April 25, 2005

RCC Board maintains current tuition level for 2005-06

Hoping that the Legislature will fully fund community colleges, the RCC Board of Education plans to maintain tuition for 2005-06 at its current level. Although the RCC Tuition and Fees Committee had recommended a $4 increase because the level of state funding is yet unknown, RCC President Peter Angstadt said April 19 that legislators are working hard to meet the community colleges’ needs.

“We believe that our legislators will come through for community colleges,” he said. “And by keeping tuition at its current rate, we would be supporting their efforts.”

“Every time we raise tuition we lose students,” he added. “We want to remain accessible and affordable.” The RCC Board concurred, voting unanimously to maintain the current rate of $59 per credit. However, the board retained the authority to revisit the tuition rate depending on the outcome of state funding.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski recently released an updated budget recommendation that would provide another $23 million to Oregon’s 17 community colleges, but that puts the colleges at about the same funding level as the current year. College officials say $440 million is the minimum needed to maintain programs and avoid tuition increases.

At a budget hearing also held April 19, the RCC Board and Advisory Committee reviewed RCC’s proposed 2005-06 budget, which at $28,276,629 is “pretty much a roll-over budget,” according to Lynda Warren, chief financial officer and executive dean of College Services. Next year’s proposed budget is just 2.1 percent more than the current year’s budget of $27,688,826.

Even if the Legislature approves the $440 million community colleges are seeking, RCC anticipates receiving about $1 million less in state funding in FY ’05-06 due to a new funding formula being proposed by the Oregon State Board of Education.

“That’s the next big issue we’ll be facing – equalization,” Angstadt said. The state board wants to retool the formula so that students at all community colleges are funded at the same level. But that means property taxes from some community college districts, RCC included, would be redistributed to other districts with lower taxing authority in order to
achieve equalization. A hearing on the issue is set for May 16, Angstadt said, and RCC officials “will be trying to offer some alternatives.”

“Our big concern is that our legislators have worked so hard for community colleges, and we may still come up short,” he added.

In other action, the board:

- Accepted three grants: $267 from the Oregon Heritage Commission for RCC Gallery services/improvements; $3,000 from the Jackson County Commission on Children and Families to provide tuition vouchers for Jackson County child care providers; and $1,824,668 for a U.S. Department of Education Title III grant for distributed learning.

  The Title III grant is based on a five-year proposal to boost student access, retention, and success through enhanced learning courses and programs, and distributed career-planning services. “Distributed” means all forms of delivery, included but not limited to face-to-face, on-line, and video conferencing.

- Revised a policy that prohibits intoxicants and controlled substance on RCC premises. The revision allows limited consumption or tasting of alcohol under controlled circumstances, for example, public safety training for standardized sobriety testing or classes in growing/harvesting grapes or hops and/or the production and marketing of wine or beer. The board reaffirmed that no consumption of alcohol will be allowed on college-owned facilities without authorization by the college president.

- Approved a request for early retirement for Dorette Long, a full-time math instructor who has worked at Rogue since September 1975.

- Acknowledged the retirement of Marty Gruher, full-time criminal justice instructor in the RCC Public Safety program. Gruher has worked at RCC since 1994.

- Heard a first reading of a resolution revising board policy related to contractual authority. Revisions are being proposed in accordance with the Oregon Cooperative Procurement Agreement and in response to board recommendation.

- Heard a first reading approving the fee schedule for 2005-06. Three changes to the fee schedule are proposed: a 5 percent (of account balance) penalty for non-payment; a $5 fee for an official transcript plus $1 for each additional copy; and a $45 late registration fee.###

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