



# West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Higher Education  
News Clippings

Week of February 15, 2009

## W.Va. college tuition increases 'inevitable'

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Students at West Virginia's public colleges and universities will almost certainly be hit with higher tuition bills next year.

"It's inevitable that there will be fee increases," Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland told the Gazette on Monday, after a budget presentation to state legislators.

Noland said he couldn't speculate on how much a tuition hike students might face, especially because his office hasn't received final details of the federal economic stimulus plan.

Gov. Joe Manchin's proposed 2010 budget for higher education is generally consistent with this year's. But to keep up with inflation - and the rising cost of health care and utilities - state institutions face a \$12 million shortfall for operating budgets, Noland told members of the House Committee on Finance.

The HEPC's budget priorities include student financial aid, faculty and staff salaries, capital funding and academic research.

But Noland emphasized that education officials realize the fiscal constraints facing lawmakers. More than half of the 47 states with budget deficits have cut higher education budgets, he said.

"We are all highly cognizant of the economic times in which we find ourselves," he told legislators.

Still, Noland stressed the need for financial aid, especially because so many displaced workers will need training for new careers.

In 2000-01, state revenues made up 58 percent of higher education funding in West Virginia, and tuition revenues made up the rest, he said.

Today, state funds make up 38 percent of higher education support, and tuition pays the rest.

Noland also told the committee that the final federal stimulus bill - which President Obama is set to sign into law today - will not pay for new construction at institutes of higher education. It will still cover major renovations, deferred maintenance and energy-efficiency upgrades.

Finance committee members also heard from James Skidmore, chancellor of the state's community and technical college system. He emphasized the need to keep tuition low for adult students, and to upgrade equipment at technical programs.

Aside from budget questions, legislators on Monday focused on possible changes to the state's Promise scholarship. Last month, an advisory committee recommended a \$4,500-a-year cap on the merit-based aid program.

Several delegates also questioned how the state would afford the Yellow Ribbon Program, a federal initiative related to the new GI Bill.

Manchin touted the program in his State of the State address last week. Out-of-state veterans could attend West Virginia schools at in-state rates, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs would pay the schools for up to half the difference.

While calling the program a good initiative, Delegate Bill Anderson, R-Wood, said he was "very concerned" the federal government would not keep up its commitment - and that in-state students would pay the price for lost revenues.

"We have to be very sensitive to anything that is going to increase the tuition and fees of West Virginia" residents, he said



February 18, 2009

## W.Va. higher ed proposes recession-minded budget Officials warn students may face tuition hike

Associated Press

CHARLESTON — West Virginia's higher education officials have shaped next year's budget with the recession in mind, but warn that students will face a greater burden unless legislators help.

The officials told House Finance Committee members Monday that the state should strive to make college more affordable at a time when residents are losing their jobs. They said enrollment among nontraditional students, adults 25 and older, has already declined for two straight years.

"I find that to be unacceptable," Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland said.

Gov. Joe Manchin has recommended \$1.9 billion in total funding for the state's public four- and two-year institutions, and the administrative agencies that oversee them.

The amount includes nearly \$427 million from general revenue. Lottery proceeds, federal funds and student tuition and fees are among the other sources. But commission figures show that the state's share of higher education funding — general and lottery revenues — has shrunk from 58.5 percent to 38.2 percent since the start of the decade. The share borne by tuition and fees has grown from 41.5 percent of total funding to nearly 62 percent during that time.

The 15 other states in the Southern Regional Education Board have also seen the burden shift toward student revenues, but at half of West Virginia's rate. Meanwhile, tuition and fees at the Mountain State's four-year schools increased by an average 6.8 percent last year and by 47 percent over the past five years, commission figures show.

"We need to ensure that college remains affordable," Noland told the committee members.

Manchin's proposal for the budget year starting July 1 is \$10.7 million more than what officials requested, but 3 percent less than what they're budgeted for the current fiscal year.

Until now, West Virginia has dodged the financial crisis slamming most states. With 47 states struggling to keep their budgets balanced this year, more than half have cut higher education to stave off deficits, Noland said.

He cited states like Arizona, looking to reduce higher education spending by one-fourth, and Minnesota, where faculty recently voted to forego pay raises.

“We are all highly cognizant of the difficult financial times in which we now operate,” he told lawmakers.

But Noland also said that the higher education system still needs \$12 million to cover increases to fixed costs. It would need another \$22 million to keep faculty salaries apace with inflation, he said, while \$55 million would bring them up to the average for the 16 southern states. West Virginia’s faculty pay now ranks second-to-last in the region.



February 20, 2009

## College students: Tuition hike could stall higher education

By CHARLY MARKWART and TAMMIE TOLER, Princeton Times

PRINCETON — Like many recent college graduates, Evangeline Vaughn is trying hard to work her way out of the debt that she accumulated throughout four years of higher education.

This semester, while the Concord University senior works to complete the final course she needs to obtain her bachelor's degree, she is also working four part-time jobs in order to pay off the loans that got her through college.

"I'm really stuck right now, because my loans were all private and they aren't consolidating or deferring right now," she said. "So I owe \$600 a month on them, and when you only make \$1,000, that's tough. I'm going out to interview for an additional job today, just to help me pay for those loans. It's a mess."

Unfortunately for Vaughn and her collegiate peers throughout the state, that mess probably won't clear up anytime soon. At a budget meeting with state legislators this week, Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland reported that tuition increases at the state's public colleges and universities next year are "inevitable." And, in the midst of a national recession and what Noland called a "\$12 million shortfall" in next year's operating budgets for state institutions, local universities and their students will almost certainly be feeling the hit.

"It's a little bit premature to be looking at our tuition costs for next year, because that will be decided in a process that includes the state legislators, the Policy Commission, the Board of Governors, and the institution after we see the state budget," said Jim Nelson, Bluefield State University's director of media relations and assistant to the president. "But, I think that almost every public college in the state is going to have to look at an increase in tuition next year. State funding for education has gone way down, and almost every college in the state has had to increase tuition in recent years because of that squeeze we're looking at."

When university administrators work to avoid that squeeze, Concord senior Ashleigh Glass says, it is the students who feel the pinch.

"With every rise in tuition, I've had to work harder and find more hours somehow to make up the difference," she said. "When your debt is more than you're going to make in two years on the job, it's getting to the point of being ridiculous. I'm seeing a lot of people deciding it makes more sense to go to a technical school rather than study what they'd really like to, because they can't make the loan payments."

Nelson understands that dilemma. At just over \$2,000 per semester, he notes, BSC's tuition is the least expensive of any public four-year institution in the state. Still, when

setting tuition rates, college leaders have to be aware of the “ouch factor,” the point when tuition increases affect students’ decisions regarding higher education.

“Even though we have the lowest tuition in the state, we all know that \$2,000 a semester is a big lick for anybody,” he said. “I believe that all colleges have to have one eye in each of two directions: one on the cost of operating even at a lean capacity effectively for students, and the other on what cost can reasonably not go beyond that ouch factor.”

Vaughn says that if the cost of higher education hasn’t already reached that point, it is perilously close. Like most public universities in the state, Concord’s tuition, currently set at \$4,578 per year, (\$11,108 with room and board) has seen recent increases.

“It’s going to have to break some time, because they’re getting to the point where loan companies are getting ready to go under, which is making the interest rates unbelievable,” she said. “There has to be a point where the increases stop. With my degree, I really don’t have a job market without more degrees, and I can’t afford more degrees without more loans. It’s at the point where a four-year degree is not worth what it’s going to cost later.”

The money state government provides directly to schools has steadily dropped in recent years. In 2000-01, Nolan reported that state revenues made up 58 percent of higher education funding. Students and their families footed the bill for the remaining 42 percent. Today, just eight school years later, that percentage of state funding has dropped 20 percent, to 38 percent of the higher education dollars. That means students now pay 62 percent of what it takes to run state schools.

During a Mercer County stop Tuesday, Gov. Joe Manchin spoke out against tuition hikes within the next year.

“It would be the most disastrous thing that could happen right now,” the governor said.

Rather than raising tuition rates and student fees, Manchin suggested making the higher education system operate more efficiently.

Still, with the economy in its current state, Nelson said the strain of increasing tuition rates isn’t likely to be relieved anytime soon. At BSC, he says, administrators are looking at ways to help students and parents deal with that financial reality.

“Tuition can’t come down, so we try to find ways to soften the blow,” he said. “We do things to encourage students to get through quicker, so they don’t have to pay for extended semesters. And, we will be offering more than 60 web-based or distance learning courses by the end of the spring, which reduces students’ trips to school and saves them on gas money and seat time.”

Of course, Nelson and his colleagues encourage students to look for scholarships and grants as opposed to costly student loans. The equation of decreased budgets and increased tuition costs, though, inevitably makes for a tighter financial aid market.

“We try to route them in the direction of aid they won’t have to pay back, but with the reality being what it is, so is everyone else right now, so there are sometimes decreasing amounts of scholarships,” he said. “Right now endowments are down

because of the economy, and some foundations that use interest to provide scholarships are finding investments aren't yielding the interest they were, so that has tightened the available funds. But, that just means you have to be smarter when looking for those things."

Nelson says that it's never too early, or too late, for students to begin the scholarship search. A collection of small scholarships and grants can go a long way towards paying for tuition, he notes.

One of Manchin's proposals for the 2009 Legislature would limit the popular West Virginia Promise Scholarships to \$4,500 in scholarship funds per year to Mountain State students who graduate high school with a 3.0 grade-point average, score at least a 22 overall on the ACT and attend college inside West Virginia.

About 9,000 students currently receive the benefit of the scholarship program that costs the state \$42 million, according to the most recent estimates. The governor said capping the benefits per year would still allow worthy West Virginia students to expand their education while encouraging them to attend more affordable institutions.

Without the cap, Manchin said West Virginia University and Marshall University will continue reaping the most rewards from the program, while the state's students never consider the ample offerings at smaller institutions, such as Concord and Bluefield State.

With or without the Promise and the possible benefits cap, Nelson said students should start planning their college education as soon as possible to make the most of all available opportunities.

"If you begin the process when you're a sophomore or a junior, talk to your counselors and use the things that are out there like Fastweb.com to find those available scholarships, you can make it work," he said. "Even if you're a graduating senior, there are unclaimed dollars out there."

He acknowledges, though, that student loans often become the reality, even for students who receive some of that scholarship funding. For Glass, who made her way through undergraduate school without relying on loans, the idea of going into debt to pay for law school is overwhelming.

"There comes a time in every person's life when they have to get a loan, and unfortunately that time is coming," she said. "It's nerve-racking that I will have \$150,000 debt after three years, and the job I want to take pays \$60,000 a year. It will cost as much to go to school as I will make in three years, and that is daunting. I think that every effort should be made by the colleges and the state to keep the student budget in mind, because many of us can't work while we are attending school, so we have to go into debt."

Vaughn, who worked full-time through college until her dropping grades forced her back to part-time, agrees.

"Honestly, at the time, I didn't think much about tuition increases because I was getting loans to pay for it, but now it's a real problem, because I'm going to be paying for that

tuition for the next 25 years,” she said. “Retrospectively, financially I would be better off if I hadn’t gone to college. A lot better off.”

Nelson, though, believes that despite rising tuition costs and the lingering effects of student loans, a college education is still worth the price.

“Statistics show that college graduates make three times the salary as non-grads, so it’s still a nice trade,” he said. “But, we know that when students begin working they won’t be making what they will in ten years, and the need to repay is there. We’re just trying to do as much as we can to keep the cost as affordable as we can without requiring students to bear a huge load in tuition increases.”



February 20, 2009

## WVUH plan can save \$7M

### Changes in health premiums, hiring, purchasing on list

BY CASSIE SHANER, The Dominion Post

WVU Hospitals announced plans on Thursday to save more than \$7 million this year by altering employee benefits and re-evaluating operations to increase efficiency.

Bruce McClymonds, president and CEO of WVU Hospitals (WVUH), said a decline in the hospital's investment portfolio, slowed growth in the demand for services, and an increase in uncompensated care have all created financial challenges, but the hospital will continue to hire new employees and provide competitive pay.

A memo was sent to 4,500 full- and part-time WVUH employees Thursday detailing the hospital's margin improvement plan, McClymonds said at a press briefing Thursday.

"The objective here is to preserve employment, to save jobs, to be proactive in looking at our structure organizationally and look for opportunities to do things more efficiently," he said. "That's what we're trying to do here."

The plan eliminates a benefit that gives employees paid time off for perfect attendance and a rule that provides full-time benefits to part-time employees who work at least 832 hours — nearly full time — in a six-month period.

"This is not a strategy to harm the employee," McClymonds said, adding that management would need to make sure employees are paid and classified appropriately. "If they're really working as a full-time employee, then they need to be in the system as a [full-time] employee."

The hospital will also reduce its match for employee retirement contributions and charge employees an \$80 per pay fee — on top of existing premiums — to provide health insurance for spouses who could be covered through their own employer.

At the same time, however, the hospital will reduce co-pays for prescriptions to boost revenue at the facility's on-site pharmacy.

McClymonds said the national economic crisis has led some patients to put off non-essential procedures and services, but the hospital is in strong financial condition. And the improvement plan is designed to keep it that way, he said.

"This is not a crisis," McClymonds said. "We think we are taking action that will avert a crisis. We are trying to be proactive."

McClymonds said the hospital remains committed to providing high-quality health care, but officials plan to reduce expenses by cutting back on non-clinical supplies and putting about \$20 million in facility and technology improvements on hold.

Officials also plan to re-evaluate vacant positions as they come open, McClymonds said.

About 1,000 people were hired at WVU Hospitals last year, and about 100 filled new positions. The number of new jobs will likely drop this year, but McClymonds still expects the hospital to continue to add employees.

“We’re not talking about significant change,” McClymonds said. “We’re talking about continual examination of how we can do things a little more efficiently and better manage our labor costs.”

McClymonds said payroll costs and employee benefits amount to about 52 percent of WVUH’s operating budget each year, but he wasn’t sure of the total cost of operations. WVU’s overall budget — including operations and other expenses — is about \$550 million a year.

McClymonds said raises will continue, too, and bonuses are still included in the budget. They were eliminated last year to cut costs.

### Consulting and cooperating

McClymonds said the WVU School of Medicine and University Health Associates (UHA) are also experiencing financial challenges similar to WVUH, and officials are working together to coordinate improvements.

WVU hired a Pittsburgh consulting firm — R&V Associates — to examine operations at the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center (HSC) last year, but the firm was fired a few months later. WVU officials said that an interim report issued by the firm contained several inaccuracies and failed to provide solutions to ongoing problems.

The report detailed staffing shortages, financial shortcomings and leadership and structural problems across several departments at WVUH, the WVU School of Medicine and UHA, the university’s clinical practice arm.

According to a memo provided by HSC spokeswoman Amy Johns, a new consultant — The Chartis Group — was hired in December to help leaders at the health sciences center develop a more unified organizational structure. WVUH and UHA will cover the cost of the consultant’s services — up to \$315,000.

So far, Johns said, The Chartis Group has had two meetings with HSC leaders, participated in a town hall meeting with employees and interviewed about 30 people on campus. Once its work is complete, the firm will provide a report that includes recommendations, the rationale for each one and an implementation plan.

Fred Butcher, interim vice president of health sciences, said the firm’s experience with academic health centers has already been an asset to WVU.

“The Chartis Group has brought some very experienced people from the world of health care and academia to our campus. ....” Butcher said. “They’ve contributed a lot to our discussions — and they’ve reinforced our belief that we need to make our operations more efficient so that we can meet the needs of our patients better, free up scarce resources for research and teaching, and improve the service we return to the people of West Virginia.”



February 15, 2009

## WVU group picks finalists

### List of presidential candidates given to BOG for review

BY CASSIE SHANER, The Dominion Post

WVU's presidential search committee completed its work Saturday by selecting presidential finalists for the university's Board of Governors (BOG) to consider.

But Gene Budig, chairman of the search committee, refused to say how many candidates' names the board will receive or how many interviews were held.

The search committee met in executive session at the Mountainlair for about three hours Saturday to select its final candidates.

"We were pleased to have the difficult task of closely examining numerous strong applications to identify the candidates who will fulfill the institution's needs and be a great fit for West Virginia University and the state of West Virginia," Budig said in a press release.

He later added: "It was a long and painful process because of the quality of candidates. We knew it would be difficult; it was difficult."

The list of finalists was approved unanimously, Budig said, and the board agreed to forward the candidates' names to BOG chairwoman Carolyn Long, also a search panel member.

Information about the candidates will be provided to the board confidentially once the candidates have been notified and agreed to continue being considered — probably within the next day or so, Budig said.

The names of the candidates being considered have not been released publicly, according to rules established by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission.

At a press briefing following Saturday's meeting, Long said she accepted the candidates chosen by the search committee on the board's behalf. She and Budig both praised the search panel for its work.

"This committee has been relentless in [its] striving for excellence and looking for excellence for WVU," Long said. "I appreciate your efforts and your hard work."

Budig has said previously that the committee would likely narrow the list of candidates to five or six names, and the search committee agreed last month to extend invitations for off-campus interviews to 16 candidates.

Budig said the search committee participated in "several days of off-campus interviews."

The interviews included discussions about the Heather Bresch scandal, but those conversations pertained to the facts of the situation, Budig said. He added that “no one” was reluctant to take the job as a result.

An investigative panel determined last year that WVU had retroactively awarded Bresch, the daughter of Gov. Joe Manchin and chief operating officer for Mylan Inc., an executive MBA degree she did not earn. Former WVU President Mike Garrison stepped down following the panel’s report.

“In the final analysis, it was no factor,” Budig said. “What prevailed ... was the reputation of WVU. It remains solid. It is not tainted. [The job] had enormous national appeal to a significant number of gifted academics.”

In a press release, Budig said the presidential vacancy at WVU “generated significant national interest,” and he described the applicants as “very well-qualified, highly experienced and well-regarded.”

Long said the board has agreed on a plan to proceed with the search, but she said that process will remain confidential for now.

Long said the board still plans to conduct on-campus interviews with candidates — including open forums with various constituencies — after March 15, and the board is still on track to select and announce WVU’s next president at its April 3 meeting.

Budig said he will be available to assist the board as needed.

“I will do anything for this university,” Budig said. “I accepted this assignment because of my deep love for it ... I’ll do what I can to help the board bring a successful conclusion to the process.”

## MU, WVU receive large gift from Verizon toward Bucks for Jobs

The Herald-Dispatch

CHARLESTON -- Both Marshall University and West Virginia University were given \$250,000 grants from Verizon West Virginia Monday at a presentation in Charleston.

The grants, which the state will match, are part of the Bucks for Jobs initiative started in 2008 by Gov. Joe Manchin.

The money goes toward endowment-based research at Marshall's Institute of Interdisciplinary Research, said university President Stephen Kopp.

"The fact that Verizon gave so much is a statement of support and confidence in Marshall and WVU," Kopp said.

He also said the funds, now up to \$2 million in cash and written pledges, will go toward breakthrough discoveries with the research people are doing.

Through the schools' programs, newly hired faculty also will find ways to patent, license and commercialize products that result from their research. The ultimate goal is for West Virginians to reap financial benefits from industries this investment creates -- from bioscience to healthcare to manufacturing to technology.

"Verizon has been a leading proponent of economic development in West Virginia for decades," said B. Keith Fulton, president of Verizon West Virginia. "Technology will play an important role in our state's continued growth and future success. Our goal in supporting this program is to improve the communities we serve and live in by helping to create new, technology-based jobs right here at home."

According to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, studies show that regions populated with science, technology, engineering and mathematics professionals show more intellectual property creation, higher wages, positive health care statistics, more new business startups and jobs. In areas like North Carolina, where colleges and universities receive federal and state funding to attract the right people who can get grants and conduct research, the effort has generated billions of dollars into the state, although it can take time.

Through Bucks for Jobs, Marshall and WVU can compete for up-and-coming scientists on an international level. Both schools already have developed plans for their respective shares of the funds, which they may start to receive by the first part of this year through 2010.

## MU-MCTC separation likely to go to arbitration

BILL ROSENBERGER, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- If a resolution is not reached with Marshall University by Feb. 27, the separation of assets and liabilities between the university and Marshall Community & Technical College will go into arbitration.

As part of House Bill 3215, passed during the 2008 legislative session, universities and community & technical colleges that were academically and administratively linked had to work out a separation plan.

Marshall and MCTC are still working out several details of that plan, including separating enrollment databases.

MCTC President Keith Cotroneo said while a verbal agreement seemed to have been struck with Marshall concerning the database, there are still disagreements with regards to e-course fees, recreational center fees and land at the corner of 20th Street and 5th Avenue bought with MCTC's state-appropriated funds that the Marshall Board of Governors holds the deed on.

And the university has declined to sign off on agreements one at a time.

"It seems the university is reluctant to sign off on any one issue," said Sue Richardson, chairwoman of the MCTC Board of Governors. "We thought the database resolution was going to be signed (last) Friday and it wasn't."

Marshall University spokesperson Bill Bissett said some disagreements could have implications with agreements, therefore a need for a total package.

"Negotiations are continuing, and it is accurate that Marshall University would like to see an entire agreement reached rather than portions," Bissett said.

Cotroneo said the database issue is the most pressing as time creeps closer to scheduling for fall classes. Registration for current students begins Monday, April 13. New students can register Monday, April 27, through Friday, May 8. Summer registration starts at the end of March.

"They have to segment out our data, and we have to ensure the system is operating properly," he said. "We have to make sure our staff knows how to use it and prepare for the fall. It's time consuming, and we need to get moving on it."

The original date for a separation agreement was in December, but it was moved to Feb. 27. However, Jim Skidmore, chancellor of the West Virginia Community & Technical College System, said there have been discussions to move the date back again. But he indicated that some schools, including MCTC, may not be able to wait because the database issue is so critical.

"(Marshall University) is holding up the database (agreement) because of some other issues," Skidmore said. "I was hoping they could move forward with a database plan

instead of putting it with the whole package. The database, that holds up the whole process of enrolling students. That's going to be a disservice for students if we don't get this worked out."

The other issue is the rec center fee, which the MCTC Board of Governors voted to make optional for its students. But Cotroneo said university officials did not act on it.

"The university has essentially refused to stop charging (MCTC students)," he said. "They have their reasons, but they have not implemented the recommendations of this board."

Cotroneo said he thinks the talks with Marshall have gone well, indicating that initial talks about the rec center fee were well received. And more time would allow the two boards to work out any differences. But the deadline is state mandated.

"We think we can resolve most of the issues locally, but the issue is a time matter," he said.

Bissett said the development of the funding process and bonds for the recreational center were done with MCTC's student population in consideration. And taking away those funds would change the financing model. All Marshall and MCTC students pay \$150 per semester for use of the new facility.

MCTC's Board of Governors voted on a Monday deadline to have resolutions in place before forwarding paperwork to Skidmore and Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland.

If those Skidmore and Noland cannot reach an agreement, then the matter goes to a three-party panel made up of one person from each state agency and an agreed-upon third party. That decision is binding.

The board also authorized MCTC administration to move forward with the preparation of cost analyses for sites discussed in executive session.

It's not known how many sites this includes, but four offers were made at a public meeting earlier this month. Those sites included KineticPark, the Pullman Plaza Hotel, downtown property along 5th Avenue between 14th and 15th streets and three parcels of land that are part of a 200-acre lot owned by Dave Duffield and Bob Null. The land is located across from KineticPark on the other side of Interstate 64.

### Legislature changes WVU-P status

By WAYNE TOWNER

PARKERSBURG - West Virginia University at Parkersburg experienced a big change in its status through action by the West Virginia Legislature in 2008 and college officials are still waiting to see what all of the ramifications and effects will be as they continue looking for ways to serve the Mid-Ohio Valley community.

Looking back at 2008, "I think we had a pretty good year after we got past the legislative session," said Dr. Marie Foster Gnage, president of WVU-P. "Enrollment was good when we got to fall. Certainly, we would have liked to see it increase, we were looking for 4,000 students. We think some of the discussion and the results and the response to (House Bill) 3215 might have caused us not to increase, but we did not decrease."

The result of HB 3215 was to sever - legislatively - WVU-P's relationship with West Virginia University as a regional campus and make it a more independent entity. Gnage said there were both positive and negative aspects to the change, such as opening access to some different financial and program sources for WVU-P, but also requiring it to stand more on its own.

"I think good is going to come out of what is taking place, even though what we really want to do is maintain that relationship with West Virginia University because it is an important for the college, for the students and for the region," Gnage said.

It will be some time before all of the changes and ramifications resulting from HB 3215 are finalized, she said. The process is ongoing and will continue through 2009. The local campus wants to maintain a close relationship with WVU, but it will be through joint service agreements rather than as a part of the larger university.

Other factors affecting WVU-P during the past year included the spike in gasoline prices during the first half of the year and the general decline of the national economy in the second half of the year, she said.

Those factors resulted in some changes which have been proven popular with students. The first was the decision to offer more classes and courses online. The second involved scheduling groups of classes so students would only have to come to campus two days a week, saving on fuel costs and other benefits.

Both have been very well received by students, Gnage said.

WVU-P's online offerings include four degrees that can be earned through online classes, including the Associate of Applied Science in Business Technology, the Associate of Applied Science in Multi-Craft Technology, the Associate of Science in Business Administration and the Associate of Arts.

One-third of enrollment in summer classes was online in 2008, WVU-P spokesman Connie Dziagwa said. The number is expected to increase as more students make use of online services. WVU-P also offers some non-credit courses online, often called personal enrichment classes. Some classes also are designed for professional development, and allow people to gain further skills in their chosen fields.

Despite the uncertainties faced in 2008, WVU-P officials were able to accomplish some campus enhancements during the year. Gnage said the college implemented a \$3.5 million infrastructure project aimed at energy efficiency improvements.

The project included changes and upgrades in lighting, windows, toilets, and the heating and cooling system. The energy savings created by the changes will more than pay back the costs, she said.

With the current economic situation locally and nationally, WVU-P is putting on hold some proposed brick-and-mortar projects. During the early part of 2008, college officials were working toward possible construction of a new child development center and a new advance technology facility on the campus. Those projects are now on hold but WVU-P is continuing to look at ways to upgrade and improve its programs, curriculum offerings and services, Gnage said.

Looking ahead at 2009, the college will continue working on ways to improve programs and offerings and access to those for the community. The college is also looking at strategic planning down the road, in 2010 and beyond.

"We have to be a great institution for this valley, we have to continue to be an institution that offers what is needed for the Mid-Ohio Valley and that means we don't sit on our hands, we move forward," Gnage said.