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Technology Fee Process

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Approved by the Senate:

Not Approved by the Senate:

Approved by the President:

Not Approved by the President:

Technology Fee Process

Submitted by Chris Ford

4/18/2006

Motion:

Request from SGA to present to Faculty Senate the process used to approve projects for funding from Technology Fees.

Rationale:

Faculty Senate has discussed the Tech Fee Committee and the process for approving funding for projects at several meetings, and found that due to the inconsistencies in procedures that a Tech Fee AD Hoc committee be formed. The former administration of SGA concluded that the additional committee was not needed and that SGA is comfortable with their current procedures with the Tech Fee Committee. The new administration of SGA supports the decision of our predecessors; however, we would like to present our procedures for reviewing and approving projects to the Faculty Senate.

Senate Response:

Minutes: 6/21/2006: You will recall at the March meeting, we voted to form an ad hoc committee to study the composition of the committee on procedures for awarding tech fee money. That motion still has not been either approved or denied by Dr. Grube, but the Student Government leadership has said that they are satisfied with the current method of awarding these fees. Chris Ford, the new SGA President, submitted an

agenda item request to explain their views, and that will be information item # 7 on today's agenda.

7. Information Item: Student Technology Fee Award Process, Chris Ford,
SGA President: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Chris Ford, and I am the President of the Student Government Association. Today, Kelsey Grubbs, who is Vice President of Academic Affairs will be speaking on my behalf.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA-VPAA): Good evening. This year, in March, a proposal came about an ad hoc technology fee committee. The last administration brought it to the student Senate, and the student Senate discussed it, and voted against the ad hoc committee. We feel like we have already run the committee the way we would like to run it, and it runs efficiently. We, as the new administration, are going to run the committee according to the old administration. We feel that we have a very effective process, and we do not feel like an ad hoc committee is necessary.

Michael Moore (COE): I became involved in this fee issue when faculty teaching with technology from my college came to me. Actually, all of us in the COE use some aspect of technology in our classes, and we prepare our students in the use of technology in all fields. And the faculty in our college are discouraged that their equipment is outdated, the software is old, and they want to purchase new materials. They kept applying for and not receiving funds, and asked me as a Senator to look into it. And when I did, I found that in our college we had generated over \$856,000 in fees from our college, and the College of Education had received back in monies in that college only 1 percent. That was in the fall, and in the fall we received a larger award, I think, because of accreditation purposes, but that really did not do much; it brought us up to 7 percent. Until Dr. Bleicken announced in the past spring meeting that there was a COE member now on the tech fee committee, although she did not say who it was, we had not had representation on the tech fee. When I raised this issue in the Senate, I started hearing from other faculty members in other departments that the situation was the same. And prior to my motion with no fanfare, no announcements, the process by which we award these fees suddenly and radically changed between Thanksgiving and Christmas--again, to my knowledge, without any faculty input. This is why I made this approved motion that we look at the process. My concerns still have not been eased. I still believe, as does this Senate, by their nearly unanimous vote on this issue, that the process still needs examination. I do not see the problem of an ad hoc advisory committee to give advice.

The committee might come back and say well, everything looks fine, and suggest no changes. The committee may find the faculty should have a more active role in the process. I do not see a threat in this. I am glad that our students have faith in the process, but if we teach anything else in our universities, our state universities, we do teach a democratic process. And in keeping with that, I think that the vote that we had in favor of this proposal is in keeping with these democratic principles. And I urge that the wishes of the faculty be acknowledged and approved from the President's office to allow this committee to form.

Bruce Grube (President): Well, since I have a distinct feeling somebody here, some group, has just been accused of being undemocratic. I would point out the students are also part of the university community, and so their voice is important, and so to the contrary, I think democracy is what is happening right now in discussion with the students.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): I have a quick question. There is a line in the motion where it says that the SGA would like to present their procedures for reviewing and approving projects. Does that mean that they are going to give us a document to say, here are our procedures, so that we can take a look at it, and see if there are aspects with which we have in any arguments?

Pat Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator: It was my understanding that they were going to describe the process.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA): I can, would you like me to?

Pat Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator: Please.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA): The Provost appoints a faculty member, a CIO, and a staff member. The committee also includes the Director of Information Technology, the SGA President, the Vice President of Academic Affairs (me), and four Senators from SGA. We divide requests up into categories, and fund according to a priority list. The first priority is failing equipment within a college; the second is life-safety, an improper outlet, something that might be dangerous to students; the third, and probably most important to a lot of people, is the number of students that are serviced or benefit from it; and our last is the age of the equipment, outdated equipment, and previous funding. And the reason why this priority list works so well is because none of these requirements have anything to do with a specific college. It has to do with what students need, the safety of the students, and what equipment is actually failing. That is why we feel that our

process is done effectively, because we do not focus on where it is coming from; we focus on what is needed for the students.

Michael Moore (COE): Now, remember this process just originated between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Before the process was that if you were interested in new equipment, or if you were interested in software, or whatever, you had to write a proposal. Proposals went to the Student Tech Fee Committee, and that committee voted on it. And, again, I raised the issue because, to my knowledge, there are not any faculty involved in this new procedure. And we are major stakeholders in this game here, you know. We have a lot to say about this, and we have no voice in this process at all.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA VPAA): These are student fees, and we have been given the responsibility to give out these student fees. And I agree that we might need your input, but right now we are satisfied with the way the process works.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): Do you have some weights? There are four or five categories here by which you evaluate. Do you have some weights that you put on them? In other words, is there a scoring mechanism so that, if a proposal comes to the committee, does that proposal get a score based on these categories that you have?

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA VPAA): Yes. They are weighted according to priority.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): Okay, and so do you have a scoring mechanism of a 100 points or something like that?

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA VPAA): Since I am a part of the new administration, I am not as familiar with the system as I should be, but when I get to the office later on . . . , are you familiar with the actual scoring mechanism (to Chris Ford)?

Chris Ford (President, SGA): Ms. Grubbs is actually fairly new to the Tech Fee Committee herself. She has been doing research on previous committees to determine what they have done and to understand the new process, but any type of question as to how they go about delivering the funds; she will probably not be able to answer at this time.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): Right, so, could we get something that says: This is how the proposals are weighted; here are the weights on each piece. That might help remove some of Michael's fears.

Pat Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator: Are you asking for a set of objective

Criteria?

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): Yes, that is exactly what I am looking for, thank you very much. There must be some set of objective criteria out there by which proposals are evaluated; that would let each project stand on an equal footing.

Linda Bleciken (Provost): Godfrey, actually when this issue was originally raised back in the fall, Lisa Spence responded to a request for information with some fairly extensive information about how the process works, and so that is in our back records. If you would like further information, certainly either I (or the students) can find that for you. Our office manages, certainly from a clerical standpoint, the decisions that the group makes. I would like to correct a misperception that was put out there--prior to the fall, there actually was a process. And that process was heavily weighted toward the number of students that are being served by a specific technology request. In addition, it was heavily weighted by the number of hours that students could actually access the technology that was placed in any given location. For that reason, a major amount of the new technology every year goes into the library, which is open almost 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It goes into labs such as the College of Business Administration and the College of Information Technology. I believe that the College of Business Administration's lab stays open until maybe 2 or 3 in the morning, and it opens first thing in the morning prior to the start of classes. So, the number of students served, and the accessibility of the equipment used by students is top priority. As we have moved down the pathway, and more and more of you faculty have requested smart classrooms, that has become another big funding issue. So that one I think has become number two in priority--certainly the big labs, then smart classrooms. So there has been a process, and it has truly been looking at the proposals, considering the needs of students, how many students are served, and also truly the needs of the faculty because the smart classrooms have been a wish that has been expressed by the faculty.

Michael Nielsen (CLASS): I missed the first criteria you said before life-saving, what was that?

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA VPAA): The first one is failing equipment.

Greg Brock (COBA): I was also wondering if it is possible to share successful proposals from the past that people could see.

Linda Bleciken (Provost): Yes, I do not know why that would be impossible. In essence, a successful proposal is one that has many of those elements: served a lot of students,

is accessible, perhaps addresses a life-safety, or failing equipment issue. And we would be happy to share those. This is not a closed process. We have a website that you can go to for information. Remember the tech fee did not exist until, I believe 1997, so as we have gone down the pathway I feel truly that the process that has been used has become much more open, much more accessible. I would really hate for us to have to go back to the way it was in the early years. I think that we have become much more sophisticated in not only formulating a standard for these proposals, but also it incorporates student input, and that is a very important part. I truly do wish that some of our former SGA Senators could be here because they have been very active participants in this process.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): The list of criteria here seem quite good, but weights would be helpful; for example, you could have failing equipment or old equipment somewhere, but it serves only a small group of students. That particular small serving group with old equipment could get left behind for five years. That is why we want some assurance that would not happen in the process.

Linda Bleciken (Provost): May I address that? Periodically we have requests for smaller labs. One of the things that we try to do is not necessarily always fund only the big huge labs. We have had some smaller labs that have been funded. We funded an Art lab, for example, and the reason that we funded that lab was not because it served huge numbers of students, but because there were very specific needs that were required by the faculty, very specific software and hardware needs because of the graphic issues involved. The students themselves read these proposals before the meeting, and they advocate very vigorously sometimes for these things. I want you to realize also that we have funded not just classrooms, and not just faculty issues. We have also funded labs that exist in our residence halls. In addition, we have funded the Academic Success Center computers, because these are very important. Students need to have the kinds of computers that are going to help them. So, there are criteria, and there are other considerations that come into play. But we are very happy to have people look at the process and make suggestions; that is how it has evolved over time.

Bruce Grube (President) Ms. Grubbs I think when you began talking that you invited input, which I thought was perfect. In that spirit, would the Tech Committee be willing to sit down with two or three Senators from this group, to get their input and to talk with you in that manner? Is that something that you all would be able to do?

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA VPAA): Yes, we are always open, especially this

administration, seeing that we are really focusing on communication, and we just want to make that known right now with the faculty that we really are willing to get your input. We really do need your help sometimes, so we would welcome having a couple of members of the Senate sit down with us to discuss what might need a little tweaking in our process.

Bruce Grube (President): My suggestion to the Senate is that might be very a good way to proceed.

Michael Moore (COE): Two things. One, I think our motion was the same thing; that is what an ad hoc committee does. The second thing--I am confused, Dr. Bleicken, in some of your comments. My understanding was that in the last funding cycle there were no proposals; that actually someone from the Tech Fee came around, according to the administrators in my college, and asked what the needs were in the college. I understood that the system had been scrapped, and in its place we were going from college to college in terms of trying to keep up with the needs that all colleges and departments have in terms of equipment. So am I confused, or is it still a proposal system? Can individual faculty actually access the web site and write proposals, because my standing was that that had changed?

Linda Bleicken (Provost): There is a very specific format. One of the reasons that we went to the format and asked for people to provide input via the format was so that we would have proposals that were more easily comparable. And by that I am saying if you have similar information on each proposal, it is a much easier and a much more streamlined way to review proposals and to compare them. If we do not have that sort of mechanism, Michael, we cannot do that. Just so that you know, the big proposal review happened in the fall semester. We get funding for one year; it comes from the student technology fee. We estimate what that amount of funding will be, but in the fall semester we do the biggest award. In the spring semester typically we have many more proposals that are left over from the fall that were not funded, so many times spring is when we re-look at some of those that were not funded in the fall cycle.

Marc Cyr (CLASS): I would just like to reiterate something Michael Moore just said. President Grube suggested that members of the Senate talk with the SGA. You said you were open for communication. As Mike pointed out, this is what his motion, which the Senate approved, basically asks for, with an ad hoc committee. I am not sure then what the opposition to the ad hoc committee is, since apparently you like the idea, President Grube likes the idea, I know Mike just loves it, so I am just trying to figure out what is going on--we have the thing approved. You seem to object to the committee, but you want a conversation. I am thinking that the ad hoc committee is a dandy way. I just do not understand the opposition to it.

Bruce Grube (President): My apologies. I have tried really, as you know, historically not to get engaged in these debates, but rather to listen. I think there is a huge difference between an ad hoc committee recommended by the Senate and formally sanctioned by the President of the University with a charge, than, on the other hand, informally sitting down with a group of people where you think you have an issue and trying to work out what that issue is before you carry it on up into what is really a quasi-legal kind of environment. Thank you.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA VPAA): That is exactly what I was going to say. As students, we like to sit down and discuss suggestions, but in the format that we have and the process that we have. We would like to take suggestions, but I feel like an ad hoc committee would almost make it an environment that would demand that we accept those suggestions, whereas in a little bit more casual environment, it would be a lot easier to discuss, to discuss and say I agree with you here, but I do not necessarily agree with you here.

Marc Cyr (CLASS): Personally, it sounds like a waste of time to me. The ad hoc committee seems to me would be conversation with a point, and with the possibility of effect, and otherwise it is just discussion. Thank God, we will have Starbucks, you can have \$4 coffee while you are having your discussion, but I am in favor of the ad hoc committee. If I recall correctly, I voted for it, as did the majority of Senators.

Kent Murray (CLASS): The door seems to be open. The next thing is somebody needs to set an agenda time as to when the groups can get together to see if the informal starts to work, and run with it from there, so could somebody, either from students or from Faculty Senate, propose a date and a location.

Kelsey Grubbs (SGA VPAA): We do not want to come across that we do not want to hear suggestions, we do, but we are satisfied with the way that it works now. If it were in the ad hoc committee, it really would be very formal and mandated. If a suggestion is made that would really clearly improve our system then of course we are going to take it, and I do not think that is a waste of time.

Barry Balleck (CLASS): I see this situation, and I wonder what the reversal would be if the students wanted an ad hoc committee for our Senate and wanted to make comments on our procedures in our classroom. As I understand it, this is the purview of the Student Government Association. They have been given the charge over these funds. That is their responsibility, and if the administration sitting on that committee feels that it is proceeding correctly, then I think the input idea is fine. I think it would be great to

have a Senator or two or three come and sit in on this meeting. The students feel that this is their responsibility. This is the charge that they have been given, and I think that what I have seen here is that we want to dip our fingers into a responsibility which is largely a student responsibility. They are looking at, as Dr. Bleicken said, the needs of the students. They are not telling us how to run our classrooms, but we are trying to tell them how to allocate this money, which has been designed to be allocated by the students. If they are willing to take our suggestions, and our proposals, and so forth that is great. But I do not think they are under any obligation to implement those.

Michael Moore (COE): First, I would not mind a student ad hoc committee talking to me about my classes. That is fine. Second, my reading of the Board of Regents' Procedures, in terms of this committee says the number of students that are supposed to be on the committee. I did not see anywhere in there that responsibilities for the fee was with the students. It seems that there are a certain number of students that had to be on the committee. My understanding was that there is also the same number of administrators, and/or faculty, who would be on the other side with them in this. So I am not seeing where there is a Board of Regents' Mandate that this student fee is the responsibility of the students.

Barry Balleck (CLASS): Well, as I understand it, Michael, for the last several years the students who are the Student Government Senators from the College of Education, are allowed to request which committees they want to be on, and none of the students from the College of Education have requested to be on this committee. And so if you want input from the College of Education, on this committee, go to your Senators from the Student Government Association and ask them to get on the Student Technology Committee, and find out where these monies are going so that you can have an input. If we are concerned about College of Education, then the College of Education Senators have to be the ones sitting on that committee. They have not requested that. It is largely a situation where senators are asked which committees they would like to be on, and for the last two or three years, as I understand it from the previous administration, no one from the College of Education has come forward and said they want to sit on that committee. So there has been no input from a student senator from the College of Education on that committee.

Pat Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator: I would like to make a suggestion that I get together with Ms. Grubbs and Mr. Ford and see what we can do in terms of setting up a communication meeting.

Michael Moore (COE): So what happens to our motion?

Bruce Grube (President): There is no motion on the floor is there?

Michael Moore (COE): No, I am talking about the motion that was passed by a majority of the Senators, about forming of an ad hoc committee. What happened to it? It has yet to be approved by the President, and right now it is in limbo, and now you are talking about forming another kind of informal committee. I am just wondering what happened to our motion to form an ad hoc committee. Why are we not talking about forming an ad hoc committee?

Bruce Grube (President): My response, I think, was pretty clear. It was in light of student comments, in light of the student responsibility, in light of the fact that we would not even have a tech fee on this campus if the students had not voted to support it--in light of those things, my response to the recommendation from the Senate was that we pause to hear the students before I formally respond to that.

Godfrey Gibbison (COBA): I think your suggestion to meet with Ms. Grubbs and Mr. Ford is excellent.

Pat Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator: All right, shall I move on to the item from Mr. Ford about council for the college level? And, he can explain to us what he is actually looking for, and, yes, and I believe he is asking for an approval or a motion of support from the Senate.