusual in this climate now," Doerksen said.

QuikPAY has advantages over paper bills in that it can deliver more messages to more people more efficiently, Doerksen said, because each student can designate up to two third

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be rolled over to prevent a deluge of surplus points at the end of each term.

Residence Hall Association President Todd Mann said that the changes could be implemented as early as winter term, but he added that implementation will depend on how quickly programmers can update the computer system.

"Our goal is this winter, but that is completely dependent on the programmers," Mann said. "The winter is a very optimistic goal."

Driscoll said students might even have to wait until fall 2006 for the changes to occur.

Mann said there are two main reasons for implementing roll-over meal points, the first being that the current system leads to a rush of students attempting to use their surplus meal points on Saturday evenings.

The influx of students strains the dining facilities and causes behavioral issues, Mann said, because large numbers of intoxicated students converge at Common Grounds Cafe and the Grab 'n Go Marketplace to spend their points before they expire.

A second problem Mann cited was that students currently pay for a fixed number of points. If they forget to use all their points, they lose potential food they have already paid for.

ASUO President Adam Walsh had the same concern and promoted roll-over meal points during his campaign for the executive seat last spring.

"The reason that we wanted this plan implemented was because it creates fairness — it gives students what they pay for," Walsh said. "This was something we had told students we wanted to work on and fight for."

Although both ASUO and the RHA have advocated for roll-over meal points, strained communication and disagreement over each others' realms of authority has chafed relations between the two student groups.

Mann said he disagreed with Walsh's making a push for roll-over meal points part of his campaign because "the people making the promises weren't Residence Hall students."

"I think the decision to make that a part of their campaign was a poor decision," Mann said. "It is an RHA issue."

Mann and Walsh met at the beginning of summer to discuss a number of issues that they hoped to collaborate on throughout the year, including roll-over meal points.

Walsh said he was sensitive not to "step on RHA's toes" and felt that both he and Mann left the meeting believing "it would be great if we could work on it together."

After their meeting, Walsh delegated ASUO Outreach Director Cassandra Day to work with Mann to implement the changes.

Both Mann and Day expressed

frustration with the difficulties they had contacting each other during the summer.

They met on Sept. 19 when Mann said he told Day that, after discussions with Housing, plans had been developed to implement roll-over meal points.

The news surprised the ASUO, which had planned to lead an extensive campaign to institute the changes, Day said.

"I spent two months of solidly researching and developing a campaign where it wasn't going to be just student leaders leading this campaign," Day said. "I was going to have student involvement to develop new leaders to take over when we leave next year."

Day also expressed resentment regarding an e-mail Mann sent to her and Walsh.

In the e-mail, Mann wrote that "credit for this accomplishment belongs to the persistence of RHA members and to the Housing Department that is working to implement these changes."

Walsh agreed that the RHA deserves credit for the changes but objected to Mann's wording because he felt that the ASUO was left out of the process.

"While it's true that the credit for the victory goes to RHA, because they are the only ones who worked on it, we weren't included in the discussion," Walsh said. "It is only because we were not included that all credit went there. I think the ASUO deserves a share of the credit as well for bringing the issue to light."

The two groups disagree on the proper role of the ASUO in residence hall affairs.

"The ASUO holds little weight within housing," Mann said. "Housing wants feedback from people living within the halls. That is something Adam has hopefully learned since then."

ASUO Programs Administrator David Goward felt that the ASUO Executive's voice was relevant to the meal points issue.

"The ASUO Executive is the voice of all students," he said. "We impact every aspect of campus life."

Despite their disagreements, both the ASUO and RHA applauded the prospect of roll-over meal points as a positive step.

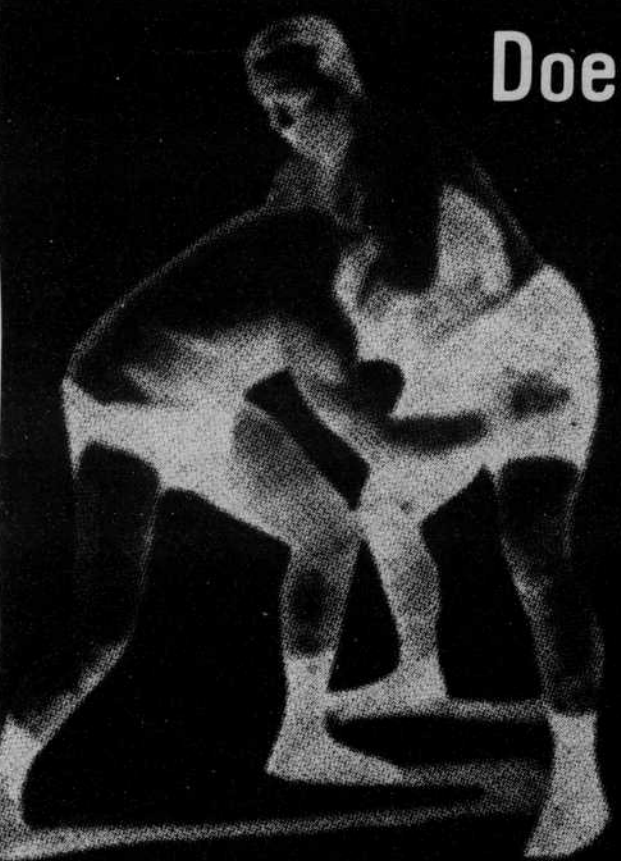
"When it comes down to it, it is the students who benefit," Mann said.

Walsh agreed, but he said the ASUO's lack of involvement troubled him.

"It is a victory for students, but for us as an organization, it's disappointing that we were not included in the discussion, especially because, as an organization, we represent all students on campus," he said.

Day added that the ASUO hopes to be more involved as the details of the plan are formulated.

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