Student Government Association  
Tuition Forum  
September 22, 2003

**Background**
The Texas A&M Student Government Association hosted a student forum on tuition increases. President Gates presented information about budget shortfalls, cost increases, cost saving measures, and proposed uses of tuition money.

**Method**
The seven-question survey was created in Teleform©, a software program that creates scannable surveys. Approximately 50 students received a survey to be filled out at the end of the session. Of that number, 40 people returned the survey. Although a few faculty or staff attended the session, they were not included in the data collection. The data was analyzed using SPSS©, a statistical software program, and Excel©.

**Results**
Results will be reported as means and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Qualitative themes are reported here; the entire list can be found in a separate document. In addition, standard deviations, which describe the spread of the data, are found in the statistical tables in a separate document.

The first question asked students how they funded their education, with a check all that applied option, so percentages do not add up to 100%. Table 1 indicates the responses—students currently seem to rely on their parents for educational funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Support</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships/Grants</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1—Current Funding Sources (n=40)

The next question asked how students would cope with the upcoming tuition increases. Again, this question allowed students to check off as many responses as applied, so totals do not add up to 100%. Table 2, on the following page, indicates that students will live on a tighter budget and increase their use of loans.
Methods of Coping with Tuition Increases | Percent
--- | ---
I will live on a tighter budget | 60%
Take out a loan, or more loans | 55%
My parents will live on a tighter budget | 40%
Works more hours/second job | 35%
Get a job | 10%
No effect | 8%

Table 2—Coping Strategies for Increased Tuition (n=40)

Students were asked if they thought Texas A&M University was a good value. Twenty-five percent (25%) strongly agreed with that statement, and another 58% agreed. On the other hand, 15% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed with that statement. On a 4-point scale (strongly agree=4), the mean was 3.05.

Students who attended the program were asked how informed they felt about the issue before hearing the presentation. Table 3 indicates their responses. The majority of students feel they have some knowledge about the issue.

| Before tonight, how did you feel about rising tuition and fees? | Percent |
--- | ---|
Very informed—I realize where my money is going and when I will be expected to pay anything new | 16% |
Informed—I know that new things are going on an I know where I can find out more | 57% |
Barely informed—I hear a few things around campus from friends | 19% |
Not informed at all—I do not understand at all where this new money is needed | 8% |

Table 3—Students Knowledge Level Before the Forum (n=37, mean 2.81)

To follow up with the previous question, students were asked how comfortable they felt about the reasons for rising tuition after attending the forum. About 14% of the respondents indicated they were very comfortable, 62% said they were comfortable, 11% replied they were less comfortable, and 14% were still unsure of the reasons behind the tuition increases. To compare the two previous questions a cross-tabulation was performed and indicated that 70% of the students felt informed before attending and felt more comfortable after attending the forum.

Students were asked, “If you were going to vote to raise one fee, which would it be?” Of the five responses, 33% chose the Computer Access, 23% chose Student Services, 23% chose Rec Sports, 3% chose Transportation, and 3% chose Health Services. Another 18% did not respond to the question.

Students were asked to write in any comments about tuition and fees. The comments were mixed—while some students appreciated the information and agree with the increase, others still wondered what their money went to and what other options there were to save money.
Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the small number of students who attended the forum and responded to the survey, it is difficult to make any generalizations about student views regarding tuition and fee increases. Students who attended the forum may not reflect the views of the general student population.

This information should be shared with the Department of Student Financial Aid so they have an idea of how increases will affect some students. It should also be shared with the departments who are affected by specific fees. Those departments may be interested in providing more information to students about what those fees actually pay for.

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