



guest opinion

Student fee control raises questions

Bruce Beecher, a senior in secondary education, is president of ASUN.

Several years ago the State University of New York found itself fighting to keep student fees out of the control of the state legislature. Two basic issues developed from this court case: first, whether funds derived from student activities fees are state funds subject to state legislative control, and secondly whether the activities fee should be mandatory or voluntary.

Implicit in both was the question of who should control the disbursement of student fees. Since then, these questions have cropped up on campuses all across the nation and of course, Nebraska has done its best to keep up with this trend.

The State University of New York, at last report, lost its court case. But our University officials have devised a way to sidestep the precedent-setting defeat handed down by the New York courts.

They've decided to change the name student fees to university fees so the Nebraska State Legislature won't get any ideas about assuming control of student fees.

But what about the students who are forced to pay this mandatory fee? What say do they have in determining the taxation rate or the recipients of student fee support? I'm sorry to say they have none.

Student fee rates and programmatical appropriations are set by the Board of Regents and are recommended by the University administration.

Of course, the University administration isn't

insensitive to student complaints about this injustice.

It recently created several special task forces to study areas receiving student fee support. These areas, of course, have been researched in the past year by every group from the Council on Student Life to the University Motor Pool.

The administration seemingly wants to make sure there is no stone unturned. Or could it be they're stalling on taking action on student fees until a critical regent's race is determined? Where does this action leave students?

Students have braved the legislature's threatening attacks on student fees, suffered the humiliations brought forth in never-ending court appeals, and are presently staggering through an endless barrage of University investigation committees, complete with token student representatives.

It seems to me, if the University of Nebraska is really interested in producing responsible, well-educated men and women, it should allow students to experience a governmental system like that used in society.

This would include allowing students to elect their student government, and giving this government the power to assess student needs, prepare a budget, and set student fee taxes accordingly.

This way students would have the same voice in determining what their taxes are used for as a Nebraska citizen has.

Students who disagreed with the expenditures or taxation imposed by their government would also have the same recourse as a Nebraskan who is dissatisfied with his government; either impeach his representative or organize a ticket to defeat the incumbents at the next election. If this system is fair for Nebraska citizens why isn't it fair for University students?

All of the universities in the Big-Eight conference use a similar system. Why is the University of Nebraska hesitant to give this control to student government?

Could it be a fear that student government might just demonstrate responsible management of student fee money and become a powerful and effective instrument for students?

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