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Tuition increases at Terra Community College

Submitted story

The Terra Community College Board of Trustees approved one budget in June. And like so many other state entities, Terra's trustees were confronted with a shortfall of \$500,000.

Sen. Mark Wagoner, at a recent legislative reception, told trustees and elected officials that they should be prepared for yet more cuts later this year.

On Wednesday, the board, in a five to three vote, approved a \$4.19 per credit hour tuition increase for the 2009-10 school year. The rate will jump to \$123.84 per credit hour, from the current \$119.65 per credit hour. Terra's tuition has remained the same since 2007 when the legislature froze tuition across the state. At the increased rate, a full time student taking fifteen credit hours would have a tuition bill of \$1,857.60 for the semester as compared with the previous amount of \$1,794.75. The increased tuition results in a difference of \$62.85 for the semester.

Board Chair Helene Zielinski said the modest increase is imperative in meeting the operating needs of the College. "Terra remains committed to affordable and accessible higher education for our students and their families; however, we must not compromise the quality of that education and the factors associated with providing an excellent academic experience for students. At this point, without any increases for the last two years we have to make an adjustment," Zielinski said.

The 2009 fall term is on track to be one of the largest in the history of the community college. Summer term enrollment was up by 37 percent and the current fall term is up by 33 percent over the same time last year. Dr. Marsha S. Bordner, Terra president said, "We are keenly aware how devastating this historic economic downturn has been for families in our region. It's incumbent upon us to be good stewards of money and increase operational efficiencies whenever possible. But, we can only shoulder so much of the burden without an operating increase," she said.

Adding 65 new sections due to the enrollment increase also has strained the Terra budget.

"We are hiring adjunct faculty members and using every bit of space on the campus for classrooms," Bordner said.

The recent fiscal cuts in the higher education line item of the biennium budget have had a sharp impact on Terra's overall operations.

That and the combination of increased overhead costs contributed to the reluctant approval of tuition increase for Terra students.

In other highlights from the board meeting, Nancy Grandillo has been selected as the newest member of the Terra Community College Board of Trustees. She is from Tiffin and represents Seneca County.