CHICO — Students at Chico State University might pay a new fee intended to support learning and teaching at the local campus.

University President Paul Zingg brought up the idea at a meeting Monday. He said over the last two years Chico State has lost more than $30 million because of cuts in state funding of the California State University system.

If Proposition 30, which would raise certain taxes, fails in the November election, the local campus could lose another $5 million to $10 million, he added, and there is no assurance the Legislature will increase funding for the CSU in the future.

Zingg spoke about the fee Monday at a meeting of the Associated Students board of directors. On Tuesday, he and several other campus leaders emailed a memo about the fee to students, staff and faculty.

It mentioned such effects of cuts on the local campus as employee furloughs, lost jobs, unfilled positions and discontinued academic programs. A new fee could go for such things as adding more class sections, helping persuade top professors to join Chico State's faculty, buying new equipment and technology, and supporting career and academic advising, it said.
The memo noted Chico State was again this year ranked very high by U.S. News and World Report, but it said without a reliable source of funding the campus may not maintain such top ratings.

It pointed out the need to "have a serious discussion about Chico State's future direction ... the need to take more control of how we are funded, and to what extent we risk being just another university, sliding into mediocrity and lack of distinction."

"There would be a financial-aid element in such a fee in order to mitigate any negative impact on our most financially needy students," he wrote in an email to the Enterprise-Record.

The president stressed no decisions had been made about key elements of the fee proposal, including the amount. The idea for the fee is being called "a Chico Compact for Student Success," he wrote. The proposal will be developed through a series of campus meetings, the memo said.

The final decision on a new fee would be up to the CSU chancellor, Zingg wrote.

Whether a fee is brought to the chancellor for a decision will depend on the outcome of either a vote of Chico State students or what is called "alternative consultation." The latter is a process for a campus to use in considering whether to recommend a student fee to the chancellor. That process has to be "transparent and meaningful" and must involve input from a "representative sample" of students, according to a CSU website.

In his emails, Zingg wrote a number of other CSU schools have adopted student fees like the one that will be considered at Chico State. A student fee of $600 a year adopted at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo raised about $10 million a year, Zingg wrote.

Earlier this month, the CSU board of trustees voted to raise tuition at Chico State and the 22 other campuses by $300 a year if Proposition 30 does not pass.

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