WHERE DO THE FEES GO?

Student Government Association to continue fight for fee transparency

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The Student Government Association posted a specific breakdown of the student-assessed fees on their website on Saturday night/Sunday morning.

According to SGA President Rachel Lautigar, SGA is posting the fees as a response to many students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette last year demanding the university be more transparent about where the fee money goes.

“There was a ‘cut the fees’ protest and a lot of people just talking about it on a lot of different spheres,” Lautigar said.

UL Lafayette’s Student Cashier Center posted an explanation of the fees on their website, but Lautigar said the page was too hard to find for most students.

“The (explanation of fees) wasn’t hidden from the public per se but it was really difficult to get to,” Lautigar said.

“For the average student, knowing where to go to get that information to find out how that money was being used took a lot of time and resources that college students usually don’t have.”

In addition, Student Cashier Center’s breakdown doesn’t include many of the fees’ actual cost, and many students find the descriptions given to be unclear.

“The way that they word where the fees are going is super vague,” Nova Vernon, a junior in Criminal Justice at UL Lafayette, said.

The explanation of fees page doesn’t even say what the fee money is actually used for in some cases but simply states which organization the money goes to and when the fee was established. The intramurals fee, the band association fee and the cheerleaders fee are all given descriptions like this in the Student Cashier Center’s breakdown.

SGA’s website shows each organization’s expenditures and revenues in detail, but the fee breakdowns for the cheerleader fee, the day care, the Masterplan Advancement Program fee, the police fee, the student loan fee, the transportation services fee and entertainment fee still don’t disclose how much students pay individually.

SGA’s list of fees also fails to include board assessed fees. Unlike student-assessed fees, which are requested by SGA, board-assessed fees are fees UL Lafayette’s System Board of Supervisors have deemed necessary according to the explanation of fees page.

Lautigar said SGA will try to get the board-assessed fees on their website as well if students appreciate SGA’s breakdown of the student-assessed fees.

“We do have intentions and gods of getting all fees that are not tuition eventually on the website. Student-assessed fees was a great place to start because it is something that SGA manages already,” she said.

“We are hoping that students take this and appreciate it and then say, ‘Okay, can we get all of it now?’ and then we can go back and continue the work that we started back in August with the administration and say, ‘They really, really love the student-assessed fees, and based on this we want to give them everything,’ because that is our intention and goal.”

Nicole Mistretta, a junior in journalism at UL Lafayette, said she would only look at a breakdown of fees if it was shown to her when she paid her bill.

“I would only really look to see what the breakdown of the fees are if it was where I’m paying for them,” Mistretta said.

Lautigar said she would like to see the fee breakdowns appear when students pay their bill, but the issue is out of SGA’s control.

“The way that it was explained to me was that whenever students pay their bill, they are actually leaving the louisiana.edu website and going to a service called TouchNet,” Lautigar said. “And that is the billing service by which the university collects tuition and fees from its students. And as of right now, we are not in direct control over what is displayed (on TouchNet).”

Amelia LeFleur, a senior in journalism at UL Lafayette, said she is happy to see the university is starting to be more open about student fees.

“We deserve a better idea of where our money goes,” she said.