Student Senate makes decision on parking fee recommendation

Andrew Prater

sy7378bx@metrostate.edu

At their March 18 meeting, the Metropolitan State Student Senate voted to recommend that the school maintain its current parking fee structure into the next school year. Official decisions about student fees are made by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), but the Student Senate and Metro State administration’s recommendations are taken into account when the decision is made.

The parking ramp, which was finished in June of 2015, cost $24 million to build. The Saint Paul city government required that the ramp be constructed as a condition of building the new Science Education Center and Student Center. Between yearly debt service of $1.65 million and operating and maintenance expenses of $598,000, the parking ramp costs the school more than $2.2 million per year.

In order to cover those expenses, Metro State assesses a $12 per credit parking fee on all students. When these fee was introduced, it caused concern among some online students, many of whom felt it was unfair to be charged a fee to support a parking ramp that they were not using.

Responding to these misgivings, school administration presented two scenarios for the next school year: Metro State could keep the same fees as last year, or it could adopt a new structure with parking fees assigned only to on-site credits. Under the proposed plan, the school would add a parking fee of $17.50 per credit for courses take at a Metro State building, such as the St. Paul or Midway campuses, and it would not charge a parking fee for online credits.

On March 15, three days before the vote, the Student Senate hosted a forum to inform the student body about the two plans and to solicit student opinions. Four members of the Student Senate — Matt Rubel, Rico Lopez, Sarah Leistico and Brian Wermerskirchen — as well as Metro State’s Interim CFO Brian Biser and Associate Vice President for Financial Management Anthony Roan attended to answer questions and participate in the discussion.

At the high point of the forum, there were approximately 12 students in attendance. Both of the proposed plans had some support among attendees, though the majority seemed to favor keeping the current fee structure in place.

The forum also included a discussion of waivers. Some attendees suggested providing waivers to disabled students, or for those who purchased a bus pass. Currently, the only students that can get parking fee waivers are active duty members of the military taking online classes.

Feedback from the forum was brought to the Students Senate meeting the following Friday, and, ultimately, the organization voted to recommend keeping the parking fees at $12 per credit for all credits.