

University of Idaho to ask for 6 percent tuition hike

Idaho education officials to visit school Wednesday

Mary Stone/Lewiston Tribune

The University of Idaho is set to ask for a tuition increase double what it got last year, when the Idaho State Board of Education meets Wednesday in Moscow.

The meeting agenda published Monday lists UI's tuition and fee increase request at 6 percent, which would take the cost for Idaho students from \$7,232 this school year to \$7,668 for 2017-18.

Last year, UI's request initially was listed as a 4.5 percent increase, but school officials reduced it to 3 percent at the urging of the state board. That 3 percent increase matched the amount approved by the Legislature for pay increases for state-funded positions.

Lewis-Clark State College's request is listed at 3.5 percent, which would take tuition and fees from \$6,120 to \$6,334. The school asked for and received a 2 percent increase last year.

Idaho's other colleges and universities are asking for tuition bumps as well, including Boise State, with a 5.1 percent increase that would put student costs there at \$7,440.

Tuition increases have been much larger at times over the past couple of decades, with UI and LCSC asking for and receiving 11.9 percent and 11.8 percent increases, respectively, in 2003. Recent increases have been smaller, with UI raising tuition 5 percent, 4 percent and 3.5 percent in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Tuition has risen even more slowly at LCSC, with increases of 4 percent, 2 percent and 1.7 percent over the same three years.

UI President Chuck Staben was traveling Monday and unavailable for comment about this year's 6 percent request, university spokeswoman Jodi Walker said.

LCSC Vice President for Finance and Administration Todd Kilburn said the college's request is bigger this year because the school will not see an increase in its funding from the state's normal school endowment. The college received about \$2.1 million from the endowment this year, an 18 percent jump from the previous year.

"We're still going to get that much, and we're grateful for that," Kilburn said. "But we're not going to see an increase."

The 3.5 percent increase LCSC is asking the state board to approve would cover the college's portion of the 3 percent employee pay increase, insurance and faculty promotions, Kilburn said.

Whether the board will limit increases as it did last year is unclear, said board spokesman Blake Youde.

"I don't think anybody right now is in a position to predict what the decision of the board would be," Youde said. "I know that there's lots of careful thought both by the institutions and by board members as to what would be an appropriate amount."

Kilburn said he hasn't heard anything specific from the board.

"They could certainly tell us that we can't go over 3 percent," he said. "Obviously we all want to keep tuition as low as possible."

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