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NKU students blitz on cuts

Legislators lobbied to oppose trims

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS -

With higher education budget cuts looming, Northern Kentucky University's Student Government Association took to the streets during homecoming this month.

In an initiative called iCare, the association urged students to contact the state legislature to voice their concern.

The association set up three laptops in the University Center from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. during homecoming week, Feb. 1-9, for students to e-mail Frankfort. The senators also passed out index cards advocating students call Frankfort. Several students called on the spot using their cell phones.

"We have been told by Legislative Research Council staff members in Frankfort that NKU has made over 500 calls," said Kelly Sirk, the student association's vice president of public relations.

"Students were giving their personal story. Most were letting the legislators know that they were concerned about the 15 percent budget cut and the value of their quality education being at risk. As SGA, we gave them a sheet of facts about the situation for their own knowledge."

Melissa Koppenhoefer saw the push as part of her duty as an SGA senator.

"We simply don't want an additional tax passed exclusively on the 15,000 students that I represent, nor do we want to limit the student experience and the quality of our education," she said.

Student Meaghan Goodwin was one caller to Frankfort.

"It's important that my education is funded. I need and want a good education so I am able to get a good job when I graduate. It's a huge deal that they are going to cut our funding," she said.

Some students fear not being able to finish school in the face of budget cuts.

"I know people who have dropped out in the past due to money problems with paying tuition; and now that its going up even more, more people are going to have a problem with staying in school," said Katina House. "I really don't understand what this world has come to."

The calls haven't been ignored.

"Several students have been surprised to receive phone calls back from legislators. They are so excited that the legislators are taking the time to listen to their needs for a quality education," said Sirk.

As an incentive, students who made calls were entered into a drawing to win an iPod shuffle, but Sirk argues that was not the reason students made the calls.

"It has been shown that the iPod is not what is driving the students," she said. "We have been told that over 500 calls have been made, but we only have a total of about 80 tickets for students who have entered the iPod drawing throughout the week. This shows that NKU students have received the information and have taken it into their own hands to make the difference."

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