



West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Higher Education
News Clippings

Week of May 10, 2009



May 13, 2009

State to vote on college tuition hikes WVU will not be considered until state budget is finalized

By Staff, wire reports

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission is preparing to vote on proposed tuition increases at state schools that range from about 3 percent to more than 9 percent.

Tuition increases are on the agenda for the commission's Thursday meeting, but an expected tuition hike for WVU is on hold until the state budget is finalized.

West Liberty State University is seeking the largest increases. The university has proposed a 9.32-percent hike for in-state students and a 9.67-percent increase for out-of-state students.

Fairmont State University has proposed the smallest tuition hikes, 3.08 percent for in-state students and 3.03 percent for out-of-state students.

The commission said the WVU and Marshall University boards have not yet acted on tuition hikes.

Interim WVU President C. Peter Magrath has said WVU will have to increase tuition due to an expected drop in state funding, but the exact amount will depend on how much money WVU receives in the state budget. Lawmakers will reconvene to consider the 2009-'10 budget May 26.

WVU received about \$205.2 million from the state in 2008-'09 — about 25 percent of the university's \$823.2 million in overall funding. But Magrath said officials have indicated that WVU's allocation from the state could be cut by 2 percent to 5 percent this year.

Magrath has said WVU's tuition could increase by up to 4 percent.

"I don't want to go higher than four," Magrath said Tuesday. "We'll be OK with four."

Undergraduate tuition at WVU costs about \$5,100 a year for in-state students and about \$15,768 a year for out-of-state students. A 4-percent tuition hike would increase the cost by about \$204 a year for instate students and \$630.72 for out-of-state students.

The increase will likely be factored into WVU's budget and presented to the university's board of governors for consideration in June.

May 13, 2009

Textbooks

WVU officials asked to look into books' out-of-control prices

It is not difficult for today's college students to spend more on textbooks than their parents did for tuition plus books. While we understand that virtually everything costs more these days, it appears to some that the cost of books for college has gotten out of control.

Some members of the West Virginia University Student Government Association are asking WVU officials to look into the matter. Specifically, the students are upset by what they consider to be too-low prices paid by the university bookstore when it buys books back from students.

Members of the state Higher Education Policy Commission agree that textbook costs are a problem. They have created a nine-member task force to look into the matter.

It is not at all uncommon for college and university students - everywhere, not just at WVU - to pay \$100 or more for a single textbook. The cost of books for a single semester can top \$500 - or even more for students in advanced or specialized programs.

That is ridiculous, even considering the fact that textbooks often have to be priced higher than books for the popular market, for various reasons.

We agree that textbook prices have become a tremendous burden on students at institutions of higher learning. At the same time we wonder what can be done about them. We encourage Higher Education Policy Commission members to make the issue a priority - and to work with college and university officials in other states, if possible, to address the situation.



May 14, 2009

WVU renews pledge for \$20M wellness center Student facility may be ready by 2011

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

WVU officials renewed their commitment to construct a \$20 million wellness center near the Student Recreation Center by 2011 on Wednesday.

They are still seeking funding for the facility. It would further integrate and improve health resources on campus by combining medical care, mental health, psychiatry, health education and wellness services under one roof, officials said.

“We like to say that we are a student-centered university,” interim WVU President C. Peter Magrath said. “If we are a student-centered university ... it is absolutely imperative that we have an integrated student health center where thousands and thousands of men and women who are students here can go and get friendly, good service for their health needs.”

WVU’s Division of Student Affairs hosted a strategic planning retreat with WVU students, faculty and staff at the Mountainlair on Wednesday to discuss plans for the wellness center and other health initiatives.

Ken Gray, vice president of student affairs, said WVU’s health care programs have operated independently in the past, but they were incorporated into the Division of Student Affairs several months ago to integrate health care services. A flow chart detailing the new structural organization was presented to attendees at the retreat.

Cathy Yura, interim assistant vice president of student health and wellness, reports to Gray and oversees WVU’s Student Health Service, mental health, psychiatric services and health promotions programs.

She noted that students have already expressed their dedication to health and wellness by using the Rec Center and crafting a campuswide wellness initiative — called WELL WVU — that was presented to administrators last fall. Now it’s up to WVU’s faculty and staff to focus on health care, she said.

“It’s of the utmost importance that we work together to provide comprehensive health care for our students,” Yura said.

Lisa Costello, a WVU medical student, reminded attendees that good health is essential for a good education, and health lessons extend beyond WVU’s classrooms and the Morgantown community.

“By teaching our students — most of whom are West Virginia residents like me — about the importance of health, we secondarily disseminate that information back into the student’s community, thus fulfilling a purpose of our landgrant mission,” Costello said.

Yura said the wellness center will likely cost \$20 million or more, and administrators hope to have it built by 2011.

No funding has been identified for the project, but Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, said Monongalia County's legislators are "thinking creatively" to identify funding opportunities.

Fleischauer said local legislators plan to contact federal lawmakers for assistance, and they are looking into tobacco settlement money, federal grants and bonding, among other options. She's not sure if the project could be completed by 2011, however.

"I think it would be wonderful if we could get there," Fleischauer said. "I don't know if it's a feasible goal. We have a lot of work to do."

Magrath noted that running and regular exercise have helped him feel more strong and alert. He will return to Washington, D.C., after WVU President-elect James P. Clements takes over June 30, but he said he will try to return to Morgantown for the wellness center's ribbon-cutting.

"Everybody needs to push for this," Magrath said. "It's good for WVU. It's good for the citizens of this state."

May 14, 2009

Now a University, West Liberty Wants A 6.6-Percent Hike

By HEATHER

WEST LIBERTY - A vote is expected today in Charleston on a proposed 6.6-percent increase in tuition for in-state students attending West Liberty University.

The proposed increase comes less than two weeks after the former West Liberty State College attained university status.

Reid Amos, executive director of the Office of Communications at WLU, said Wednesday the proposed increase previously was erroneously reported by the Associated Press as a 9.32-percent increase request.

"The actual request for in-state students is 6.6 percent, which is about \$151 a semester," Amos noted.

For out-of-state students, the proposed rate increase is 8.54 percent, or about \$470 per semester. The metro rate also would be affected under the proposed new rate structure. The metro rate is for students with a permanent address in Belmont, Columbiana, Guernsey, Jefferson and Monroe counties in Ohio; and Allegheny, Beaver, Greene and Washington counties in Pennsylvania. Effective for the fall 2009 semester, the metro rate also will include the counties of Carroll, Harrison, Stark, Tuscarawas and Washington in Ohio; Allegany, Garrett, Washington, Frederick and Montgomery counties in Maryland; Butler and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania; and Frederick, Shenandoah, Clarke, Loudoun, Warren and Rockingham in Virginia.

Amos said the cost of attending West Liberty University will actually be less, as the school is reducing its fees for capital and operational costs. The university has been graduating students since 1837, making it the oldest institute of higher education in West Virginia.

"West Liberty has consistently been among the most affordable public four-year institutions of higher learning in West Virginia. We are committed to continuing to maintain that designation," said university President Robin Capehart.

"We are anticipating as much as a 5 percent decrease in our state appropriation, when combined with the enrollment growth that we have been experiencing, an affordable increase is necessary in order to remain competitive," he added. "Simply put, it is an investment in our growth as well as an investment to continue to maintain a high quality education."

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission is slated to vote on the proposed tuition increase in Charleston. The commission also will consider a request from Fairmont State University for a 3.08 percent tuition hike for in-state students and 3.03 percent for out-of-state students.

The boards at West Virginia and Marshall universities have not yet acted on tuition increases.

Counselors: More local grads choosing higher ed

By CHRISTIAN ALEXANDERSEN, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- More graduating high school students hope to further their education, whether at traditional four-year colleges or career or vocational schools, high school counselors say.

Having more education beyond high school, the counselors said, is becoming more important in a job market that's looking for better qualified candidates.

Of the approximate 340 students graduating from Huntington High this year, about 275 plan to continue their education, Huntington High counselor Melanie Beckett said.

"This class is motivated to further their higher education, no matter if it's a two-year program, a vocation program or a traditional four-year program," Beckett said. "There's more interest in finding a self-satisfying career and not just a job."

Beckett said students have begun to realize the benefits of having a career with benefits as opposed to getting a full-time job right after graduation. Though Marshall University and West Virginia University get a substantial portion of local high school grads moving on to college, Beckett said Huntington High students have been applying all over the country.

Applications have been sent to Princeton University, Carnegie Mellon University, Washington University in St. Louis, University of Kentucky, University of Charleston and several Ivy League schools.

"Some students have sent out five, 10 or 15 applications," Beckett said.

Beckett said there are a couple reasons why students are sending out so many applications.

"Students want to see how much financial aid they can get and then comparatively shop for the best one," Beckett said. "The other reason is because they have a desire to see what the world is like through different colleges."

Spring Valley High School senior Carole Ann Bradley said she's looking forward to the opportunities afforded to her as a freshman at Stanford University in California. Even if she decides to change her major, which is now eco-engineering, Stanford gives students the freedom to develop their own major and have a broader education, Bradley said.

"The world's becoming more globalized," Bradley said. "We're no longer just competing with other students in the United States."

Attending such a prestigious university, she said, will give her an edge when she graduates and begins looking for a job.

Beckett said the fields of study are just as varied. Grads this year, however, have paid attention to the nation's currently poor economy and which jobs likely will be available when they graduate from college, Beckett said.

Grads have shown a lot of interest in careers in medicine, technology and technology support, engineering and teaching. All are fields that are growing and will need a fresh crop of college graduates in the next few years.

Beckett said students have asked about programs outside of the traditional four-year colleges. Vocational schools, community colleges and career centers have caught the eye of many students who want to begin training for a career.

Pam Artrip, head of the counseling department at Cabell Midland High School, said she's also seen students moving toward the vocational direction. She expects about 5 percent of this year's graduating class, or about 20 students, to attend non-traditional four-year colleges.

"These are not school-oriented kids, but they know they need more specialized training after high school," Artrip said. "These are the kids who wouldn't have gone to school a few years ago."

Artrip said the attitude of parents about vocational schools and technical colleges also has changed.

"Parents have realized their kids don't have to go to a four-year college to get a good job," Artrip said.

But four-year colleges still reign supreme for Cabell Midland grads. Artrip estimates about 65 percent, or 260 students, will attend a four-year college.

Popular colleges for Cabell Midland grads included Marshall, WVU, Ohio University and the University of Kentucky. Several students, she said, are weighing their options for colleges out of state.

Scholarships a hot commodity in a faltering economy

By CHRISTIAN ALEXANDERSEN, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- This time of year, scholarships from local organizations, government agencies, academic organizations and employers are hot commodities.

That's especially true in a faltering economy, as high school graduates and their parents strive to keep the cost of a college education at a minimum at a time when they might be worrying about other expenses.

Students have been sending scholarship applications to a variety of places in hopes of minimizing their after-college debt.

Huntington High School senior Michael Bay said the financial aspect of college played a big factor in his decision to attend the University of Oklahoma. Bay said he applied to a number of colleges, including Carnegie Mellon University, Brown University, Boston College and Georgia Tech.

He chose the University of Oklahoma because he received a full scholarship to study physics. Bay said he plans to become a physics professor after going to grad school.

"I didn't want to get into too much debt for undergraduate school because I'd go back and get into more debt for graduate school," Bay said. "Finance was the reason I chose Oklahoma."

Melissa Mooney, a counselor at Cabell Midland High School who specializes in financial loan and scholarship information, said she's been fielding calls for the past few months from parents wanting to know about ways they can save on college tuition.

"The parents call me more than the students," Mooney said. "(The students) don't see the urgency or the importance of it.

"A lot of students just think that mom and dad will pay for it," she said.

Mooney said dozens of parents attended the annual financial aid fair in January. The event provides parents with information and resources to guide them through the financial aid process. Since the fair, the guidance department at Cabell Midland has been inundated with calls about what parents need to do to prepare their children for college.

Mooney said the school helps sign up each senior for the Federal Pell Grant Program, which provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduates. Students are also signed up for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.

This ensures students have the opportunity to find out if they are eligible for any government assistance.

Many students, however, rely on the West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship to fund their college education, Mooney said. The program provides West Virginia high school graduates meeting certain requirements a full tuition scholarship to a state college or university in West Virginia.

For students unable to gather much money from scholarships or financial aid, Mooney suggests students join a work-study program at college. The programs allow the students a small stipend for working 20 hours a week at the university.

Students who are on top of applying for scholarships and finding information on financial aid, Mooney said, are typically the students who have struggled the most financially. Those students, she said, take financial aid more seriously.

Mooney said she encourages all students to take advantage of local scholarships offered by community organizations, fraternal organizations, women's groups and local employers. Local organizations such as the Rotary and Lions clubs offer scholarships that total hundreds of dollars.

Mooney said she's noticed a "slight increase" in local scholarships offered to this year's graduates.

"\$500 here, \$1,000 there. It really adds up," Mooney said. "Every little bit counts."

That's exactly the way Huntington High senior John Castillo felt while applying to colleges this year. Knowing he was unable to afford Ohio State University's tuition, Castillo began applying for scholarships.

He received the National Buckeye Scholarship, the Air Force ROTC Scholarship and the Chick-fil-A Scholarship. His college education, he said, is virtually paid for.

"I wanted to attend a good school and not be in debt for the rest of my life," Castillo said. "I won't be paying as much as a run-of-the-mill student."

Castillo estimated he'll be paying about \$3,000 for his total undergraduate education at Ohio State. He is still waiting to hear if he has received an additional \$2,000 from Chick-fil-A.

Castillo said he will enter his freshman year as a chemistry major and may attend medical school following his undergraduate work. Castillo said he feels secure knowing he'll have work waiting for him after college, due to the dedicated service requirement for the Air Force scholarship.

May 11, 2009

College for the Unemployed

By Doug Lederman

On the heels of an administration that sometimes acted as if higher education could do little right, college leaders now have in the White House a president who seems to think their institutions have the answers to many of the country's problems.

From economic recovery to scientific discovery, President Obama has put higher education front and center in many of his most important policy goals. And on Friday, he added unemployment as the latest problem he believed colleges (and particularly community colleges) were uniquely positioned to help solve, and announced a relaxation of federal rules to make it easier for unemployed Americans to get more education or training.

"In a 21st century economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, education is the single best bet we can make -- not just for our individual success, but for the success of the nation as a whole," the president said in a speech during which he detailed government data showing 539,000 new unemployed workers in April. "So if we want to help people not only get back on their feet today but prosper tomorrow, we need to take a rigorous new approach to higher education and technical training. And that starts by changing senseless rules that discourage displaced workers from getting the education and training they need to find and fill the jobs of the future."

If the new president seems to have an almost automatic inclination to assume that higher education has the answers to federal problems, he usually cites data to back it up. "Right now, someone who doesn't have a college degree is more than twice as likely to be unemployed as someone who does," Obama said Friday.

Yet existing federal rules actually impede the ability of unemployed workers to go back for training, the president noted. Some states strip unemployed workers of insurance benefits if they enroll in certain kinds of education or training programs, deeming them to no longer be searching for a job. And federal financial aid regulations generally require college aid administrators to use the salary from an applicant's former job and his or her unemployment income in calculating eligibility for Pell Grants or other federal aid, often restricting eligibility.

"Well, that doesn't make much sense for our economy or our country," Obama said. "So we're going to change it. First, we'll open new doors to higher education and job training programs to recently laid-off workers who are receiving unemployment benefits. And if those displaced workers need help paying for their education, they should get it -- and that's why the next step is to make it easier for them to receive Pell Grants."

Under the administration's plan, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis said she would send letters to all states directing them to inform all unemployed workers within their borders that they may be eligible for federal aid to return for college education or training. It also urges them to follow the example of Maine, which allows recipients of state unemployment benefits to keep them even if they are enrolled in a broad range of

education or training programs. (In his speech, Obama cited the case of one woman, Maureen Pike, who took advantage of Maine's approach to get an associate degree in nursing after she lost her job as a physician's receptionist.)

And Education Secretary Arne Duncan sent a letter to college financial aid officers Friday saying they could expand their use of "professional judgment" to expand assistance to unemployed workers. Professional judgment allows college officials, when appropriate, to adjust data they receive from the families of dependent students to account for special circumstances or changes in their situations. The Education Department sent a letter to colleges last month encouraging them to make better use of that flexibility to help students whose families' financial situations had been upended by economic turmoil.

The new letter informs college aid officers that if an unemployed worker applies for student financial assistance, the institution -- using the Labor Department-inspired letter the worker received from his or her state -- can alter the applicant's aid application to exclude the unemployment benefits and income from prior employment.

The department also said that to encourage colleges to more broadly use "professional judgment" for this purpose, it would temporarily soften standards that limit the proportion of cases in which institutions make such a determination -- standards designed to prevent fraud and abuse. "We will continue to monitor and enforce requirements for appropriate use of professional judgment, but recognize that appropriate use of professional judgment by a school is likely to increase in the current economic environment," the letter said.

"Together," Obama said, "these changes will increase access to education and opportunity for hundreds of thousands of workers who've been stung by this recession."

Many of those students, the president went on to say, will get that training at community colleges, which he called "one of America's underappreciated assets." And he used the occasion to make other two other pieces of news that could have bigger implications down the road.

First, Obama said he had asked Jill Biden, wife of the vice president and a professor at Northern Virginia Community College (and before that Delaware Technical & Community College), to lead a "national effort to raise awareness about what we're doing to open the doors to our community colleges."

The president also said that he would soon "lay out a fundamental rethinking of our job training, vocational education, and community college programs," designed "to move beyond the idea that we need several different programs to address several different problems -- we need one comprehensive policy that addresses our comprehensive challenges."

The idea of a major reworking of federal programs designed to help train and re-train workers -- which would presumably overhaul and/or replace the Education Department's Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education program and the Labor Department's Workforce Investment Act program, both of which are major sources of funds for community colleges -- is likely to both excite and worry officials at two-year institutions and other career-oriented colleges.

May 12, 2009

The Disappearing Tenure-Track Job

By Scott Jaschik

Year by year, various federal data sets are released, and document the steady growth of adjunct positions and decline of tenure-track jobs in the academic work force.

In an attempt to draw more attention to these shifts over time, the American Federation of Teachers is today releasing a 10-year analysis of the data, showing just how much the tenure-track professor has disappeared. The overall number of faculty and instructor slots grew from 1997 to 2007, but nearly two-thirds of that growth was in "contingent" positions -- meaning those off of the tenure track. Over all, those jobs increased from two-thirds to nearly three-quarters of instructional positions.

The growth in these jobs -- and the decline in tenure-track positions -- was found in all sectors of higher education, but was most apparent at community colleges. However, one of the most notable shifts was at public four-year colleges and universities, where over the period studied, tenured and tenure-track faculty members went from being a slight majority to less than 40 percent of faculty members. At the end point of the AFT study, tenured and tenure-track faculty members do not make a majority of faculties in any sector.

"What was shocking to me, even though I think about this all the time, was that the percentage of tenure and tenure-track faculty has shrunk to almost a quarter," said Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress, the AFT chapter at the City University of New York. "The deterioration of staffing has reached a crisis point when only a quarter are tenured or tenure-track."

National discussions about higher education have focused on issues of cost, and Bowen said that it was important to involve students and parents in looking at academic staffing and its impact on the quality of education. "Part-time faculty have done an amazing job, especially under the circumstances that they work," Bowen said. "But I think parents and students are beginning to see the difficulty when the part-time faculty member you loved for English 101 is no longer there for English 201, or to write a recommendation. You don't have that continuity."

The AFT is in fact preparing a brochure that it will be distributing to high schools, encouraging students and parents looking at colleges to "just ask" about the faculty work force. "We want people to ask 'What are the chances I'm going to be taught by a full-time faculty member?' or 'What kind of salaries do your faculty get?'" said Lawrence N. Gold, director of higher education at the AFT. "In terms of achieving our goals, consumer pressure has got to be part of it."

Given the competition among colleges for students, Gold said that institutions could be motivated to change if the people who talk to prospective students "report back that this is what they asked about."

Both Gold and Bowen -- clearly aware that some adjunct leaders have criticized the AFT's efforts as focused too much on the creation of new tenure-track jobs -- stressed dual goals. They said that they wanted to see a far greater percentage of jobs go to tenure-track faculty members. But they also said that those who teach off the tenure track must have better salaries and benefits. The AFT's campaign on these issues is called FACE, for Faculty and College Excellence.

Here are the numbers from the report, which come from the federal data prepared by the Education Department's National Center for Education Statistics.

Distribution of Teaching Positions in Higher Education, 1997 and 2007

Job Type	1997	2007
All Institutions		
--Full time, tenured or tenure track	33.1%	27.3%
--Full time, non-tenure track	14.2%	14.9%
--Part time	34.1%	36.9%
--Graduate assistants	18.6%	20.9%
Public doctoral granting universities		
--Full time, tenured or tenure track	34.1%	28.9%
--Full time, non-tenure track	14.1%	14.4%
--Part time	14.3%	15.8%
--Graduate assistants	37.5%	41.0%

Public four-year colleges and universities		
--Full time, tenured or tenure track	51.0%	39.0%
--Full time, non-tenure track	9.0%	10.9%
--Part time	33.6%	43.9%
--Graduate assistants	5.7%	6.3%
Public community colleges		
--Full time, tenured or tenure track	20.6%	17.5%
--Full time, non-tenure track	13.4%	13.8%
--Part time	64.7%	68.6%
--Graduate assistants	1.2%	0.0%
Private doctoral-granting universities		
--Full time, tenured or tenure track	34.9%	29.2%
--Full time, non-tenure track	17.3%	17.9%
--Part time	29.9%	31.3%
--Graduate assistants	17.9%	21.6%

Private four-year colleges and universities		
--Full time, tenured or tenure track	39.3%	29%
--Full time, non-tenure track	15.6%	17.2%
--Part time	42.3%	52.2%
--Graduate assistants	2.9%	1.6%