

Tuition Policy Advisory Council
Meeting Notes
October 1, 2004

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Friday, October 1, 2004 in 203 MSC. The meeting was called to order at 3:15 p.m.

It was reiterated that a main objective of flat rate tuition is to encourage students to take more semester credit hours. For the time being, the flat rate tuition subcommittee will only consider undergraduate students. The subcommittee is looking at basing the flat rate on 14-15 semester credit hours, but will need to run the numbers through the tuition model to determine the appropriate number of hours. The University must ensure that 14-15 hours of classes would be available to each student. Most universities that have flat rate tuition are based on 12 hours. Perhaps the limit should be set lower for first semester freshmen to allow a period of transition time to college expectations. The Faculty Senate is also working to lower the number of hours required for some degree programs.

The Council will examine if tuition should remain at a fixed flat rate for a period of five years for entering freshmen. Transfer or re-admit students would see a fixed flat rate for three years. However, for students that take longer than five years, or three years respectively, to graduate, tuition would increase every year. Students taking less than 12 hours or more than 18 hours might pay tuition based on an hourly rate. These topics will be discussed further.

A handout from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board was distributed ranking from high to low cost, designated tuition of public universities in Texas for Fall 2004. Texas A&M University ranked #8 out of 34. Another handout, also from THECB, ranked from high to low cost, public universities in Texas based upon tuition and required fees. Texas A&M University was listed at #5. It was suggested that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board should compare the cost of the curriculum vs. course fees.

The legislation that establishes the authority for universities to set designated tuition also states that differential tuition could be charged on the basis of college, class time of day, or for summer school. A difficult aspect of charging differential tuition based on the time of day a student takes a class would be to be able to ensure enough classes are offered at off-peak times. Offering differential tuition for the summer would provide better utilization of classrooms. Junior and senior level courses would be targeted for this endeavor. However, students wishing to participate in internships and co-ops would encounter longer graduation rates. Flat or fixed tuition encourages quicker graduation rates, where differential tuition does not. Differential tuition could also have the potential of pricing out low and middle income students.

Meeting Notes
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Page 2 of 2

Another possibility would be to roll course fees into tuition costs, which would simplify the cost and allow more predictability. Incorporating fees into tuition will be addressed with fixed and flat rate tuition, as well as differential.

The various tuition topics (fixed, flat, and differential) should be discussed one at a time and flat tuition would be the easiest to start with. Therefore, the next time the Tuition Policy Advisory Council meets, the discussion will be limited to flat tuition. The subcommittee was reminded to consider course fees in their model and to keep flat and fixed tuition separate, for the time being.

The next meeting will be held when the flat tuition subcommittee is ready to discuss with the full committee. An e-mail will be sent announcing the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.