Editorials

Poorly timed forum is a good first step

In order to solicit student input on the setting of next year's tuition fee, the Dean's Office is sponsoring a public forum during dinnertime on the last Thursday of classes.

The forum is a valuable first step toward giving students a meaningful role in the tuition-setting process. Although the timing is ridiculously inconvenient, students should make every effort to attend. Surprisingly good turnout and valuable advice at a similar exercise of the Dean's Office last year has resulted in tangible change.

Simply holding a single forum at an awkward time, however, does not fulfill the Institute's responsibility for involving students into budgetary decisions. The decision to allow the Undergraduate Association President and the Graduate Student Center President to attend Academic Council meetings was an excellent one. Holding more forums during Independent Activities Period would also be valuable, although some students will not be here to take advantage of the opportunity.

Students who have participated in similar exercises in the past have learned a lesson that administrators would do well to heed: lecturing is not learning. Many students cannot be convinced to spend their time at such affairs because they don't believe anything will happen as a result of their efforts. The Institute must take steps to encourage students to participate, by replying to all queries in writing or inviting high-ranking officials—such as President Gray—to any future forums.

In the past, the collection of data on student input seems to have changed from curiosity to meaningful acknowledgement. On an issue as important as setting tuition, the Institute administration should go one step further and try intelligent application.

New payment plan is more equitable

Students need not worry about changes in policies regarding late tuition payments, as the Institute now states that the late fee will have no effect next fall. While interest charges will substantially increase the penalty paid by those who are delinquent in their payments, students will now have a reasonable time to pay, with a payment deadline extended by four days per week. Students who pay more—perhaps even less—than under the current system.

The present program of late fees and administrative fees for delinquents is a curious one. As a Director of Student Services Jack Frailey has observed. Under current policies student with an overdue balance of one hundred dollars for one week must pay the same fifty dollar fine that is paid by a student with thousands of dollars outstanding for two or three months.

Inequities in the current system have led to inconsistent enforcement and, therefore, more injustices.

Deferred payments will still be permitted under the new, more flexible system. Students may choose to accelerate their payment schedules to reduce interest costs, or to take more time to pay, despite the costs involved.

The Administration is wise to postpone implementation of the new system. The delay will allow resolution of any questions of misunderstanding and a smooth transition to the new system.

The new plan is an equitable way to encourage early payment, increasing the Institute's cash flow while distributing borrowing costs among students in a fair way.

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In the Forum should be rescheduled

To the Editor:

The forum was advertised to encourage students to attend an open forum on 1982-1983 tuition and financial aid. This forum was thoughtlessly scheduled on Thursday, December 10, while students have no classes to study for and final exams awaiting them the following week. Why does the Institute always seem to schedule open forums on important student issues when the students are unable to attend? Perhaps we should ask: Does the Institute really want students to attend their open forums?

Obviously, such a forum should have been scheduled much earlier in the term when interested students at least had an opportunity to attend. I appeal to the administration's promise to be more sensitive to the needs of its students by rescheduling this forum for a more appropriate time.

Geoffrey Goodman '83

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For the Editor:

I'm going to keep this letter printable and not say what I really feel about the ideas who instigated this. Not only have they apparently cost the Institute tens of thousands of dollars, which (I assume they pay for), but they have caused me to have to risk fifty dollars if I want to continue my own, peaceful explorations.

Steve Summit '83

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