Fees rising at UL: What are students paying for?

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Since the beginning of my time here at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, I've been in a peculiar situation, a situation that has caused me to take out loans every semester to cover my tuition. Eh, a sad story, but I've gotten over it. The real difficulty is that even with all of my loans in, I still have to pay a remaining balance. It's on average about $900 a semester.

Now, this isn't meant to be a sob story. It's meant to present a realistic scenario where the cost of UL is exorbitant to someone you know. We can easily get blinded by TOPS aid and forget what's happening, but UL Lafayette is continuing to raise its fees. So over this past week, I did some research on why and how the fees are being raised.

I can't tell you, you're not gonna like it. The system works a little like this: Tuition stabilizes via TOPS because TOPS is meant to cover it so they balance each other out. The only real way to raise tuition is also via legislation with the university itself, so it takes time, energy and resources.

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With that being said, one thing that doesn't take time or energy is raising fees. Since there are no hoops to jump through, fees are easy to manipulate. These include fees for stuff like the cheerleading squad or the art museum or... anything else that UL wants to do with our money.

I think if I were someone who got TOPS and could go to school with everything paid for, essentially carefree, maybe I'd think differently. I'd say "Sure, raise the fees, I love the ART MUSEUM," but I'm not. I pay for everything I do here. Every class I take, every student event, every club, everything. I walk on UL Lafayette's campus and my money is somewhere sunk into the concrete.

I write for The Vermilion, which is also a part of my fees. A fee I can respect, given it's an outlet for information, but also I have to look at myself in the mirror and think "Is UL legitimately paying me from my own money?" And let me tell you, it doesn't make me a happy camper.

The reason I say these things is because the only way it can change is if the students say something about it. I love this school, it's given me beautiful memories, amazing professors, some great staff and a lot of opportunities. But not for a second do I put it past this university to claw for my money.

Just last semester I had to buy a book straight from the bookstore because my professor authored it. Could I do anything about it? No, not a damn thing, because that's the compromised position I've been put in here. After all this, it doesn't mean you have to sink in the same boat.

Ask about your fees, read the paperwork, wonder about where your money is going. A loan, a grant, a scholarship, it's all your money. Whichever way you pose it.

Let me leave this with an example that might help shed some light on the situation. You go to buy a car. You have all your money saved, you've even got help from your parents, and you are on your way to the used car place now. Once you get there, he tells you some good news. The car is actually 2,000 dollars less than you thought it was. You had saved about 5,000 and it turns out it's 3. Not a bad deal, so he rings you up and it's 5,167 dollars.

You say "Woah what the hell man?" and he says that the car is only 3,000 dollars, but he took the liberty of adding a cold air intake, drag racing tires, headlights that flash the superman symbol, a horn that sounds like Mr. Krabs' laugh and an exhaust that permanently puffs out pink smoke. Nice car, but you just wish he hadn't done it.