RCC Board eyes tuition increase

Faced with the likelihood of a $2.7 million budget shortfall next year, Rogue Community College is considering an increase in tuition and fees.

The RCC Board of Education heard the first reading Tuesday of a proposal to increase tuition $5 a credit in 2006-07. The increase would boost in-state tuition to $64 per credit, up 8.5 percent, beginning summer term. Out-of-state tuition would increase $6 per credit, and international tuition would go up $22 per credit.

“The proposed increase is based on an 8.8 percent reduction in state funding and a change to the community college state funding formula,” said Lynda Warren, executive dean of College Services and chief financial officer. “RCC has held tuition at $59 a credit for the past three years,” she noted, and the proposed increase will cover about 20 percent of the anticipated shortfall as each $1 of tuition generates about $120,000.

The board also is considering a $50 fee to offset costs associated with administering a computer proficiency exam. The fee would be paid by students who want to take the test in lieu of enrolling in Computer Science 120, a required class for many degrees and programs. Likewise, a $50 fee nursing application fee would offset additional evaluation requirements for admission to the RCC Nursing program.

RCC student government representative Steve Monroe said students were concerned about the impending budget crunch but grateful to college officials, including RCC President Peter Angstadt, for including them in budget discussions.

“We have faith that you will find solutions and outcomes that will benefit everyone,” Monroe told the board.

Monroe and other students have attended several forums in which students learned about the budget shortfall and the likelihood of tuition increases. They also were invited to offer revenue-generating ideas and suggestions for cost savings. Staff, faculty, and managers have been exploring ways to increase revenue and decrease expenses as well.

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“We are looking at every possible option to solve the budget shortfall,” Dr. Angstadt said. “It is doable, but no one person has all the answers. It will take all of us together, sharing ideas in a respectful, straightforward and honest manner.”

RCC’s budget problem stems from two primary sources. Last summer, the Oregon Legislature approved $428 million for community colleges, less than the $440 million college presidents said was needed to avoid tuition hikes and program cuts. In addition, the state’s formula for allocating money to each college has delivered a double-whammy to several colleges, including RCC.

The formula is based on the number of FTE or full-time-equivalent students, with an offset so that districts with higher property taxes get less than those with lower rates. The funding formula is calculated on a three-year rolling average, and because RCC’s enrollment has declined since 2001-02, its share of state appropriations has fallen. But over the same period, the college has opened a new campus, developed new instructional and job-training programs, and added class sections to meet student demands for degree requirements.

“The real problem is that the state funding formula is constructed to penalize a college for the problems of the past and doesn’t give a college the resources and programs needed to anticipate the future and serve a growing community,” Dr. Angstadt said. “It’s like dragging around a ball and chain for past FTE drops and is inherently unfair.”

In other business, the RCC Board of Education:


∞ Approved faculty emeritus status for faculty member Sue Calkins. Calkins, who retired in December, taught Adult Basic Education and GED for 26 years, primarily at Illinois Valley Learning Center. Emeritus status is bestowed on faculty and staff with at least 15 years of continuous, meritorious full-time service who have been recommended by a dean and RCC president for board approval.

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