

The Student Union of the University of Oulu: University of Oulu scholarship program must be equal and predictable

In May, the Board of the University of Oulu will decide on its degree program portfolio for the year 2019. The proposed scholarship program includes some drastic changes to the current model, in which all students apart from those attending the Oulu Business School are offered a full 100 per cent scholarship. The biggest change in the proposed model is that several different scholarship categories can be offered to students studying in the same degree program. The University of Oulu degree program portfolio and the tuition fees have been discussed in faculties and in the Education Management Group over the course the spring. The degree program portfolio defines our university's supply of education, degree programs, and how many students are admitted into each program. Through this decision, the applicants will be informed what the university's supply of education and promise of education are.

The Student Union of the University of Oulu (OYY) considers that all education should be free of charge to everyone. If tuition fees are collected, the Student Union thinks that the university should have a comprehensive and transparent scholarship program for all students who pay tuition fees. Students must have information on the criteria for awarding scholarships as well as the size of the tuition fees already when they are applying, and neither criteria nor the tuition fees may be changed during the course of the studies.

The Student Union considers the proposed model problematic when the equality of students is concerned. Everyone should have the same opportunities for education despite their socioeconomic background, and the opportunities should be primarily based on the applicants' skills and motivation. A complex scholarship system will easily lead to unequal treatment of students depending on whether they pay for the education or not. The scholarship system should also be equal to all students in different faculties.

The Student Union also considers it problematic that the university has marketed its education to international applicants using the pre-existing scholarship system, and that the national tuition fee monitoring group has not yet given a sufficient amount of information on the tuition fees' effect on the universities' internationality, finances, and the realization of equality. The Student Union wishes to remind everyone that according to the university's International Support Strategy Team's (INSTU) recommendations, the coverage of the scholarships can be gradually reduced, if the number of applicants from EU / EEA nations increases. However, this growth has not been sufficiently achieved.

Internationality and globalization should be viewed as a source of strength for the University of Oulu, and not as a source of expenses. Because of the internationalization goals it is important that the university receives students equally from all over the world.

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