April 22, 2009

RCC budgeters hold the line

Rogue Community College proposed a general fund budget for 2009-10 of $29.2 million. That’s nearly flat — just .36 percent greater than the current year’s adopted budget.

Although state revenue is still an unknown, RCC built next year’s budget on a “best guess” estimate of $6,329,106 – $2.2 million less than current state support. State revenue accounts for 22 percent of the college’s budget, tuition and fees account for about 32.6 percent, and local sources including property taxes comprise the remainder.

Due to the struggling economy, the state has been focused on rebalancing the 2007-09 biennium budgets and won’t address the 2009-11 biennium until the state forecast is released in May, RCC President Peter Angstadt and CFO Lynda Warren explained Tuesday to the budget committee. It may be June or July before the state finalizes its budget.

In the meantime, Oregon’s 17 community colleges are required to adopt their budgets. There has been much speculation that state support for community colleges, based on full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment, could range from $350 million to $500 million. After much deliberation, RCC decided to build its 2009-10 budget on a $440 million Oregon Community College Support Fund, which represents a $60 million decrease.

“Thi is our best educated guess for now,” Angstadt said. State support to community colleges could be reduced and RCC’s share slashed if unemployment continues to rise and the state’s revenue projections worsen, he explained.

RCC’s proposed budget for 2009-10 includes a $5 per credit (7 percent) tuition increase. The RCC Board of Education, which convened Tuesday following the Budget Committee meeting, adopted the increase and reserved the right to raise it further should the Oregon Community College Support Fund fall below $440 million.

Beginning summer term, RCC in-state students will pay $73 a credit for in-state tuition. Tuition increases for out-of-state and international students also were approved. Out-of-state students will pay $89, up from $83, and international students will pay $244, up from $227. The board also
approved fee increases: the transportation/bus fee went from $20 to $80 a term, the basic skills fee increased from $17 to $26, and the EMT program will begin charging lab fees ranging from $100 to $200 for uniforms and disposable materials used in class.

With spring classes under way and enrollment up for a third term running, the college expects an overall 11 percent increase in FTE enrollment for 2008-09, resulting in more than $1.6 million in increased tuition and fee revenue. To balance the budget, the college hopes to combine that increased revenue with cuts to general fund expenditures – primarily in materials, services and personnel.

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