Students: Fee vote premature

By Natasha Bhuyan
Arizona Daily Wildcat

Although student leaders are confident that five days is enough time to educate students about the $30 per year activity fee, students on campus say the referendum date is too soon.

"It’s a very short period of time," said Judy Kwan, a materials science and engineering junior. "It’s unreasonable."

Calmly Awe, a psychology junior, said she is not familiar with the fee, and does not plan to vote in next week’s election.

A $30 fee will be charged at the beginning of each semester, and could be refunded to any student who didn’t begin each semester, and could be refunded to any student who didn’t vote Monday.

A 9-0. One senator was not present to vote on campus in time. Two voted against the fee, saying students should have more time to learn about the fee. Members of the Collaboration Board who are behind the fee say it would be used for concerts, public speaking events, educational programs, comedy shows and films for students on campus.

A committee composed of eight student leaders, three students representing the campus at large and two administrators appointed by the vice president for Campus Life would be charged with working out the fee’s details, said Aisling Force, a fine arts junior.

"They need to give it a few weeks," said Amberly Atene, a psychology junior. "They are taking it too fast."

Administrators won’t dismantle the atmospheric sciences department, which for the past 14 months has been targeted for possible elimination, Provost George Davis said yesterday.

Davis said administrators were persuaded not to recommend its closure after reading a report from a faculty committee charged with evaluating how the university could exist in earth sciences and environmental programs.

"They made the case," Davis said. "We will preserve atmospheric sciences."

The department, said, without atmospheric sciences, the UA’s research and teaching would suffer in earth sciences and environmental programs, which deal with land and water use, atmospheric changes and other threats to Earth’s long-term survival. Davis and President Peter Libbey have called earth and environmental studies an area in which the UA should exist in the future.

"There’s some really strong scientists in that department, and the whole field of atmospheric sciences is really key," said Susan Ickes, head of the geosciences department and a committee member.

Atmospheric scientists study long-term climate change, pollution and other issues with public policy implications, in addition to straightforward weather forecasting.

The University of Arizona is one of the strongest universities for science research," said Joaquin Ruiz, dean of the College of Science. "In order to maintain that strength, atmospheric sciences is an important component."

Libbey and Davis had proposed creating an interdisciplinary program in atmospheric sciences, but last week’s report and outside experts showed that such a move would not provide the necessary support to maintain strong research.

"They’re just saying you’ll be crazy to turn that program into an (interdisciplinary studies program) or merge it with some other program," Davis said.

Atmospheric sciences faculty have opposed the department’s proposed elimination since it was announced in January 2003. Last April administrators decided to delay a decision on whether to eliminate atmospheric sciences, saying they needed more time to investigate the effects of the proposed cut.

Faculty welcomed the support they found from the study team.

"Our faculty is certainly in favor of being saved," said atmospheric sciences professor Bernd Braken. "The bottom line is we can’t live without a healthy, good atmosphere."

Now that the department’s future has been solidified, new faculty will be hired to replace the professors who have left in previous years, Ruiz said. Only six full-time faculty currently work in the department, down from eight when the department’s closure was initially proposed 14 months ago.

When proposing the department’s elimination, Davis and Libbey said it lacked enough faculty to be retained as a free-standing department. They had initially proposed moving the faculty to other departments, as part of the interdisciplinary program.

See ELECTION/7 See GREENHOUSE/30

PAGE 3