



CSU's good news – no tuition increase

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California State University students can look forward to no tuition increase next fall – and possibly for the next four years, CSU officials said Tuesday at the trustees' meeting in Long Beach.

If the trustees stick with their plan and don't raise tuition, it would be the first year they haven't increased the price since 2006. This year, however, CSU is actually refunding the increase that had been approved for 2012-13 – because of Proposition 30, the tax increase approved by voters in November. Prop. 30 included \$125 million in funds for CSU and required that the tuition increase be rescinded.

Avoiding a tuition increase next year will depend on whether state lawmakers approve Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal to raise CSU's \$2 billion allocation by nearly half a billion – \$448 million – in 2013-14. CSU officials say they're counting on the proposal's approval. "At this point, we are operating as if we will not increase tuition," Ben Quillian, CSU's chief financial officer, told the trustees and Brown, a trustee himself who sat in on Tuesday's meeting.

The governor's state budget proposal also looks ahead. He wants to increase CSU's budget by 4 and 5 percent a year for four years in exchange for an unspecified array of "efficiencies" at CSU, including expansion of its online education program. (Brown has also recently pushed for more online education at the University of California to expand access to higher education and proposed giving each university \$10 million for the purpose.) If lawmakers approve four years of budget increases for CSU, "the expectation is that there will be no tuition increases for the next four years," Quillian said.

Although lawmakers can make such plans, they can't be locked in ahead of the actual budget planning year. Similar compacts have been made and broken in the past. But Quillian said the idea of a multiyear plan "is very much to my liking." "It's been exceedingly difficult to plan the finances of this institution not knowing from one year to the next if we were going to be cut –

how much we were going to be cut,” Quillian said. “So this four-year plan is appreciated.” Students like it, too – but won’t be lulled into complacency.

“As always, I am optimistic, while at the same time cautious,” said David Allison, who studies business at Cal State San Bernardino and serves as president of the Cal State Student Association, the student government for CSU’s 23-campus system. “You can’t ignore history. And the history of the CSU is that we’ve been cut,” Allison said. “So, like everyone, I’ll hope for the best and prepare for the worst” by vigorously lobbying state lawmakers to look favorably on CSU.

Undergraduate tuition this year at CSU will be \$5,472, after CSU refunds this year’s increase. In 2006, the last time tuition remained flat, the price tag was \$2,520. The figures do not include room, board or mandatory campus fees that average about \$1,000 a year.