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The Grizzly, April 16, 2020

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NEWS

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SPORTS

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STAFF

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Students react to room and board adjustments

🕒 April 17, 2020 👤 Kevin Leon 📁 News 💬 0



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After weeks of deliberation and students demanding answers from the school, Ursinus announced its decision regarding room and board reimbursement on Friday. Students reacted with a mixture of relief and frustration.

An email sent by President Brock Blomberg to Ursinus students stated that the school will be adjusting boarding costs (such as dining and meals) completely for the time students were away from campus. Since many of the costs related to rooms including energy, maintenance, and

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cleaning, are “fixed on a semester basis,” he wrote, room-related charges will be adjusted partially.

The email stated that the school explored several options that followed the guidance set by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administration.

Blomberg outlined the implications of the decision for graduating seniors, then explained options available for returning students.

For graduating seniors, the total room and board adjustment will be \$2,200. This only applies to graduating seniors who haven’t resided on campus since Monday, March 23 (many students have not been on campus since the start of Spring Break on March 6). The amount covers the eight weeks seniors would have resided on campus, including the “Senior Week” leading up to Commencement.

However, graduating seniors won’t get a hold of the credit adjustment particularly soon. The money will not be applied to student accounts for the spring 2020 term until June.

For some, the delay in receiving the money is disappointing.

Senior Juliette Reinhardt stated, “I’m not that upset about the amount. It’s more than I thought but students need that money now, not later.”

Students of the college had expressed frustration and disappointment in the delay of the school’s decision. Many students and families are relying on the reimbursement as it may result in less of a financial burden amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Erin Fowler '20 said, “I’m super disappointed how long it took them to respond to us.”

As for the rest of the students, there are several scenarios. Returning students who have fully paid their tuition can choose between a \$2,100 credit for the Fall or a \$1,600 refund.

The first option of \$2,100 credit reflects the seven weeks the students would have resided on campus after March 23. The credited amount will be applied toward the upcoming school semester for academic charges.

The second option is a \$1,600 adjustment that can be refunded in the form of a check later on this current semester.

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A survey outlining these options along with asking students their preference was sent out this week by the office of Student Financial Services.

For returning students with an outstanding account balance, the total room and board adjustment will be \$1,600. The school will first apply this towards the student's outstanding balance, followed by a refund of any remaining credit balance in the form of a check in the upcoming weeks.

No further action is required by graduating seniors and returning students with an outstanding account balance.

Some students have expressed confusion regarding the options for returning students. Junior Donovan Erskine discussed the financial burden it will put on some students.

"Students that are struggling financially have to decide between a much smaller check and nothing else, or not see the money at all as credit for the next semester that barely covers half of what we are missing out on. This was incredibly predictable especially when you have to constantly remind yourself that you are not a student, you are a client," he said.

Sophomore Ashly Chavez shared, "It's frustrating for students who need that actual money and the fact that they take away money for students if they ask for it back is annoying."

Vice President for Finance and Administration, Annette Parker discussed the breakdown on the adjustments to room & board.

Parker explained that for the COVID-19 shutdown period, full adjustments to fees would be given 100% back to families for board. However, as for room, only half adjustments to fees would be given back to families while the other half would be absorbed by the College.

"These are, obviously, not normal circumstances. There are factors here, though, that do still affect this approach. Please note that almost 100% of room costs are fixed, debt service, maintenance, etc. and the few variable costs, like cleaning, have actually gone up, so the College is not saving money on the shutdown. In fact, the reverse is true. With the exception of being able to turn thermostats back somewhat to save energy, all other costs continue to accrue to the college at the full level whether rooms are occupied or not," said Parker.

Director of Student Financial service, Ellen Curcio, explained the school's rationale for these options.

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She explained that the college's policy is that after the first day of the semester, students are responsible for the full semester room charge. However, the school is making an exception this year due to the extreme difficulty posed by COVID-19.

"While our first priority is providing a choice and additional flexibility for our students, we're also looking at ways to absorb these changes over a greater period of time. We think by offering students a credit in the fall, in contrast to a spring semester adjustment, the college can better plan for any unknowns, lessening the impact on our students and still deliver a high quality academic experience," said Curcio.

She continued, "We also recognize that students may be feeling an economic punch and due to a number of reasons, still have a balance remaining on their accounts. The spring adjustment allows them to reconcile, or make significant headway to resolving that outstanding balance in the short-term."

Junior Maggie Frymoyer thought the school was putting its own financial health ahead of students'. "I guess I understand what the school is doing and it feels like they are simply on damage control. I know we have the money to give full payouts to students who need the money now. But the school is too concerned about keeping money that they don't realize that \$500 means so much to a lot of students right now."

Financial matters pertaining to work-study, additional fees for courses and more are still a concern for some students.

Christopher Moreno '22 said, "We have invested so much time, effort, and money into this institution for them to reimburse us with the minimum. And on top of that my work study is gone. I can't file for unemployment and I can't work due to the pandemic so what is my compensation during this pandemic? Nothing."

According to the Ursinus website, "the college is unable to continue paying students through the federal work/study who are not currently working in campus-related jobs." The school has urged students who are facing urgent financial need to apply to the Bear2Bear student emergency fund.

It's important to note that many college students were excluded from the stimulus package that was recently passed. If students were claimed as dependents by their parents, they won't receive a \$1,200 check, and due to their age, their parents won't receive \$500 due to the qualifying age limit.

The college faces serious implications from the shutdown. Parker said there could be:

“A substantial impact on instruction and, more broadly, the college’s finances, with an estimated total of what is looking to be somewhere in the neighborhood of five to six million dollars – and the additions to that tally have not ended. Lost revenue and additional costs are now approaching 10% of our operating budget.”

She explained that the operating budget of the college, specifically the revenue sources such as tuition (minus financial aid), room and board, annual giving, endowment spending and other sources of revenue go into supporting all of the academic, residential and athletic costs of the college.

“They also support the entire infrastructure of Ursinus. It may help to think of our campus as a small town—we have utilities to pay, a security force, daily upkeep, dozens of buildings that include a number of residences,” she said.

Parker added, “As we address this staggering shortfall, we are making every effort to balance the best interests of students right now, as well as those in the future. The size of the costs from this semester, plus uncertainties in the coming year, have the potential of doing permanent damage to the quality of the institution and its long-term reputation. This would do a disservice to returning students if we could no longer offer the quality of experience that Ursinus students have come to expect, and a disservice to graduates from a reputational damage to the value of an Ursinus diploma. We are completely committed to avoiding such an outcome, and we can only do that if all parts of the college community share the financial burdens that we face.”



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“Biden” My time? I’d rather not be

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This past month has seen the rapid ascendancy of Joe Biden to the top of the Democratic candidate heap, despite his initial poor showing in the first few national primaries. Biden knocked out all other centrist candidates for the 2020 presidential race, and even early favorite Bernie Sanders suspended his presidential campaign – for reasons having just as much to do with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic as Biden’s sudden lead. I’m no great fan of Biden – in addition to being a serial sexual harasser and a doddering old galoot with no control over his mental

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TWEETS

faculties, he also embodies the compromise-oriented spirit of the establishment Democrat.

However, in accordance with the “Intellectual Diversity” act recently instituted by Ursinus, I have been forced to reprint this personal address from Mr. Biden himself – being as all public speaking events are shuttered at the moment, Mr. Biden and the folks behind his campaign thought this would be the best way to reach the “young folks.” The statement is as follows:

“And another thing. When I was riding the rails, back in the, uh, the twenties or the sixties, a stack of pancakes was seven pancakes. No more, no less. And a short stack, a short stack was three. And I remember one day, this would’ve been August of ‘72, I was having lunch with the great senator, a wonderful senator, and his name was Kenneth McRacist. And ol’ Ken used to lift up the pancakes and pour the syrup under each one, and put the butter too. And I said look here buddy, what’s going on? That’s not how you treat a nice, fluffy pancake. And he looked me in the eye and said ‘Hey, man, you talkin’ back to me? Take ‘em out. You gotta keep ‘em separated.’ And those words really stuck with me. Because it taught me that sometimes, to do the things you want to do, you gotta never do the things you want to do.”

“You kids don’t know Thing One about what it takes to be a great politician. All you Jimmies and Janes, you just don’t get it. You gotta make the tough decisions. Sometimes when your bread goes a little bad, you gotta chew around the mold. And the bread, y’know, doesn’t matter if it’s sourdough, or a sweet bagel, you just gotta make the cake the way the cookbook like it’s printed in the cookbook. If you don’t, the cake will end up crazy. And another thing, my elbow hurts.”

“I remember in ‘83, when I was wrapping up college, I felt just like you. I was scared, I was a baby, I didn’t know what a car or an airplane was. But I figured it out, paved my way, didn’t stand in the road too long, and BOOM! That bug in the grass just kept on hopping. You know, if you can put one foot in front of America, and put the other foot in your hand, then brother, let me tell ya, you’ve got so many heads you could start a football team with them. And that’s against the of I and the reason blue corn swertt feetia ghX4 and that’s that.”

Words of wisdom, or a harbinger of doom? You decide. All I can say is this – don’t blame me, I voted for Kodos.

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OPINIONS

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

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Coronavirus is another obstacle on the comeback trail for pitcher Nick DeFeo

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Photograph Courtesy of David Morgan

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“Pop.” Nick DeFeo knew something wasn’t right after hearing this noise while throwing a curveball on his first day of spring practice for Ursinus baseball in 2018. Just to be sure, he threw another fastball despite the discomfort in his arm. It traveled 5 feet then hit the ground. At this point DeFeo had lost all feeling in his hand and couldn’t bend his elbow.

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TWEETS

DeFeo, a freshman at the time, had just lost his first year of college baseball to a torn ulnar collateral ligament (UCL). "I was devastated," DeFeo said. "I've come all this way just to have it end like that." He knew it wouldn't be an easy recovery, but he set his mind to it and told himself that he will be back: better and stronger than ever before.

DeFeo was first noticed by Ursinus in high school as a lanky yet powerful pitcher. He had many successes at Haverford High on the mound that led to Ursinus offering him a spot on the roster come 2018.

"I was beyond excited to start my collegiate career that year," said DeFeo. "I couldn't wait to get out on the field and pitch for the program, but when I found out I needed Tommy John surgery, I questioned if I'd ever be on a field again."

On March 15, 2018, DeFeo underwent successful surgery on his UCL. After getting his cast off about two weeks later, it was time for rehab. "I started doing small exercises for range of motion at first while still wearing a brace," said DeFeo. "It was very repetitive and annoying, but it had to be done."

DeFeo was able to strength train after a few months, then started a throwing program when he was strong enough. "The first time I threw during this program, I had a lot of pain in my arm, which really worried me," said DeFeo. "I told my doctor about this, and he said it was completely normal to have pain the first times throwing after getting surgery, so that gave me a lot of confidence."

DeFeo's program progressed very slowly to ensure that he wouldn't injure himself again. "I went up about one step every week and the entire program took about 16 weeks," he said.

The program finished up just in time to return to spring practices in 2019. The whole process took 11 months.

DeFeo's 2019 season was one to remember from an individual standpoint. The Ursinus pitching staff had a down year in 2019, but DeFeo was a bright spot for the program. He posted one of the best ERAs on the team at 4.97 and had 4 wins with 1 save.

In the shortened 2020 season DeFeo broke out, posting a jaw-dropping 0.73 ERA and 12 strikeouts in 12 innings pitched. He also recorded 1 save and is currently 4 saves away from tying the all-time Ursinus record for saves.

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When asked about the shortened 2020 season, DeFeo reflected the attention away from himself and on to the seniors. “The seniors worked so hard and gave so much back to the program. They were great leaders and helped the whole team reach the next level. We were going to do something great this year, but all we can do now is have it carry over into next year.”

Things couldn't be looking better for Ursinus pitcher Nick DeFeo. It's hard to believe that only two short years ago his baseball career was in jeopardy from a torn UCL. Expect the trend of improvement to continue next year as DeFeo looks for some conference recognition in his senior year at Ursinus.



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