March 24, 2006

RCC increases tuition to help offset budget deficit

Faced with a $2.7 million budget shortfall next year, the Rogue Community College Board of Education has approved increasing tuition rates for 2006-07.

The 8.5 percent tuition increase, passed by the board at its March 21 meeting, will raise in-state tuition to $64 per credit beginning summer term. Out-of-state tuition increases $6 per credit to $77, and international tuition will go up $22 per credit to $223.

RCC is confronting 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. The tuition increase will cover about 20 percent of the anticipated shortfall as each $1 of tuition generates about $120,000.

Tuition at RCC has held steady at $59 a credit for the past three years, Warren said. This increase is projected to add $60 to $75 a quarter to most full-time students’ bills.

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

RCC administrators have held a series of forums to inform students of potential tuition increases and solicit suggestions, said President Peter Angstadt. Although some students expressed concerns over higher tuition, many students also said that what mattered most was having classes available so they could graduate on time. Student representatives have participated on college-wide committees working to find creative ways of reducing expenditures and generating revenue.

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 blow to several colleges, including RCC.

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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 state funding formula does not provide community college the resources and programs needed to anticipate the future and serve a growing community, Dr. Angstadt said.

**In other action the board:**

- Approved the 2006-07 faculty renewal list for 99 full-time instructors.
- Approved early retirement of Dale Turner, RCC Automotive Technology instructor.
- Accepted a $75,000 incentive grant from the Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development to complete course development in a wide range of fields.
- Accepted a $500 grant from the Junior League of Jackson County to help women studying business technology to develop a professional image before entering the workforce.
- Accepted a $6,000 grant from the Rogue Valley Development Council to provide scholarships for workforce and business training.

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