

**TOPIC: REVISIONS TO STUDENT FEE POLICY**

**PREPARED BY: JOHN KARAKOULAKIS**

**I. SUMMARY**

The Department of Higher Education staff has been working throughout the summer with representatives from all institutions to review current Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) student fee policy for consistency and clarity. The group found that institutions were reporting and appropriating fees inconsistently due to a lack of clear definitions of different types of fees and ambiguity as to which fees should be appropriated and which should be reported to the Department.

The working group and staff recommend the attached changes to CCHE Policy Section IV: Tuition, Fees, and Student Aid. The Chief Financial Officers of the institutions concur with the proposed changes.

**II. BACKGROUND**

In April 2008, the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) sent a letter to the Legislative Audit Committee recommending a review of the Department's student fee policies and procedures. In the 2008 legislative session the General Assembly passed a Senate joint resolution recommending a similar review of fees and student input in the fee process. These actions prompted the Department to conduct a review of fees and fee policy.

The JBC's letter to the Legislative Audit Committee was primarily concerned with how student fees are appropriated, and it asked the Committee to review the checks in place to ensure that fees were not being used inappropriately.

The Senate Joint Resolution, SJR08-037, encouraged the Department to conduct a review of fee policies at CCHE and the institutions, review fee changes for the past ten years and to seek student and institutional input in the process.

Department staff and institutional representatives identified several key areas requiring policy changes. The recommended changes combine existing fee definitions with new categories where necessary, define each type of fee, specify if it is appropriated or not, and describe reporting requirements.

Currently, student fees are appropriated if they are considered "Academic or Academic Facility Fees." However, there is no definition in policy of what this term means. One proposal of the proposed policy changes is to include the JBC's definition of "Academic or Academic Facility Fee" in policy.

Existing policy also fails to specify clearly the types of fees to be reported to the Department, such as Student Activity Fees, which are mandatory campus-wide fees and that therefore appear in the Department's annual report of mandatory student fees. The changes proposed categorize each type of fee and describe applicable reporting requirements and whether it is appropriated or not.

The Department believes these recommended changes will ensure that all institutions are reporting and appropriating student fees uniformly across the system.

Department staff is still reviewing student involvement in how student fees are determined and approved as requested in SJR08-037. We are awaiting student response to a questionnaire distributed to student governments at all institutions at the beginning of the 08-09 school year. As recommended in the resolution, we plan to publish a report on the findings, and the report should be available by the end of October.

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Commission approve revisions to policy Section IV: Part C Tuition, Fees, and Student Aid.**