Graduate students debate activity fee

By Jennifer Rieck
Lantern staff writer

The Council of Graduate Students discussed the idea of activity fees as a method of providing increased support for clubs, student activities and certain student services.

"The idea of an activity fee is not a unique thing," said David Thomson, member of the Advisory Planning Committee for the Council of Student Affairs. "Eight out of 10 schools in the Big 10 have had it for a period of time."

An activity fee would be developed and approved by students, Thomson said.

The initial starting cost would be $3 or $4 per quarter. In order to manage the fee an individual would be hired to watch how the money is spent and then file reports with the university, Thomson said.

"The kind of funding we have now is a general fee to provide services for students," Thomson said. Over the years the general fee has been thrown into the income pot along with allocations, he said.

"Maybe its time to take a look at the rules to see what's best and what's fair in funding," Thomson said.

"There used to be an activity fee years ago," said Benetta Burton, president for the Council of Graduate Students. The activity fee was absorbed into the general fee.

Each year this amount of money has gotten lower and lower because it is subject to reallocation which means a percentage of the money has to be given back to the university, Burton said.

"The percentage varies each year, one year it might be one percent and another year it might be three percent," she said. "Also there is no way to track what students give to the general fee to what comes out."

An activity fee can be directly assessed to students, she said. "Students could say how much they want to be assessed in the student activity fee."

Students would decide the rules and this money wouldn't be subject to reallocation, she said. "It wouldn't be part of the general fee."

"We are only investigating the idea right now," Burton said:

"The idea of an activity fee is not a unique thing."

— David Thomson, member, Advisory Planning Committee, Office of Student Affairs