

**Aerospace Engineering Department
Student Fee Committee Meeting with Dean Menon
Thursday, November 21, 2004 in 13-202**

The meeting began at 11:00 AM. The following were present: James Young (Aero Student Fee Committee Chair), Sagar Desai, Dr. Jordi Puig-Suari (Chair Aerospace Engineering Department), Associate Dean Menon, Amy Hewes (Liaison between Student Fee Committees and Dean), and Bobbi Binder.

This meeting was called in regards to a memorandum which was sent to the College of Engineering Dean by the Aerospace Student Fee Committee entitled "Meeting to Discuss Academic Year 2004-2005 Budget."

The meeting began with an introduction of each member present, as some were not previously acquainted. After introductions, James Young briefly summarized the memorandum and stated the concerns and questions of the Aerospace Student Fee Committee.

AEROSPACE DEPARTMENT BASE BUDGET: After the surfacing of rumors claiming that the Aero departmental budget had been cut as a result of the PRTB status of Dr. Biezdad and the leave of Dr. Cummings and never raised for the addition of the two new faculty members, the Aero Student Fee Committee sought clarity from the college level as to the issue. Associate Dean Menon and Dr. Puig-Suari both explained to the fee committee that the departmental budget is fixed regardless of the amount of faculty that is employed by the department. The reductions that the department saw were a result of state funding cuts that have totaled about 18% in the past 3 years.

Dr. Puig-Suari then went on to explain that the Aero department has been seeing a significant increase in its student body that has led to a more stringent financial situation. He explained that due to the fluctuations in the student body count from year to year, departmental budgets are not increased based on a yearly student body count. Rather, if an increasing trend is seen in the student body count, then that department's base budget will be increased, or vice versa. Despite its increase in student body count, the Aero department has yet to see its budget increased as a result.

These explanations satisfactorily answered the student fee committee's concerns in regards to the issue of the Aerospace Departmental Base Budget.

ALLOCATION OF STUDENT FEE COMMITTEE FUNDS: With the stringent financial situation of the College of Engineering, student fee committees across the board have been forced to spend in upwards of 100% of their budget on instructional support. To many of the student fee committees, in particular, the Aero student fee committee, it seems as though this use of fee committee funds is outside their intended purpose. In addition, the use of Aero student fee committee funds for required Aero courses was a concern of the Aero student fee committee. In addition, the fact that the Aero student fee committee funds were being used to provide required Aero course was a concern

In response to this issue, Associate Dean Menon explained that the primary purpose of the student fee committees, as stated in their by-laws, is to meet instructional needs. If all instructional needs are met, then the remaining balance would be available to use for projects, equipment, etc. Instructional need was defined as making sure that all students in the department had the courses they needed to graduate in a reasonable time as well as classes that were sufficient in size for the educational process.

A discussion commenced with Dr. Puig-Suari in regards to student fee committee money being used for required courses. He explained that the Aero department fiscally cannot support the current total number of required courses as a result of the recent budget cuts. It was determined that if student fee committee funds were not used to pay for the courses, then additional classes would have to be cancelled and class sizes would increase to meet the fiscal budget. James Young stated that the Aero student fee committee would like to be involved in making the decision for which elective courses are offered each year.

This discussion effectively cleared up the concerns of the Aero student fee committee in regards to the allocation of student fee committee funds.

A discussion also commenced in regards to requesting funds or equipment for projects. Associate Dean Menon explained that equipment and supplies can often be obtained for free through partnership efforts. He referred the committee members to Michelle Jenkins, whose specific job is to help obtain funds or equipment through outside sources (companies, corporations, private donations). Before purchasing any expensive equipment or supplies, Dean Menon suggested that the Aero department first contact Michelle Jenkins to see if she could possibly work out a deal to get it for free (or at a small price). Beyond Michelle Jenkins, Associate Dean Menon urged that the student fee committee and those requesting funds for projects to seek and exhaust outside (whether corporate or private) recourses to meet their needs and only coming to the Student Fee Committee if requests were not met. The Aero student fee committee plans to use this route in the future before approving requests for equipment and/or supplies.

Lastly, discussion commenced on the current fiscal situation of the College of Engineering and all of the student fee committees. It was explained that the current financial situation of the college is not permanent. Due to the budget cuts, the student fee committees have been forced to allocate funding for instructional support that otherwise could have been used for student projects and equipment. At the inception of the student fee committees, the need for funding of instructional support was minimal, so a majority of the funds could be used for student projects and equipment. As a result, many student fee committee members became accustomed to using funds for student projects and equipment and may have even become jaded into thinking that this was the only purpose for student fee committee funds. However, Dean Menon and Amy Hewes reminded the Aero student fee committee that the primary responsibility of the student fee committee is to work in cooperation with the Aero department to meet all instructional needs (required course, electives, etc.).