



President's Report to the Senate

Senate Seventh Business Meeting, April 1, 2015

Patrick Neary, President

Health Insurance Changes

The university is planning to roll out a new health insurance requirement over the next two years. In fall 2015, all incoming full-time, matriculated students, all full-time matriculated international students, and all graduate fellows will be required to have health insurance. In fall 2016 and later, all full-time, matriculated students will be required to have health insurance.

The university will offer a health insurance plan through Aetna Student Health starting in fall 2015 with an annual premium of \$1,890 for any student under this requirement who doesn't otherwise have insurance. I have not received any additional details of this plan beyond what you have received previously via email. I have been told the plan they are negotiating for is roughly equivalent to a "gold" level plan on the insurance marketplaces. I have verified that the price is significantly below plans with those benefits, even after taking into account tax credits a student might be eligible for. I have been told more details of the plan will be forthcoming, as the university is still negotiating the contract with Aetna. The university will hold two Q&A sessions: April 14 from 6:00 – 7:00 pm and April 15 from 5:30 – 6:30 pm, both in Grant Auditorium.

Additionally, the university plans to move all TA/RA/GAs who use the employee health plans onto the new student health plan in fall 2016. In response, I have made clear that this amounts to a cut in benefits, as the premium prices to the student increase substantially. Our current strategy has been to argue for increased stipends across the board to account for the price difference in premiums, plus the added tax from this extra income, plus the tax incurred by no longer having the premiums be tax advantaged. In addition, we've pointed out that incurring the costs all up front in the fall semester is unacceptable, and we need to spread out the bill across the entire contract period with no finance charges incurred.

I have received considerable emails from TA/RA/GAs who will be affected by this change. I expect us to discuss our strategy and tactics on this matter at the upcoming Senate meeting. This is a massive change to benefits, and with the additional concerns I have received from students, we may need to oppose any move to remove assistants from the employee plans.

I am also investigating the completeness of the new insurance plan as it applies to international students, who are already subject to numerous insurance requirements.

Academic Strategic Plan Release

The Academic Strategic Plan will be released to the community for open comment shortly. It is the culmination of nine months of work by over 200 people, students included, and involving over 1000 separate pieces of input from the university community. The document to be released in the near future is the short form of the plan, with the long form still being written currently. The open comment period will last for roughly 10 days and be conducted online. The Steering Committee feels that with the considerable comments already received and multiple public forums to discuss this matter over the past nine months, an online-only process at this point is justified.

Overall, I am pleased with the plan and the importance it places on graduate programs. Next year, the university will move into implementation of the plan, which will provide continued opportunities for student input. The GSO is, as always, committed to putting students on the bodies that make decisions at the university.

Officer Elections

Anyone interested in running for an officer position is encouraged to talk to the Executive Board about their positions. The President, Internal and External VPs, and Comptroller are elected at our April 22 Budget and Elections meeting. Please consider running! While there is work involved, the positions are also very rewarding and offer many opportunities to network and connect with individuals both within and outside the university. Anyone thinking of pursuing a career in higher education administration should strongly consider running for a position.