OSU sends debtors to attorney general

By Patrick Carle
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People failing to settle their debts with Ohio State may have to deal with pressure from the state attorney general's office if they refuse to pay up.

Although action taken by the attorney general's office has been minimal since the agreement was implemented in October, the office has been contacting people with delinquent accounts, said David Stocker, assistant attorney general.

"Each account is handled differently according to the circumstances involved with each case," Stocker said. Some people are less cooperative than others and in these situations it may be necessary to take legal action."

A judge may issue an order to the debtor requesting that the account be settled, Stocker said. However, if a person has unexpected expenses, and is unable to pay back the debt right away, the attorney general's office might decide to extend the payment deadline.

Brenda Van Fleet, manager of OSU's Office of Accounts Receivable, said her office has worked with the attorney general's office for about two years in dealing with student loans, but only recently started getting assistance with other accounts.

"If a given department, such as the Student Health Center, is unable to collect on an account within 60 days, the department sends that particular file to the Office of Accounts Receivable for further action," she said.

But if the Office of Accounts Receivable cannot make progress with the account, Van Fleet said the case is referred to the attorney general's office for further litigation.

The system has been efficient so far, she said. About 40 percent of the cases received by her office are eventually settled.

"Disciplinary action taken against students may include withholding of student records and registration materials, or credit could be refused until the balance is paid," Van Fleet said.

She said if court action is necessary, the facts relating to the case would be considered public record and a person's credit standing could be damaged.