A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF TUITION AND FEE TRANSPARENCY FOR DUAL-DEGREE SEEKING GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Authors: Legislative Affairs Director Rachel Spencer, Secretary Mark Nabors, Representative Allie Honey, Senator Christina Cole

Sponsors:

The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville offers dual-degree programs for graduate students, including JD-MPA and JD-MBA programs. These programs allow students to pursue two independent degrees simultaneously, which lets them earn both degrees in less time than if they pursued the degrees independently. Because these students are enrolled in two independent programs, they have two academic careers. Tuition and fees are assessed based on a student’s academic career; e.g., a graduate student is assessed graduate school tuition and fees, whereas a law student is assessed law school tuition and fees. Tuition and fees differ by academic career, with some careers levying higher tuition and fees than others.

JD-MPA students are paying law school tuition for all credit hours, including hours taken in the graduate school. These students are being overcharged for these graduate school hours because law school tuition and fees are more expensive than graduate school tuition and fees. These students were not informed of this university policy, and thus were not prepared to pay the extra tuition and fees not covered by their graduate assistantships. One JD-MPA student will be overcharged approximately $1500 over the course of her dual-degree career. See Appendix A for a statement from these students to the Graduate Student Congress regarding this issue.

These students have pursued every avenue to resolve this issue with the university administration. The university administration cannot point to any written policy clarifying that tuition and fees will be assessed by a single—and more expensive—academic career. When confronted with the absence of this policy via email, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Terry Martin conceded he could not point to any clear, written policy to justify the practice, but dismissed the students’ concerns by noting that his office would “add some additional language to further clarify our current practice.”

By contrast, many other universities assess tuition by credit hour; i.e., dual-degree students pay graduate school tuition for graduate hours, and law school tuition for law hours. The majority of our benchmark institutions have this policy, including University of Kansas, Louisiana State University, University of Missouri, Columbia, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, University of Oklahoma, and University of South Carolina, Columbia. Some universities assess tuition and fees with a single rate, but then reimburse their students any difference they may have been overcharged. Universities with these policies include University of Arkansas, Little Rock.
Finally, other institutions will assess tuition and fees based on the number of hours the student is enrolled in each college. At the University of Alabama, for example, the student is assessed the tuition rate for the college that houses a majority of their classes each semester. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, charges students the graduate school rate if all of their classes are housed in the graduate school, but the law school rate if they are taking all law classes or a mix of law and graduate classes. Only the University of Kentucky charges students at the higher rate regardless of the classes in which they are enrolled, which is the same as the policy at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. See Appendix B for more information.

When compared to the majority of our benchmark institutions, it is clear that the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville’s policy is uncommon and inequitable, and is meant to maximize the University’s profit at the expense of these students. This practice is clearly in conflict with the University’s “Students First” policy.

Furthermore, the lack of a written, explicit policy about how tuition and fees are assessed may be in conflict with the American Bar Association’s (ABA) guideline for tuition transparency. Specifically, the ABA mandates that schools of law disclose a “[c]omplete statement of all tuition, fees, anticipated living costs, and other expected expenses.” Because the University has no written policy explaining and justifying these accounting practices, the University effectively failed to disclose completely the costs associated with obtaining a JD. Failure to do this could threaten the School of Law’s accreditation status. See Appendix C for this policy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GRADUATE STUDENT CONGRESS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE,

That the Graduate Student Congress stands opposed to the above unfair accounting practices, and believes that such practices are inconsistent with the University’s “Students First” policy, the policies of many of the University’s benchmark institutions and peer institutions within the University of Arkansas system, as well as the American Bar Association’s tuition transparency policy. Furthermore, given the lack of a clear, written policy, the GSC holds that current dual-degree seeking students who were adversely affected financially by this unofficial policy should be reimbursed without delay; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That the Graduate Student Congress charges Representatives Honey, Nabors, and Spencer to pursue a just resolution to this issue on behalf of those dual-degree seeking students who have been adversely affected financially; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

That a copy of this Resolution will be sent to the following administrators: University of Arkansas system President Donald Bobbitt, interim Chancellor Daniel E. Ferritor, incoming Chancellor Joseph E. Steinmetz, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Ashok Saxena, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Carrie Freeman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Terry Martin, Vice Provost for Planning Kathy Van Laningham, interim Vice Provost for Student Affairs Charles Robinson, Dean of the School of Law Stacy Leeds, Dean of the Graduate School Kim Needy, Associate Dean of the Graduate School Patricia Koski, Dean of the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences Todd Shields, and Chair of Faculty Senate Associate Professor Neil Allison.
Official Use Only

Amendments: ____________________________________________________________

Vote Count:  Aye ________  Nay ________  Abstentions ________

Legislation Status:  Passed _____  Failed ______  Other ____________

___________________________  __________________
Scout Johnson, ASG GSC Speaker  Date

___________________________
Tanner Bone, ASG President  Date
Appendix A: Letter to the Graduate Student Congress

October 13, 2015

Graduate Student Congress:

On behalf of dual-degree students enrolled in the University of Arkansas School of Law and various Graduate School programs, we would like to draw attention to an issue that has been unresolved and inadequately addressed by the Treasurer’s Office and the Office of Academic Affairs.

The current practice of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville is to charge tuition and fees based on a student’s “college of record for the term.” This disclaimer can be found at http://treasurernet.uark.edu/tuition.aspx. While we agree that on its face, this practice seems logical, the policy does not match the current billing practice of the institution. As dual-degree students, we applied and were accepted into the Law and Graduate Schools separately. We participate in two academic programs and will be earning two degrees, as stated on our enrollment verification documents on the Integrated Student Information System (ISIS).

We were never told the University would bill all hours, law and graduate, and the law school rate, in direct opposition of the published tuition and fee rates handed out at the Treasurers Office and published at http://finaid.uark.edu/25.php. The program advisor for the Political Science Masters programs was not aware of the current billing practice, and therefore, was unable to warn students they would be paying law rates for the program. Having never been provided notice of this practice, our tuition and fee totals were higher than expected during our second and third years of study. Loans were inadequate and graduate assistantship tuition payments were unable to cover the cost of the overcharges.

From what we have gathered, charging students at the “highest billing rate,” as determined by the “highest career level” is simply a bureaucratic decision, unrelated to accreditation issues or any other explanations provided while we have shared our issue with involved parties across campus. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (ULAR) charges tuition based the number of credit hours taken per semester per program and we believe the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville can do the same.

We strongly believe the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville is inappropriately charging dual-degree students at a higher rate than the published rates set by the University. We were given no notice. There has been no transparency. Our request to see a written policy on this matter has proven unsuccessful because there is no written policy. We have done all we can do and we now look to the Graduate Student Congress to represent the dual-degree students who are being unjustly overcharged for their education.

Sincerely,

Morgan Atwood, Candidate for JD/MPA ‘16
Ecehan Bayrak, Candidate for JD/MA ‘16
Whitley Hall, Candidate for JD/MPA ‘16
## Appendix B: Policies of Benchmark Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas, Fayetteville</td>
<td>Students are charged law school tuition for all courses, which is higher than graduate school tuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas, Little Rock</td>
<td>Students pay the law school rate for all courses, and then are reimbursed the difference to avoid overcharging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Alabama</td>
<td>Students pay tuition based on the school in which they are enrolled for the most hours per semester. Tuition is assessed on a case-by-case basis during the third and fourth years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Kansas</td>
<td>Law school tuition is charged for law classes, and graduate school tuition is charged for graduate classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>Law school tuition is charged for law classes, and graduate school tuition is charged for graduate classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri, Columbia</td>
<td>Law school tuition is charged for law classes, and graduate school tuition is charged for graduate classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nebraska, Lincoln</td>
<td>Law school tuition is charged for law classes, and graduate school tuition is charged for graduate classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Oklahoma, Norman</td>
<td>Law school tuition is charged for law classes, and graduate school tuition is charged for graduate classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of South Carolina, Columbia</td>
<td>Law school tuition is charged for law classes, and graduate school tuition is charged for graduate classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Tennessee, Knoxville</td>
<td>If students are taking only graduate courses, they are classified as graduate students and pay graduate school tuition. If they are only in law courses, or if they are taking both law and graduate courses, they are assessed the law school tuition rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Kentucky</td>
<td>Students are charged the higher rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ohio State University</td>
<td>Students are charged the higher rate. There is a written policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Tuition Transparency Policy from the American Bar Association

IX. Disclosures
The following information must be disclosed when program information is initially made available to prospective students (i.e., on the program website, in the initial announcement or brochure, and in any communication sent directly to prospective students):

1. Dates, location(s), description of the program, and anticipated enrollment;
2. The nature of the relationship with the foreign institution, if any, other than the provision of facilities and minimal services;
3. The number of students who participated in the program the previous year from the sponsoring law school(s) and the number from other schools (if the program is open to other students);
4. If the program is not limited to students from U.S. law schools, the countries likely to be represented and the expected number of students from those countries;
5. Description of each course and number of credit hours;
6. Schedule of classes with days and times for each class;
7. Requirements for student performance and grading method;
8. Enrollment limitations on any courses offered and criteria for enrollment, including prerequisites;
9. A statement that acceptance of any credit or grade for any course taken in the program, including externships and other clinical offerings, is subject to determination by the student’s home school;
10. Descriptive biographies of program director;
11. Descriptive biographies, including academic credentials and experience, of each faculty member responsible for teaching a course or any portion of a course;
12. Name, address, telephone, e-mail and fax number of an informed contact person at (each of) the sponsoring law school(s);
13. Complete statement of all tuition, fees, anticipated living costs, and other expected expenses;
14. Description and location of classrooms and administrative offices;
15. The extent to which the country, city, and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities;
16. Circumstances under which the program is subject to cancellation, how cancellation will be communicated to the students; what arrangements will be made in the event of cancellation, and information about any prior cancellations, if any;