

Open Letter to Art and Design Students

Art and Design Students:

My name is John Wilson, and I am a sophomore in Visual Communications. As many of you already know I, along with several other students, have had conversations and meetings with faculty and staff in the Art and Design department about the possibility of implementing a \$15 per credit hour "learning enhancement" fee. The purpose of this letter is to further discuss details of this fee in case you haven't had the chance to attend a meeting or just have some more questions.

First, some background information that led to this proposal. I met with the Dean in July when he first arrived on campus. I, like many of you, was concerned with the conditions of our labs and other areas of the Art and Design building. Let's face it, for a state university it is ridiculous how poorly funded, staffed and maintained our department is. I expressed these and other concerns with the Dean and he seemed very receptive. It was at this meeting that I learned of the idea of a "differential" tuition. Schools such as the School of Engineering (whose fee is being raised to roughly \$40 per credit hour) and Architecture and Urban Design (\$15) already have this fee in place. I then researched how they implemented these fees and what benefits they found from having them. Let me tell you, if you just walk through their buildings you can see a dramatic difference.

For instance, our neighbor to the north in Marvin Hall, home of the Architecture and Urban Design School, has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on technology. Almost the entire building has wireless internet, and new computers are installed every 16 months in all of their labs. Each student has 600+ megs of storage space on a server (NO zip disks!). Not only that, but printing is astronomically cheaper there. In their lab, a mere 60 feet from ours, they can print 36 x 24 photo quality prints for \$9.00. That would cost us over \$20! There, 11 x 17 color prints are .40 while we pay \$3.00. There are numerous other benefits that the \$15 per credit hour fee brings them.

I know a big concern is, "I don't use computers very much". That is a very good point. That is why this is a learning enhancement fee. The idea behind it is to have the money to go towards the things you need and use. We initially called it a "technology" fee, with the idea that "technology" is anything that enhances student learning. Too many people think computers when they hear the word "technology". So, I am telling you now...this isn't just for computers.

For instance, textile students need washers and dryers. Yes, a public university cannot even supply a \$300 washer! The fee could go towards that. Painting majors might need new easels storage spaces. This fee could bring in money to buy a new printing press or new desks or drafting tables. The common shop will benefit from the fee. Other labs like jewelry or industrial design would see benefits.

Let's talk numbers. Using the enrollment numbers from this fall, next year we could have approximately \$364,000 from the fee that would be divided among the different departments, and subsequent areas within them. This year we received a little over \$100,000 from tuition enhancement money (the Dean sent an e-mail about this) and it was spent within weeks on software, computers, crafts materials, and several other necessities. Imagine how much of a change would take place if we had this \$364,000 every year.

The bottom line is that we are behind the times. We are working with sub-par equipment and resources. This is not satisfactory or fair for students or faculty. I know it is asking more money from our pockets, but I can guarantee that you will see benefits by next fall. We have already created committees, comprised of faculty and students, for each department, with a representative from each area that would decide how the money in YOUR area would be spent. YOU have control over how the money is spent. Your money won't be going to things you never see, like pianos. I would not be pushing this if that were the case. The money would be divided up proportionately among the departments depending on total credit hours generated. I would also like to point out that it is not Dean Hedden asking for money. This is a student led initiative. This is an amazing opportunity for students to take control over the future of this school. I would love to look back and say I help create a state of the art, nationally recognized School of Fine Arts. Again, I know this is a sacrifice, but it is something that will benefit you and future students. The way I see it, the better

the equipment we have, the better faculty we can recruit and retain. The better faculty we have, the more students we have. The more students mean more money for the school which means a better learning experience for us all. Please feel free to ask me any other questions you have about this proposal. I want to make sure you know what your money would go towards, how you can help get this thing off the ground, or how you don't think this is a good idea. Regardless of what you think, I want to hear from you. Please e-mail me, call me (812-3184), or talk to me in the halls.

We are on an extremely short deadline. In order for this to be approved by the Board of Regents, it must be to the Provost by January 11. In order for the Provost to recommend it to the Regents, he must know that there is adequate student support. This means if you are interested in being a part of this you need to first, let me know your opinions; second, sign the petitions throughout Art and Design; third, e-mail Dean Hedden (hedden@ku.edu); and finally, talk to other students.

I thank you for your interest in this project, and I look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks,

John Wilson