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The CBBS mystery [College of Business & Behavioral Science]

by REID GEYER

On Feb. 10, the Clemson Faculty Senate officially released the results of their 2008 Faculty Survey. This survey, distributed electronically, asked instructors to rank 59 different issues on their importance and rate their satisfaction with each issue.

They were also allowed to write comments on each issue. The results published included both the quantitative data and unedited comments in a report nearly 400 pages long.

I was able to read through a copy of this report and buried beneath complaints of department funding and salary increases, I came across this quote from an anonymous professor: "Students in the CBBS (College of Business and Behavioral Science) have generated an extra \$25 million in fee revenue by my rough and conservative calculations. Administrators will not tell students or faculty what percentage of that money is going elsewhere. Clearly, it is not coming back to these students...."

What this faculty member is referring to is the CBBS Fee. Like many others, I was unfamiliar with this \$1,000 per semester fee until it appeared on my tuition bill.

This fee, assessed on juniors and seniors within the College of Business and Behavioral Science, also includes a \$100 per credit hour tax upon non-majors who choose to take upper level courses in the college.

The fee is justified by those in the administration as "an additional payment to fund significant infrastructural and program enhancements that directly benefit all CBBS majors." According to the college's Web site and posters hung in department hallways, about 85 percent of the fee is used to hire more faculty members, help keep class sizes down, open up more sections of upper-level classes, run the trading room floor in Surrin and fund "software and lab enhancements." The other 15 percent goes towards professional development, a category that runs many programs that the Michelin Career Center is already operating.

The idea that thousands, including myself, have been paying an academic fee that faculty members are unsure of what the money is going towards is disturbing.

If the anonymous professor's estimate is accurate, \$25 million dollars over the past couple of years should show a significant increase in the number of faculty hired, and the average class size should be dropping. I decided to check these numbers out, and what I found has left me even more skeptical. According to data from the Office of Institutional Research, the CBBS had 159 full-time and 16 part-time faculty, for a total of 175 teaching faculty.

By 2008, the College had increased to 162 full-time and 25 part-time faculty, leading to an increase of 12 faculty over 12 years, with only three of those being full-time.

One could give the college the benefit of the doubt and conclude that these numbers, while small, could have at least brought class sizes down some. Quite the opposite. Class sizes have actually gone up since the CBBS Fee has been around.

Rising enrollment numbers can only take so much blame. CBBS has seen a 8.6 percent increase in enrollment over the past two years while the College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities saw their own numbers slip, helping to explain why they've had more trouble lowering the average class size.

But what about the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences, a school that's seen a 13 percent increase over the past two years and still managed to lower class sizes?

No matter what data you analyze, it all points to the same conclusion that many faculty members were drawing in the survey: the CBBS Fee isn't doing what it promised. If the anonymous professor's figure is right, and this fee has really raised \$25 million; we've clearly not seen \$25 million worth of improvement. Class sizes have gone up, only three full-time professors have been added, and the business school has actually dropped in the latest Business Week rankings.

And yet, the administration has continued to say "trust us" with a \$1,000 check that majors have to write each semester. The posters hanging in the hallways proclaiming all the great benefits our money is getting us just don't cut it anymore.

The benefits may not be quantifiable, and it could very well be that its all gotten lost in the numbers.

I am willing to admit that I may have missed it completely, and that all of this money can be justified and accounted for. But it's clear that right now, both the currently available statistics and many members of the faculty are on my side.

It's time for those in the dean's office to be held accountable for the poor results that our money has brought under the current administration's handling.

The burden lies on them to provide evidence that this fee is helping those within the college and is not being laid to waste or distributed outside of the college.