

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
Meeting Notes
March 11, 2004

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Thursday, March 11, 2004 in 504 Rudder Tower. The meeting was called to order at 3:45 p.m.

The committee discussed the possibilities and ramifications of implementing the following:

Flat Rate Tuition

Flat rate, bracketed, or fixed tuition (may also include fees) for a specified number of credit hours per semester would help the University increase its revenue stream, especially through subvention from the State. A pilot program run at the University of Texas at Austin resulted in an increase of approximately .5 hours per semester per student. While this figure appears small at an individual level, it results in a significant increase, overall, for the University.

Texas A&M University is trying to hold enrollment at approximately 45,000 students, but in doing so, funding from the State will decrease if other universities are growing more rapidly. Flat rate tuition could also penalize working students and those involved in campus activities. Additionally, students may want to take more courses outside their degree plan, which has both positive and negative aspects. Students would receive a broader education, but it would also take longer to graduate.

Tuition as Incentive/Disincentive

Tuition rates could be based on the time of day a class is taken as a way to more evenly disperse classes throughout the day. For example, the tuition rate for a class at 10:00 a.m. could be higher than for a class at 4:00 p.m. However, predicting the income from this type of tuition would be extremely difficult.

The legislature would like to see enrollment increased during the summer sessions, so reduced tuition during the summer could be used as an incentive. The high price of on-campus housing would be a disincentive.

There are four types of revenue: tuition and fees, which the University has control over and can, therefore, predict; appropriations from the State and endowments/gifts and research, which cannot be predicted.

Charging by Classification

Upper division students taking lower division courses would be charged more to offset the loss of formula funding, which is based on the level of the course being taken, not by the classification of the student taking the course.

Fixed Tuition

Tuition could be fixed for a certain number of hours or a certain number of years, according to when a student first enrolls at the University. This would provide the opportunity for predictability for financial planning.

There may be a threshold at which point students will no longer be willing to pay, and the council needs to be mindful of that consideration.

Shift from Fees to Tuition

Fees such as the library and computer use fees could be shifted to tuition in an effort to simplify the explanation of the cost to the student. The possible political fallout would be that it may appear as if the University was greatly increasing tuition rather than shifting costs, and it may make it more difficult to increase rates in the future.

Outcomes that result from the work of this committee will be far reaching, so each member must keep in mind what will be best for the University as a whole.

University recommendations must go to the Board of Regents at their March meeting, so the council would probably make its recommendations in December.

The next meeting will be Thursday, March 25 and the five-year overview of the budget will be discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.