

Hello!

I became interested in medical student tuition, and actually became involved in the administrative board at the OSR, because at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine, our tuition and fees increased from \$10,611 the year I applied to \$17,172 at the start of my third year. We were never given any reasons for the raises, and never saw any additional student services offered in return for increased fees. Instead we were told we were rising along with the national average.

Through my involvement with the AAMC I found out about a database of tuition and fees at all the 124 registered AAMC medical schools. I did a little research using that database and discovered that we were actually paying about \$2500 a year over the national average for a public medical school (2002/2003 average was \$14,635). We were tremendously over the average for the southern region, which was \$11,409, and were exceeded in price in our region only by the University of Virginia.

I serve on the student government at my school, and we then formed a student committee which pursued such questions as what tuition was used for (no-one can tell us), how much tuition contributed to the overall UT medical school budget (2.75%), how tuition increases are implemented (it's at the discretion of the board of trustees), and how we could have an impact. We eventually drafted a letter, which we sent to the deanery, the chancellor, and the board of trustees. We also went and spoke with the Tennessee Commissioner of Finance and Administration about a possible legislative role in restricting tuition increases.

The response we received was actually very positive. Our dean was incredibly supportive of our efforts and also spoke on our behalf to the board of trustees. Several board members, as well as some members of the Tennessee Commission on Higher Education wrote back indicating their concern and support. And this past year, although all the other colleges at the University of Tennessee sustained tuition increases averaging about 9%, the College of Medicine's tuition did not increase at all.

So in the short term, we were very successful, particularly since state appropriations to the school decreased by 10% this past year. We did not however get a promise to "cap" tuition increases in any way. I personally feel that some sort of cap is in order as students don't have time to lobby on their own behalf so dramatically year after year.

On the national level, I was elected as National Delegate for Student Affairs at the OSR in the AAMC last April. I have tried in that position to place medical school tuition and its dramatic recent increases as a priority for the OSR, and hopefully at some point for the AAMC. We did a small, informal survey last fall of the AAMC reps in order to discover how tuition was determined at different schools. We received a wide variety of responses. The OSR is encouraging the AAMC to form a task force on tuition and tuition increases. We are also holding a joint plenary session at our next annual meeting with the Group on Student Affairs (i.e. the student affairs deans) on this topic. I am in the process of compiling the data that I have obtained in hopes that as a document it can jump-start the conversations.

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