Financial Aid enters quality assurance program

Of the 3,600 post-secondary institutions in the United States, only 145 have been accepted in a U.S. Department of Education program, known as Quality Assurance, that both recognizes and demands quality in the administration of federal student aid programs. West Virginia University was introduced as one of its newest members at a recent Department of Education conference in Baltimore.

According to Ken Sears, associate director of Financial Aid, there are benefits for both WVU and the Department of Education in this arrangement. In signing the agreement, President David C. Hardesty Jr. committed WVU’s Financial Aid Office to continued pursuit of excellence in administering Title IV federal student aid programs. To ensure compliance with the lofty standards set by the program, the Financial Aid Office must complete Department of Education assessments twice each year designed to promote management enhancements and improvements and ensure compliance with Title IV legislation and regulations.

Sears says the office looks forward to this proactive management approach which he likens to “a rigorous program of regular self-audits.” WVU Financial Aid has been conducting its own self-designed quality control initiative, and Sears believes that was one of several reasons WVU was selected.

He also cited WVU’s ratings on private student aid audits and Department of Education program reviews, a low incidence of student loan defaults and a history of compliance and leadership in student aid programs as reasons for the selection. WVU is the first lender in a nationwide program of student loans which began in the mid-90s known as the Federal Direct Student Loan program. Sears expects his office will benefit in several ways from this designation.

“It puts us in some pretty good company,” Sears said. In addition to making continued program improvement, Sears also believes WVU will benefit from a “cutting edge” environment and through association with the other schools committed to excellence.

“These schools are innovators — the ones who are always the first to find better ways of doing things. We have no doubt that will help us as we meet regularly with these schools and as we learn of their best practices.” The Financial Aid Office is already —continued on page 6—

Faculty next stop for revised free speech policy

BY BILL NEVIN

A retooled draft policy on freedom of expression which removes security charges for assembling groups and lifts the ban on leafleting outside residence halls and B&E's was taken up by Faculty Senate May 13.

Revisions to the draft were made by an ad hoc Faculty Senate Committee and endorsed by the Senate Executive Committee April 22, after a two-week comment period.

Other changes include increasing the number of participants who may assemble on the grounds outside of University buildings from 15 to 30 and extending the hours for these activities without reservations.

About 40 comments were received by the group, said Robert Griffith, committee chair.

"Many had merit, and the committee worked to incorporate the suggestions into the latest draft policy," Dr. Griffith noted.

WVU withdrew its old free speech policy in early April and began utilizing a more liberalized and updated freedom of expression policy on an interim basis. The original draft will remain in effect until the new revised document is endorsed by the Faculty Senate and approved by the University administration.

Parking freezes rates, resumes ticketing

A freeze on parking rates has been extended until February 2003 from a previous deadline of July.

Reasons for the delay were to ease the burden on employees already facing health care cost increases July 1 and parking office staff who begin issuing yearly permits in February, said Bob Roberts, director of public safety and transportation.

Meanwhile, the WVU parking office resumed ticketing for expired permits Tuesday, April 30. All vehicles must display a valid permit.

Anyone with questions can call the parking office at 293-5502.

A University-wide committee continues to meet at 5:30 p.m. Thursdays in 121 Woodburn Hall to discuss WVU parking issues. For coverage of the meetings, go to http://intranet.wvu.edu/news/Parking.htm