



Cal State won't hike tuition next fall

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Officials of the university system say Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed budget falls short of what they need but that they plan to hold the line on fees anyway.

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California State University officials said Tuesday they would not increase tuition next fall, even though the governor's budget leaves them far short of the money needed to increase enrollment and pay for other critical operations.

Officials had requested \$372 million for student programs, urgent maintenance, enrollment growth and other services for the 2013-14 academic year. The governor's proposal includes \$125 million in additional funding — and that must still make it through budget negotiations with the Legislature.

The funding gap will make it hard to open campus doors very wide next year, despite record demand at many colleges, said Chancellor Timothy P. White.

“It's going to improve access but perhaps not by a lot of bodies,” White said at a meeting of the Board of Trustees in Long Beach. “The budget stops the hemorrhaging and gives us a chance to take breath.”

White's caution underscored a key fiscal reality: Despite Gov. Jerry Brown's funding proposal and the passage of Proposition 30, which temporarily increased sales taxes and income taxes on high earners, the state's public higher education systems are still climbing out of deep budget holes. State support for Cal State's 23 campuses has decreased by nearly \$1 billion since 2008.

Brown, who attended Tuesday's meeting, echoed White's concerns, reiterating that he wants the university system to spend within its means and avoid a tuition hike. Brown took the same message to the UC regents in San Francisco last week.

“It's a tight ship and it's going to get tighter,” the governor said in Long Beach. “We're going to have to do some very creative, very thoughtful, very careful adjustments.”

Brown wants to increase the Cal State budget by 4% to 5% for four years. If lawmakers approve the proposal, the expectation is that there would be no tuition hikes during those years, officials said.

The governor has proposed directing \$10 million toward increasing online classes, especially those high-demand “bottleneck” courses that students’ progress toward graduation depends on. Cal State this month launched a new initiative, Cal State Online, which will focus on helping students finish course work to obtain degrees. Officials said they want to ramp up those efforts to include lower-division general education classes, prerequisites for majors and even remedial classes.

But rapid expansion could also pose problems, said Lillian Taiz, president of the Cal State Faculty Assn.

“We owe it to students to do these things right,” said Taiz, a history professor at Cal State L.A. “Who are the students who will succeed with this kind of learning and who won’t and which disciplines will succeed and which won’t? I have a lot of concern about remedial courses because those are the students who need the most support.”

Many campus presidents, however, said they are eager to embrace online technology. New approaches would help increase access at Cal State Long Beach, for example, said president F. King Alexander. His campus received 83,000 applications for fall 2013 and will enroll about 7,000 students.

“What are those other students going to do?” said Alexander. “Are they going to be able to go to college? This budget is a good first step, but I hope it sets a pattern to continue investing in education.”

Cal State leaders also want to move students more quickly through the system by limiting most majors to 120 credit units for a baccalaureate degree. White said such adjustments could create room for an additional 4,000 to 5,000 students.

He is also exploring such cost efficiencies as pooling the purchasing power of regional Cal State and UC campuses to enter into joint contracts in an attempt to lower costs. White, the former chancellor at UC Riverside, said he would present a more detailed plan to trustees at the March meeting.

White presided over his first board meeting after taking over from former Chancellor Charles B. Reed, who retired last month.