

An Explanation of the Engineering Course Fee

Many of you have read or heard about the engineering course fee that was recently approved by the Tennessee Board of Regents. This is a \$20 per student credit hour fee that will be charged to students this fall. The fee will be applied to all courses offered and taught by the Herff College of Engineering. The following paragraphs explain how the fee will be used and the necessity of using this approach.

During exit interviews in recent years, students have consistently expressed complaints related to aging and marginally acceptable laboratory equipment. The financial climate in the state has been such that very little money has been available to remedy the ongoing equipment problem in our College. Lack of financial support for laboratory needs has been cited as an area of concern in accreditation visits to the college. With our next accreditation visit due in the fall of 2003, something had to be done about the state of our laboratory equipment.

Many other universities facing similar problems have resorted to an engineering course fee with proceeds devoted to the purchase and maintenance of laboratory equipment. For example, Missouri engineering programs have had a supplemental fee since the early 1980s and it is currently \$42.60 per student credit hour. The current Arkansas engineering supplement is \$20.30 per student credit hour, and Knoxville's engineering supplement of \$25 per student credit hour has been in effect for several years. In March 2002, officers from the student organizations in the Herff College of Engineering were invited to meet with Dean Warder to discuss the laboratory equipment problems and possible solutions. Even though the student representatives were not enthusiastic about additional fees, they were unanimous in support of a fee if it would be used to provide state-of-the-art working equipment for their laboratories.

A proposal was prepared and submitted to the Board of Regents for approval. Final approval was granted over the summer and the fee became effective this semester. At that same Board of Regents meeting, Tennessee Tech received approval for a \$20 per credit hour engineering supplement as well, but they plan to use some of the proceeds for things other than laboratory equipment. Our supplement will only go toward updating undergraduate laboratory equipment, including equipment you will use in this course.