

Here are two stories about the regents' meeting and the handling of the fee increase and furlough issue. The outcome was a good one overall, and involved lots of hard work and compromise from many people. The process whereby a recommendation was arrived at for the regents to consider was very open, and everyone was able to have a say, which is as it should be.

The committee that Dan Klaich (our new Chancellor as of July 1) put together, which included faculty and administration reps, worked many hours. Mark, Judy, Scott, and I were faculty reps on it, and it was very ably chaired by Bart Patterson. The 11 page report discussing options that was produced was then examined in great detail by the Council of Presidents in long meetings with Dan. Then a memorandum was eventually produced, signed by Regent chair Mike Wixom and vice-chair Jason Geddes for consideration by everyone concerned.

There were some areas of concern expressed by a few faculty reps at the meeting yesterday, but all expressed their overall support and appreciation for the package, which contained many compromises. Meanwhile, student leaders were very impressive, indicating support for an additional surcharge of 5% per year, if the funds were used to increase access for students.

The Code addition to implement the package that was approved was an emergency measure that must be voted on again within 120 days. There may be further discussion of a couple of possible tweaks to package.

So, all in all, given the very tough situation we face in Nevada, it was a reasonable outcome, and also a demonstration that the governance model we have here in Nevada can work very well. Now we have to make sure the proposal that was adopted is implemented properly on all our campuses. All faculty leaders should be involved in making the proposal work, as we will have to explain it at the next legislative session.

Please join me in expressing appreciation to all those who worked on this, and to the regents for being willing to work with us and the students on a solution to a very difficult problem. We have some excellent regents who really care about higher education in Nevada, the faculty, and the students.

Jim

Tuition to increase by 10% for Nevada undergraduates

BY LENITA POWERS • LPOWERS@RGJ.COM • JUNE 20, 2009

The Board of Regents on Friday unanimously approved a temporary tuition increase of 10 percent per year for the next two school years on undergraduate students at Nevada's colleges and universities.

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The increase includes the 5 percent tuition increase approved last year by the regents, which will result in the 10 percent increase students will pay this fall.

The higher fees will provide the state's higher education system with \$17.7 million in 2009-10 and \$37.3 million in 2010-11 to offset the 12.5 percent budget cuts imposed by the Legislature.

However, those 10 percent tuition increases approved Tuesday are scheduled to drop down to 5 percent after 2011, resulting in a 5 percent increase tuition after the current biennium ends.

Before the vote, student government leaders appeared at the board's Las Vegas meeting and said they support the increases, particularly since part of the money will go to financial aid for low-income students.

"We are not just students, but also citizens of the state of Nevada and subject to taxes just like everyone else," said Eli Reilly, president of the University of Nevada, Reno's undergraduate students.

Adam Cronis, student body president at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, said students understand the budget crisis and most begrudgingly support the increase.

"It is important to remember that these are not just numbers on a page, but that some students will have a very difficult time pursuing their degrees," he said.

"The students at UNLV and, I think, at the other institutions understand why this is happening, but we strongly support that future increases be kept at the campus level," Cronis said.

At one point, the support voiced by all the student government leaders brought Board Chairman Michael Wixom to tears.

"This is just remarkable," Wixom said.

He stopped, in an effort to control his emotions, before he continued speaking.

"I am so proud of you," he said.

Wixom then stood and was joined by the other regents in a standing ovation for the students.

Chancellor Dan Klaich added, "I think it goes to show how powerful the testimony of young men and women who will take all of our places when we are gone is."

In assuring students that some of the tuition increase will help poorer students, Milt Glick, president of the University of Nevada, Reno, said his campus will put 25 percent of the additional money it gets toward needs-based aid.

The regents also approved requiring professional employees to take furloughs as mandated by the Legislature.

Lawmakers this year passed Senate Bill 433, which requires professional employees of the Nevada System of Higher Education to participate in furloughs to provide an overall reduction in salary savings of 4 percent.

Professional employees at each institution, except the Desert Research Institute, will have to take furloughs in the first year of the biennium to meet that overall 4 percent reduction.

In the second year, unpaid furloughs will expand to include administrative and non-tenured faculty employees on annual contracts at each institution, except DRI.

Tenured faculty will not have to take furloughs because their employment and salary levels are protected by contract. However, the regents said they will be required to increase their workload by an equivalent amount, with the option of taking unpaid leave.

Adjunct, or part-time faculty, also are exempt.

Because the actions taken by the board Friday affect board code provisions, its decisions are effective for the next 120 days but must be approved again within that timeline.

That means the regents must vote again at its August or October meetings.

HERE IS STORY FROM RJ

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HIGHER EDUCATION: Regents add to bite of tuition

Expected increase draws little opposition from students

By RICHARD LAKE
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Got a couple hundred bucks lying around?

Yes? Then you could afford the tuition increase OK'd Friday by the state higher ed system's governing board.

The Board of Regents did what everyone knew they were going to do: They unanimously approved a 5 percent tuition hike this year, followed by another 5 percent hike next year. Those increases come on top of increases of 5 percent each year that the board had OK'd a long time ago.

What it means is this: It will cost students an extra couple hundred dollars each semester to go to a university, less than that to go to a community college. Overall, it's a 20-odd

percent jump over the next two years. It currently costs about \$4,400 a year to attend UNLV full time, and about \$1,800 to attend the College of Southern Nevada.

Though the board formally voted on the increase Friday after a long discussion, nobody really complained about it -- not even the student leaders who spoke at the board meeting. The increase has basically been a done deal for months.

Similarly, faculty members had only a few problems with a plan that will cut the pay of most college and university staffers by 4 percent. The pay cut was mandated by the Legislature, but it was left up to the higher ed system to deal with how to implement it.

Lawmakers mandated the cut as part of an overall 12.5 percent cut to the system, down from a recommendation from Gov. Jim Gibbons that higher ed's budget be cut by 36 percent.

"It's a difficult time. It's not a happy time," said Michael Wixom, chairman of the board. "I wish we didn't have to do this, but we do."

The tuition change goes into effect immediately at the universities and the state college but not until next spring at the community colleges. It is expected to raise about \$17 million for the system this upcoming year and \$37 million next year. Some of the money will be used to fund financial aid for poor students. How much is up to each institution's president.

The increase is technically being called a temporary surcharge; it will expire in two years because, higher ed leaders said, they intend to lobby the Legislature to rework how the higher education system is funded in general. They are hoping for major changes.

Student leaders spoke in generally favorable terms about the increase, noting that they knew it was coming.

"The students," said Eli Riley, student president at the University of Nevada, Reno, "are willing to step up."

Adam Cronis, student president at UNLV, said he conducted a survey of 1,000 students there. They were split almost exactly evenly over whether they favored the increase. He said students "understand why this is happening."

Amsala Alemu-Johnson, the student president at Nevada State College, brought the packed meeting room to a hush.

She said the tuition hike was OK with students, so long as it means the school will be better off than it otherwise might have been. "Then we're definitely for it," she said. She noted that she is paying her own way through school.

Wixom, the board chairman, stopped her.

"That's remarkable," he said. He paused. He removed his glasses and appeared to wipe tears from his eyes.

"As difficult as this is," he said, "I am so proud of you."

The room broke into applause, which ended with a standing ovation.

Later, while waiting for the elevator after it was all over, Alemu-Johnson wondered how all that came about.

"I didn't plan for that to happen," she said.

The mood was significantly less exuberant earlier in the day when the subject of pay cuts was being discussed.

The Legislature mandated pay cuts for state employees. Not everyone who works at a college or university is, technically, a state employee. Classified employees -- maintenance workers and the like -- are, and so will be forced to take one day a month off, unpaid. That's a 4.6 percent cut in pay.

But professional staff are employees of the higher education system. They are governed by rules that do not allow across-the-board pay cuts. To cut their pay, the system needs to notify them at least one year ahead of time. The board did that Friday. And to cut the pay of tenured faculty? Nearly impossible, legally. It would require an extensive rewrite of the code, Executive Vice Chancellor Dan Klaich said.

The plan that was OK'd doesn't do anything to any professional or faculty member's pay for the first year, the 2009-10 academic year. It notifies professional staffers that next year, they will be required to take one day a month off, unpaid. They will be allowed to spread this de facto 4.6 percent pay cut over the next two years, if they'd like to.

Because the Legislature mandated that, if pay cuts were not made the first year the savings would have to be made up elsewhere, the plan the board adopted Friday requires institutions to save the money elsewhere. The colleges and universities are all operating with fewer teachers and fewer classes as part of this plan. Klaich, who will take over as chancellor beginning next month, noted that he will take the full pay cut for both years. College and university presidents will have their pay cut only in the second year.

Tenured faculty and much of the staff at Desert Research Institute won't see any pay cuts at all.

The DRI employees are mostly researchers who are funded by federal research grants and contracts, so cutting their pay wouldn't save the state any money. The board did recommend that tenured faculty increase their workload, or take unpaid leave voluntarily. They delegated the implementation of this policy to the institutions' presidents.

Faculty members who spoke before the board were generally receptive. John Filler, the president of the faculty senate at UNLV and chairman of the council of faculty senate chairs, said faculty had two problems with the proposal.

First, they hoped that faculty on a tenure track could be treated the same way tenured faculty were. Second, the faculty hoped that salary cuts would come only to professors who are paid with state funds, not those whose pay comes in full or in part from outside sources, such as grants. Other faculty senate representatives repeated similar issues.

But Klaich said the board was trying to follow the intent of the Legislature, and members didn't believe those proposals would fit that description. Ignoring the intent of the Legislature, he said, could create problems down the road.

Jason Geddes, the board's vice chairman, noted that the solution was not perfect.

"I think everybody hates it," he said.

Which meant, he said, that it appears to have spread the pain fairly evenly.

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