March meeting minutes

Tuition
Tuition for non-resident students is set to increase 3.7%.

The meeting started with John’s introduction of the new website which will include all the meeting materials, and minutes. The minutes was approved without objection. John mentioned that the tuition for the upcoming year is informational only. We would be interested in hearing about thoughts and expectations on tuition, and more than that, we want to talk about what the process is the University uses to set tuition. John said the tuition for next year has already been set that there is nothing we can say or do about it. However, for the future, we want to plan around if there are things that international students might want to do to avoid some processes.
John displaced a flow chart and stats about how tuition setting works on the board for the group to look at. The flow chart includes two main channels: the first one is administrative portion,.......Vice provost for finance administration. She is in charge of all the accounting, all the money coming in and out from the university. She looks at the entire budget of the entire university and tried to make her best guess about how much money needs to spend next year, and she makes a recommendation based on her estimate. Then she forwards this to the Board of Trustees. In addition to that, John mentioned that the ASUO, the student government at UO, forwards their recommendation for tuition and fees to the Board of Trustees.
John said Board of Trustees is brand new, and they have been around for only one year. Prior to that, the UO was actually controlled by the Oregon university system, which is the state of Oregon that control all seven universities: University of Oregon, Oregon State University, Portland State University, Easter, Southern, Western universities. All the universities realized that there were getting smaller and smaller budget from the state of Oregon. If look back 20 years ago, the state of Oregon would have given UO 20% of its total budget and tax revenues. Now, it is probably less than 5%. Therefore, what UO is saying that the model should be switched that the state of Oregon is giving us only a tiny amount of money to run this university, but it has complete control over the decisions that are made. John continued that there are 12 members in the Board of Trustees, and these are people who graduated from UO.
There are currently 3 members: one student representative, one faculty member, and one staff member. Now, instead of the state of Oregon giving money to UO, even it still does a little bit, the Board of Trustees has the responsibility to go out there and make more money for the university, to make it more financially stable. The Board of Trustees has the authority to increase the tuition up to 5% every single year, and they don’t need anyone’s permission to raise tuition. They can increase the tuition even if all students say no. If they intend to increase more than 5%, they need to get approved by Higher Education Coordination Commission (HECC).
John said the chief accountant of UO suggested that there should be a 3.5% increase in tuition for domestic student and 3.7% increase in tuition for international students for the next year, which is about $2 a credit for international students. ASUO’s position is that they would like to see 0% tuition increase, however, they
propose a 3.4% increase tuition, a moderate reduction. The board took a vote on it, and the final outcome of the vote was 6-5 NO to the 3.4% increase. Then they re-voted for the 3.7% increase, and that went through by 12-0 YES. Therefore, the tuition for international students for the next year is going up 3.7%, and the fees is going up 5%. When you add up all the non-resident students at UO who are going to pay the difference between 3.4 and 3.7% tuition, it is an increase about eight hundred thousand dollars in just one year. The total amount the resident students pay in one year is three hundred million dollars. The portion of international students to non-residents is about a third of a quarter. A fraction of that is the amount paid by international students and the rest of the money is paid by students from other places throughout the US. Anyone that is not from Oregon is considered to be a non-resident and pay the non-resident rate.

Discussion:
Adam said that she understood the agenda item as a way to introduce ideas to students, even though we came from other nations, we also have a responsibility to be part of it and have a certain amount of influence for our own good. She suggested that we as a board could try to be the mediator in between, maybe to get with ASUO, and different student organizations, and International Affairs and the University as a whole, come up with educational/persuasive material that are available to not only incoming students, but also but also students here, so everyone can gradually have the sense to participate more in the student activism and it will eventually beneficial to us. She mentioned that she liked John’s demonstration by flow chart, which is one of the most effective communication way, ad animated way to get the message to the board. She suggested that the first thing we should do is to come up with a way to deliver the message to more people and encourage more people to communicate and get connect with their organizations and the university, by voting.

John also mentioned that there are opportunities of giving feedback at all of these levels including ASUO, Board of Trustee and even the HECC. John thinks a lot of folks are aware of a lot of the issue, the overall financial health of the university and what kind of decisions that they want to make going forward, and people will listen if they provide feedback.

AJ said that he sees why the university raising the tuition, but he asks that isn’t it unfair for the existing students to hold the plan of a estimated budget from the beginning for next four years and all of a sudden, there is tuition raise when they still in their second year of school? If the university really needs to raise the tuition, why do they not started with students who are just starting the university? He said he knows some students who will take a whole year in between to work and save money for the increasing tuition. He likes to see changes, but any small change, such as changing Blackboard to Canvas, he does not want to see this changes affecting students who are already used to one setting, and planning on graduating in the old system.

Abe added that he has heard his argument before, and he was not sure if AJ has ever heard a response from the Administration on that. The argument is how can someone make financial plan when they don’t know how much tuition is going to increase in the coming years. If there is such a wide variances in how much
percentagewise that they could increase in a way that they could build to where it was a known cost when someone goes into it. He continually explained that you don’t go to a store and say: “Sign here, and I will tell you in two weeks of how much it costs.” John mentioned that he knows some universities that have done this as a marketing tool saying that student can take their classes now, and they will tell you the tuition rate later. It helps to encourage people to go to school. John was not sure if this is something that the administration is thinking, but he is sure that even the increase in tuition, if you look every year, has gone up dramatically. However, the enrollment has continually to go up those times. John said that if you look at the problem from the UO administration standard, they are asking why would we care because the university still has a good value with the increasing enrollment rate regardless of the increase in tuition. This does not make any harder for students that are already here because students coming here and they don’t expect to pay significantly more then when they started. They are saying that they are having problems even keeping up with the numbers that are coming in, one of the way that we can control is through either increase our price or increase our admission standard.

Adam said that if you do year by year budgeting, freezing the number for the existing students will cause 3 times more cost for incoming students which will lead to public doubt on whether the university is doing ok or not. She suggest that we need to make sure everyone know this before they sign the contract. Maybe letting them know the estimated tuition, and let them aware that there could be year by year increase, and historically has been around 3% in the past 10 years. Provide a conservative estimation of tuition cost for a four-year degree and the more liberal estimation as well, in the information session, pre-arrival or pre-admission time. At least this way, people will know better, because it does feel like being tricked here if you don’t know those things and being charged more later.

John mentioned that it impacts us administratively as well, and invited Abe to speak about this.

Abe mentioned that tuition has been increasing, but we have no similar increase in the amount of financial aid and scholarships that we offer for students. For example, the number of people on different scholarships has been decreased. This is not isolated to us, and it is prevalent across campus. It is hard for any department on campus as tuition goes up. It is harder to get a graduate student for example, as there are not many opportunities for GTF. Administration is saying the cost of operating this organization is going up, and the revenue has to be taken in. If the cost was not going up, they can raise the tuition and then provide more benefits and resources, so the overall operational cost would be even. But if the cost is going up, and they just give out the same amount of revenue, it’s getting more expensive.

John provided some ideas, potential directions that we can look at in the future. One strategy would be change the rate at which tuition is increased. Trying to find the middle point, and the minimum amount, and taking the rate from 3.7% to 3.4%.

Another is to change the way tuition rate increases impact. Student wants a commitment through the board, saying once we come to school here for a certain number of years at the tuition at that rate, you can still has that amount of increase, but that has to be only apply to new and incoming students. The percentage change
will increase for new students, but the overall amount of money that the administration receives stays the same. Third strategy is to say if you want to increase tuition, fine, but we want to make sure that there are still opportunities for students who don’t have as much money, and we want to see increase also in scholarships, and financial aid budget. It would be great to think of other models. AJ said how the university should advertise and market for the proposal that they are already making, making the students being in the same page, and not treating the administration as our enemy. Trying to see the pictures from both sides, and understanding why there is increase and sharing these idea and information is important. Maybe we can provide that in student orientation in different languages. Adam added that the pre-arrival packages would be very useful as well. John said one of the things that international student can do is asking: “OK, you are raising this amount of money, and now tell us how you are spending it?” Try to influence the programs and the areas in which the tuition increases. “This money is directly from our pocket, and make sure that you are spending it back on us.” Adam said this can be also included in the pre-arrival package, student orientation, and websites in connection with ASUO, since it is part of their job description to advocate for students.

Abe asked whether there has been any larger movement by ASUO or by any student groups in general in more transparency of the process. Just saying that the administration has not done a great job in explaining what they are doing and why they are doing it.

XX said, she gets all these information from president, and that she was told that they will have a campaign going, but they did not actually know the detail. Adam said CSSA has it too, but it is also biased. CSSA has part of their budget only for Chinese student as scholarship (around $500 per term.) She thinks that if a student organization can do that, it is worth to tell administration as well. John asked whether she knows where their budget is coming from. Adam said that their budget is from ASUO, and they also do their sponsor campaign for fundraising. John said that there are actually two separate increases that got passed through. One is for tuition and one is for fees. ASUO controls the all the money that is taken from student fees. The tuition portion is going into general funds through the administrative process. There are two different funding sources, and two different ways that international student can make recommendation and influence on the process. Adam mentioned that the information are very complicated, and it is easy to say it is too much for me, so I am just going to stay out of it. Adam put voting that: “We should work with International Affairs, and ASUO to promote produce information about cost, and how to be more involved. Abe added that it should be more simple, more transparent, more proactive, talking about what the costs are going to be. Adam said that since we represent different student status, we might be able to edit the information package to be more inclusive and comprehensive. Adam moved that International Student Advisory Board would help edit the pro-arrival information for international student concerning the financial model of tuitions and fees, providing more accurate estimation of expenses, and persuading more student involvement in shaping the financial model for tuition increase.
AJ seconded. Abe said we do have the responsibility to give accurate estimation information for the purposes of SEVIS and I-20s in homeland security, and he thinks it is within our authority to create supplemental piece and add to our admin packet that would say the accurate estimation of expenses. And this would not necessarily be a negative issue. John added that we can come up with a recommendation that addresses the intent of the motion, but we will not know the tuition is going to be in two years, three or four years from now. We just can’t guess. Figuring out year by year gives us a limit to provide the information of estimation of cost. However, we can say this is how much that has been increasing year after year, and it follows in a predictable pattern. The other concern is, would that potentially cause a decrease in enrolment? John has no any thoughts or data about this, but he mentioned cost certainly would impact international student of their decision. Adam argued that if the university or the administration does not put out more accurate estimation, they have to seek other sources such as international student organization, previous students, friends, or studying abroad commercial websites, and you would have even less control over how accurate their information is going to be. Adam thinks that one way or another, ISAB can at least provide information and letting students be aware of increase in tuition.

Abe asked that is the motion designed to get the board to participate in the creation of this piece and it is not that the board is calling on the office to create a piece? Adam said yes.

John said we would probably having OIA staff might be doing a first draft, and ask for feedbacks. Adam agreed. Motion approved

Employment
OIA staff Mariska Dover, who is in charge of Work Study information, joined the discussion.

In this discussion: International student employment opportunities.
In the future: Career center, OPT, and other things.
In regarding to the Work Study program, Mariska pulled up some numbers based on how many awards that we give, and how many application that we receive. She mentioned that in the Office of International Affairs, every year we get legit amount that we are able to award Work Study students that apply on our website. We also want to let students know that, when you apply for Work Study scholarship award, it is allowing you to work on campus as an international student. You cannot work outside of campus, but you can work on campus. For on campus positions that hire international Work Study students, it costs them a third of what they would pay.

Federal government pay some of your salary and department will pay some of it. John mentioned this is for domestic Work Study. Abe said that it is an internal subsidy. Work Study as a program is a federally running program. It is subsidized student employment. The federal government typically gives a portion of someone’s salary, and it is usually managed through the financial office. This exists here for domestic students. It’s a federal subsidy to all universities that qualify. Number of years ago, a group of international students came together and said that its not fair that domestic students get this Wok Study, but international students do not because of the citizenship or residency status. The primary drive was that so many
offices were making their employment opportunities with Work Study only. So the only jobs that students could get that were paying international students were low skill jobs, and did not provide them with pre-professional experiences. This meant that international students were washing dishes in the kitchens of the residence halls and international students were not doing high skill jobs. International students had less access to jobs, which is a part of their overall financial viability at UO. This group of concerned international students approached the ASUO, and this was before Abe’s time at UO. They got a motion passed through the ASUO senate that said that one of the fees- the technology fee, and they got the ASUO to designate that technology fee was used to help for technology infrastructure for students across campus, and it was allow to be used as bank account for international students specific Work Study awards. Then any Work Study position only could be applied for by a domestic student federally subsidized Work Study or an international student with the technology fee international student Work Study. This is how it started. Years past, and the tech fee became a budget item in the office of financial aid scholarships. So they would get money elocated from Johnson Hall directly, and it would be in a saving’s account. If someone earned $10 an hour at an office for Work Study as an international student, $7.5 of that would come from the savings account, and $2.5 of that would come from the office. It is cheap for an office to employ a student with Work Study award. Recently, that has been under discussion as well. Because the office of financial aid office scholarships is undergoing a transition, and the new director said this is not really part of his role, and it would make sense if Johnson Hall reconfirm that the amount that they are going for international student specific Work Study. They were giving the money, and it is up to the leadership to decide how to use it to help. So we are engaging Johnson Hall to try to reconfirm that they are dedicated to international student Work Study, and also confirm an amount for that. It was a student initiative to get it in at the first place, and it is uncommon in Abe’s experience for international students that have access to Work Study jobs on college campuses, so this is actually kind of a unique thing that we have. So this is something that we are aware of and fighting for. Just at this last budget round, we submitted a proposal that said this needs to be solidified, this is important, and we have a lot of people that support it. Mariska continued that Work Study changes every year, and how much we can actually award Work Study. Abe said we get a number said to us that this is how much you can get for next year. And it has been very stable last two years. Mariska said we are getting at least 250 applications online, and we award approximately 120-140. In 2013, 57 students used it, and in 2014, 65 students used it. And this year, we have only 58 students are using it. And the award can go anywhere from $500-$6000 depending on their financial need. It is relevant to a 3.0 min GPA as well. This year, the dead line to apply for Work Study is April 15th, 2015, and most of the time we get 100 applicants or so in the last week. When she is talking to the students, students often time mention they are not actually sure what Work Study is, so it is not as much of a benefit. Abe said but it does give international students access to jobs that they wouldn’t have access to otherwise. Mariska agreed. Regarding to the online website application, Adam said just like any other application, it asks a lot of detailed information. She assumed that it is need based,
but if there are a lot of question about how much academic excellency that one might demonstrate, not only GPA, but also how many awards that I have got, and recommendation letters. She is wondering is GPA relevant and how much other stuff is relevant? But generally it makes sense. Mariska said that this is scholarship item that students want to apply, but when she sent out emails awarding the students, I get a lot of emails from students asking whether this money coming into his or her student account. For new students, they are happy to get the award, but they do not know what they are getting. Once we explained, it’s an opportunity to work on campus and other benefits, and then they are on board. Abe said this is a confusing topic for sure. Adam said this is something we want to improve because she did not get a chance to use her Work Study, and took away other people’s opportunity for no reason. But she is glad that Mariska mentioned there are more people that do not use it. She asked if someone is awarded but eventually do not use it, will this can change into an acknowledgement award? Mariska added just like something that adds towards your resume. Adam said that this would be a very helpful idea. Abe said just like an official congratulation letter that says congratulations and your application was outstanding, but it is not a certificate saying this is a congratulations email with a pdf attachment to it. Mariska said other than a confirmation email saying congratulations to Work Study recipients, how much would it help on resume? Adam said that there should be a change in the name, so that it looks more like a student award, and acknowledgement by itself. Abe said it is a classification of an on campus job. It is either Work Study job or not Work Study jobs. He continued that what Adam said is totally valid.

Mariska said all the information about Work Study is on the career center webpage. We do not have is on ours. But there website does answer any questions that international students might have. We do not send out separate email to international students reminding them the application deadline. Abe said people seem to figure out that this is a good resource, and we have a significant number of applicants every year. For ISAB to know, the most important things in my mind about international student Work Study information is that it is unique to the UO, and it is something that other campuses that do not have. It is real when it comes to allowing students to have meaningful on campus employment opportunities that are subsidized. Abe said that offices are not creating more non-Work Study job positions, but whey they create positions, they typically create Work Study positions. Another thing that Abe wants ISAB to know is that it has been a stable source of funding for a number of years. Right now, we are collecting applications, and there is a small chance that we will not get funded for Work Study, but Abe does not like the idea of not knowing right now the deadline for applications for Work Study is in two weeks, whether or not Abe has anything to award or not. He is advocating for it to be recurring source of money, and for that source of money to be increased to meet current international student financial realities, and the desire for professional work experience. Abe said he get international students telling him in one of 3 scenarios: I need the money, and that’s why I do Work Study. I really want meaningful on campus job that is not washing dishes, and I want to be competitive when I go for an internship, and when I go for an off campus job. Or both, I want the money, and I also want good work experience. AJ asked the difference between
Work Study and part-time jobs, and it is the first time he heard about Work Study. Abe said there is no real difference. Work-Study is the funding source of how the part-time job is paid. If a student wants a job on campus, then they usually go to the career center, and they can look online and see all on campus job that are open. At the bottom of the job information site, it is going to say Work Study only or non-Work Study only, and far more positions are Work Study only. Then means you have to have work study award before you are eligible to apply, and it is mandatory. This is for part time on campus job. The office which hires Work Study student to work because they can only afford Work Study student. For example, each of the people that are students who work at the front desk, they only cost us about $2.5 an hour to employ them. The other $7.5 comes from International Student Work Study. It is cheap for us to employ them, and it is good meaningful experience for them to learn customer service skills. And other offices think of this in the same way. Abe said it is a confusing topic. It accomplishes two things for international students in general: covers financial aid, and it is career preparation in jobs. AJ said, there are lots of students who do not know about it. Abe said, we partner with the career center try to help students know about it. Two years ago, we had a ISO session titled: “Do You Want a Part-time Job?” where we talked about Work Study, and how to find a on-campus job. We have been getting feedback about students not knowing about this. If someone talks to us, we as advisors encourage them to visit the career center and get your resume together, and it provides you tips of doing well in interviews and international student Work Study opportunity. We talk about it a lot, but it is confusing topic. Abe said this is unique, and it is important for us to recognize that. We have not done a lot of job.

John mentioned that he will soon provide access for ISAB to write on blogs. It was asked about the money that Work Study student did not use. Mariska said we do not have reserves afterwards. Continued: “Is it possible to give it to other students?” Mariska said not in the same year. That is the problem that students need to wait until the next academic year. We do check GPA periodically, and students like to keep their Work Study jobs. Adam asked whether if there is any information about this in the pre-arrival package. Abe answered there is quite a lot. Abe is very glad that Mariska came and talked about Work Study. He said it is very important for ISAB to know what it is, and what the challenges are. Mariska said that there is difference in the amount as well, and going through about 200 applications takes a while.