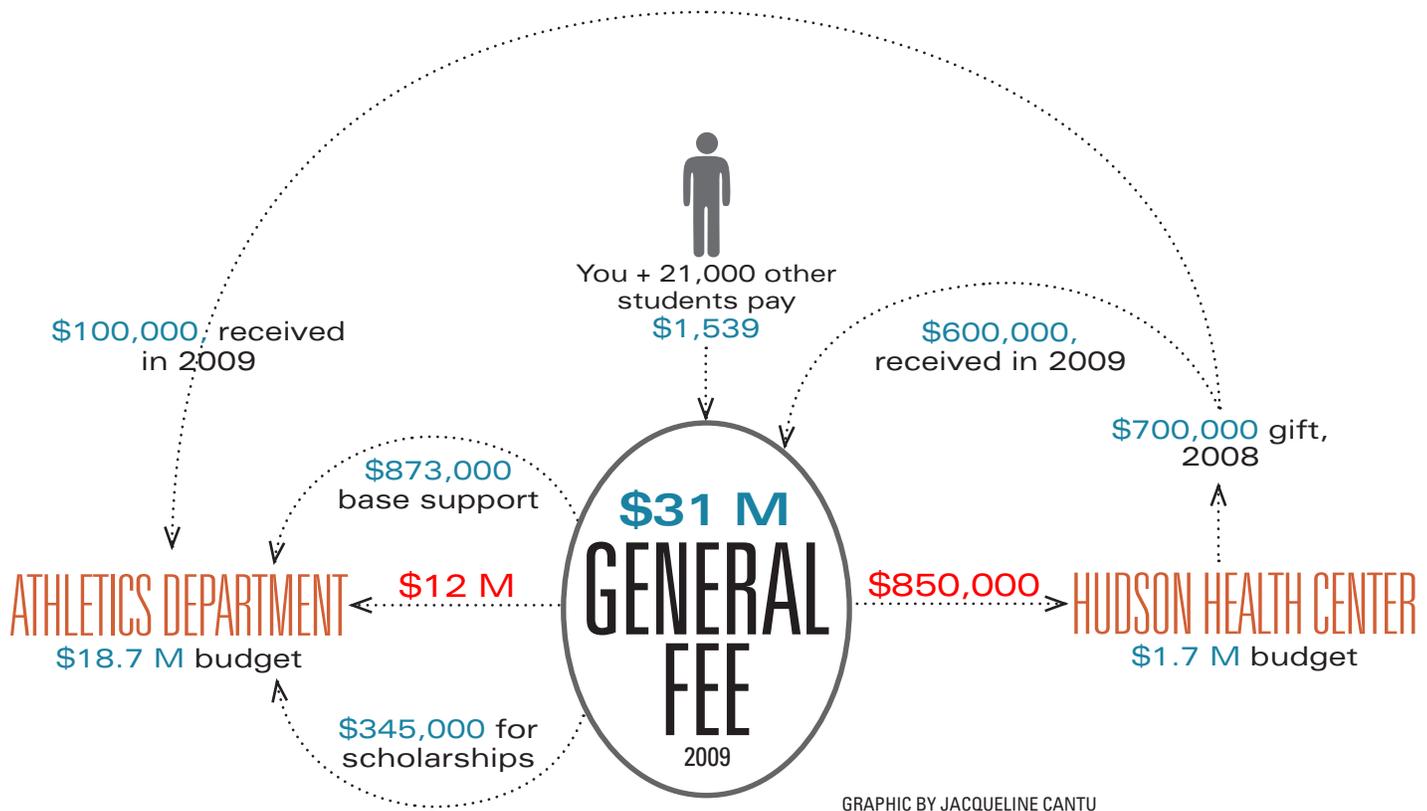


McDavis diverted fee, Hudson money to Athletics



GRAPHIC BY JACQUELINE CANTU

Dylan Scott
For The Post

Ohio University poured money from its run-down student health center and an unexpected surplus of student fee money into its Athletics Department last spring, against the wishes of a student fee advisory committee.

Hudson Health Center, the university's aging medical center, returned almost half of its university funding, \$700,000, to OU's general fee pool. And in one of the year's few fiscal bright spots, an extra \$1.6 million flowed into the fund thanks to increased enrollment and retention.

OU President Roderick McDavis funneled nearly all the money, \$100,000 from Hudson and \$1.2 million of the new fee money, straight to the Athletics Department — which still plans to overspend its \$18.7 million base budget by \$947,000 this year. Without the extra money, Athletics would have overspent by near-

ly twice that much.

A student fee committee recommended that McDavis return \$150,000 to Hudson, reasoning: "it is vitally important that (Hudson) continue to offer improved services." It didn't recommend any of the money go to Athletics.

Of the seven recommendations for Hudson's \$700,000 gift, the return of \$150,000 was the only suggestion McDavis ignored.

Kent Smith, vice president for Student Affairs, said he wouldn't have returned Hudson's money to the fee pool if he'd known about the new fee money. Chauncey Jackson, chairman of the fee committee and a student trustee, said no one told him about the extra funds.

"That's not acceptable," Jackson said.

McDavis defended the decision, saying he asked the Board of Trustees to give the money to Athletics to help end its deficit spending. Athletics relies on the general fee for more than 65 percent of its spending

money and can't access state money, which is earmarked for academics.

"That's why students are admitted into athletic events free of charge, because they're paying," McDavis said. "General fee was a fund where money could be justifiably used to bring down the deficit in (Athletics)."

Professors have repeatedly slammed McDavis for prioritizing athletics over academics. A recent survey found faculty aren't satisfied with McDavis' leadership in nearly every category.

The transfer of money away from Hudson comes at a perilous time for the health center. Though insurance payments and a \$40 quarterly plan for students, called the Wellbeing Program, have generated \$2.1 million for the center, few dispute it needs to be renovated or replaced immediately.

In an April 2008 presentation to the trustees, Smith called the center "unhealthy." His presentation showed cramped exam rooms and an aging

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building that can't accommodate the university's growing student body.

A study by Keeling and Associates in 2007 found Hudson understaffed and underfunded. Wait times have always rankled students, but the temporary loss of two doctors this fall — amid concerns about swine flu — pushed waiting times to two hours or more.

OU recently hired two Ohio Health employees to run Hudson and spent \$57,000 on new equipment. Smith has said that

until enough money can be found to renovate or replace the center, he will work to update it room-by-room.

Trustees have been reluctant to replace Hudson, hesitant to add more debt to OU's balance sheet.

Smith said if he had known about the extra fee money, he would have placed the \$700,000 into a holding account for the renovation of Hudson or the construction of a new building. He said he does not anticipate giving money back next year.

Students pay \$1,539 in general fees each year. Nearly 40 percent went to Athletics last year. Hud-

son received less than 3 percent.

Fee money pays for all non-academic university functions such as Hudson Health Center, Athletics, the Division of Student Affairs, Career Services, University Judiciaries and the Marching 110.

McDavis e-mailed the \$684 million budget he endorsed to all faculty before he sent it to the trustees for approval. In the email, which did not mention Hudson, he said Athletics would do its part to fix the deficit by spending \$1 million less this year.

But the Athletic Department's base spending increased from

\$18.5 million to \$18.7 million, a result of increased spending on scholarships to counter the tuition increase. Athletics did reduce spending on administration and athletic programs by \$170,000 combined.

McDavis, who oversaw the elimination of four sports in 2007, said OU should remain a Division I-A program. That means the department must support all 16 remaining programs.

Athletics used the \$100,000 to fund OU's golf and swimming programs.

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