

State OKs tuition hikes for UI, L-C

Brain drain frustrates officials as faculty seek greener pastures

Elizabeth Rudd/Lewiston Tribune

MOSCOW - The Idaho State Board of Education approved hikes in tuition for the University of Idaho and Lewis-Clark State College Wednesday, but not before a pointed discussion about state funding.

Boise board member Milford Terrell told his counterparts during a meeting in Moscow that he was tired of higher education always being last when it comes to receiving state funding.

Terrell said Idaho is losing quality faculty and prospective students who are choosing to pay more for out-of-state schools they think are of higher quality.

"When we look at this, we feel that we have some of the best faculty in the nation, and we do," Terrell said.

But he said Idaho is losing those people because they are not being paid a comparable amount - something he said goes back to the reduction in state funding.

Terrell said he understands that the Idaho Legislature increased the higher education budget for next year, but it wasn't the amount requested by the board.

That's something Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said he hadn't heard much talk about from the institutions. He said the 6.2 percent increase in the state's higher education budget might not have been what the board requested, but it is still good compared to what they have received in recent years.

"I just haven't heard a lot of talk on the impact of that keeping the student fee requests down," he said.

Board member Rod Lewis also expressed concern about what it would look like to the Legislature if the state board were to increase tuition and fees for the institutions this year. But Lewis said after being frustrated for a number of years, he thinks legislators sent board members a positive message with the increased budget.

"To me, that's a very important message for us to hear," he said.

Board members voted 5-2 to increase UI's full-time resident student tuition and fees by 4 percent, or \$260 per year, beginning this fall. The approved increase was just short of UI President Chuck Staben's initial tuition hike request of 4.7 percent.

The approved 4 percent increase for UI will make tuition and fees for full-time Idaho residents \$6,784 per year, up from the current \$6,524. If Staben's initial request had been approved, those costs would have totaled \$6,832.

Board President Don Soltman and Lewis voted against the 4 percent increase. Board members will have to review a motion to increase UI's full-time nonresident student tuition and fees during today's meeting.

Board members approved the requested tuition and fees increases for Lewis-Clark State College, increasing it by 2 percent across the board. The request amounts to an additional \$116 per year for full-time Idaho residents, up to \$5,900 from \$5,784.

The board also approved increased tuition and fees Wednesday for Boise State University (also less than requested), Eastern Idaho Technical College and Idaho State University.

Staben said after the meeting he was disappointed UI wasn't able to make its case for the requested increase as effectively as was needed to have it approved.

"But overall the 4 percent will allow us to do most of what we planned to do," he said.

UI will also have to reconsider some planned expenditures in light of the reduced revenue from the trimmed request, he said.

"Our next step is to consider what we're not going to do with the funds that we otherwise would have received, as well as look at other revenue strategies," Staben said.

The board meeting will continue at 8 a.m. today in the Student Union Building ballroom on the UI campus.

Rudd may be contacted at erudd@lmtribune.com or (208) 791-8465. Follow her on Twitter @elizabeth_rudd.