

Research suggests MU administrative expenses too high

By Lee Jones Staff Writer

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Inquiring minds want to know why tuition at top universities keeps increasing each year, and part of the answer is something called an “administrative bloat.”

This occurs when more university funds are allocated to administrative spending than educational spending. A study by the Goldwater Institute suggests that Miami University is among the many schools that have this problem.

Researchers at the Goldwater Institute said per 100 students at American universities, the number of full time administrators rose 39 percent, while the number of educators rose only 18 percent from 1993 to 2007.

According to a Goldman Institute index of spending increases at nearly every American university, Miami is not behind the times. During that same 14-year span, the amount spent on administration grew by nearly 50 percent, while the change in instruction staff cost per 100 students rose only 5.5 percent.

James Brock, an economics professor at Miami, said the university needs to look closely at this issue.

“We need to ask ourselves what is driving the cost higher and higher,” Brock said. “Maybe there’s too much administration.”

Brock said this trend “can’t continue forever” without doing significant damage to the quality of education at American universities.

Interim Provost John Skillings said there are no administrative bloat problems at Miami.

“Over the last few years we’ve had substantial reductions in budgets, but higher cuts were in administrative costs than educational costs,” he said.

Skillings declined to comment on the Goldwater numbers because he was not familiar with them.

“(The Goldwater numbers) can be the basis for answering whether there is administrative bloat at Miami,” Brock said. “I think they merit attention.”

The Goldwater Institute research places a considerable amount of blame on government subsidies of education, saying that this money goes into administration unchecked.

According to the report, “The large and increasing rate of government subsidy for higher education facilitates administrative bloat by insulating students from the costs. Reducing government subsidies would do much to make universities more efficient.”

Skillings sees government subsidies for universities as a crucial tool for making ends meet.

“Substantial funds are directly to pay for teaching students,” he said.

He believes that a university’s budget should reflect its priorities, and its highest priority should be students and their education.

Student Body President Heath Ingram said he sees this as a growing problem that will plague universities if left unresolved.

“I think going forward as the university evaluates its fiscal priorities Miami will have to address administrative spending,” he said.

Ingram said this will ensure that Miami will continue to provide excellent education and opportunities to its students.

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“Maybe there’s too much administration?”

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