

Introduction

Since the last SGA report, great work has been done by all stakeholders to mitigate the disruption caused by Covid-19 on the academic level (i.e., pass/fail, summer internship, capstone, etc.) and student affairs level (i.e., housing refunds, exchange credits approval, etc.). With the conclusion of the spring semester, we have compiled this update to address some pending matters (i.e., part-time jobs) and new concerns pertaining to the online summer session. Per usual, this report aims to communicate the student community's concerns and perspective in addition to humbly offering some suggestions that take into account the overall good of the community in AUI and the wellbeing of students.

Registration Fees:

As stated in the AUI Catalog (p.46) registration fees cover multiple costs including health services, student activities, athletics, swimming pool access and IT services. Similarly to the housing refund, in which students got a prorated reimbursement for not accessing or benefiting from housing services, it is reasonable and logical for students to ask for refunds on services they haven't benefited from since the onset of the lockdown. Since March 9th, students haven't benefited from these services, which they couldn't access due to the campus lockdown that was implemented in accordance with safety and health directives. Understandably, some students were outraged and expressed their dissatisfaction openly and repeatedly. Still, the majority of students recognized the unprecedented nature of the situation and didn't fault the university as the disruption occurred mid semester and the evolving national situation didn't leave the university any choice but to cut access to these services.

Conversely, the notion of paying registration fees for the summer session is devoid of all the aforementioned factors for which students were willing to forgo their access to services. Simply put, in this instance, the university is asking students to pay full fee for services that both parties know won't be rendered. As we transition into exit strategies and easing the restrictions of the health state of emergency, adjusting to this new normalcy and the evolving landscape is paramount; it goes without saying that open, flexible, and constructive dialogue with all stakeholders is necessary to reach a middle ground that will benefit all parties without incurring any undue cost on neither students nor the university.

Like any other institution in the current Covid-19 context, AUI is undeniably struggling to remain financially sustainable and continue to pay all the hardworking faculty and staff members, who significantly enabled the smooth transition to online distance teaching. Undoubtedly, AUI students, as part of this great community, don't only contribute to the university's successes and accentuating its excellence but also feel duty bound to help the university navigate these difficult circumstances. As such, while we categorically reject the notion of paying full fee for services not rendered, it is conceivable to formulate a fee that will allow students to help in alleviating the university's Covid-19 losses and sustaining their beloved university and campus, while not unreasonably offsetting the cost on them and their families, who have also been hit financially by Covid-19 and the health state of emergency. Indeed, it is reasonable to request an appropriate amount for ITS and Office 365 services. As previously mentioned, such a fee and formulation requires constructive dialogue between all stakeholders.

Meanwhile, an alternative revenue stream that will help the university sustain itself financially involves increasing class sizes. The transition to an online summer session removes some of the physical limitations around class sizes. The demand for courses in this summer session is high as seen in the number of students on waiting lists. While in some instances it is high enough to open another section, in most it concerns a few students. As such, we suggest that the university increases the number of seats available per section by 5 seats.

Students with part-time jobs under the Financial Aid Office

As detailed in the first SGA Covid-19 Recommendation List submitted on March 25th, students, who must work a certain number of hours as required in their financial aid and scholarship package are concerned about how they could finish the remaining hours from a distance, given that most of them depend on said money to be able to afford and continue their studies in AUI. We've expressed our hope that since the situation is out of the hands of the students and that scholarships and financial aid should be maintained.

Given that the lockdown's duration has exceeded all our earliest projections, we believe that a more comprehensive solution is in order, one that would be fair to both the students and university by not incurring undue costs on it. In conformity with our rationale around services non-rendered, we propose that the remaining work hours be deferred to the following semester(s). Ideally, there would be a case-by-case process that involves the student and his/her supervisor, enabling them to reach an agreement on how the remaining hours shall be distributed in the following semester's required hours and, if possible, depending on the nature of the tasks, allow for the possibility of fulfilling some hours remotely. As with all alternatives and backups, flexibility and open community between the concerned students and their supervisors are key. Before this is possible, agreeing on guidelines and issuing an institutional framework are of great importance.