

Tuition Policy Advisory Council  
MEETING NOTES  
September 30, 2005

The Tuition Policy Advisory Council met on Friday, September 30, 2005 in 203 MSC. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

Guest: President Robert M. Gates.

Dr. Gates stated that the tuition rate was established because of a commitment not to raise tuition more than absolutely necessary and because of a cap that was established last year at the open tuition forum. Dr. Gates reiterated how much he appreciates the willingness of everyone on the Council to serve in that capacity. The Tuition Policy Advisory Council has had to take a tough stand because of the unpopular subject matter.

President Gates expanded the writ of the Council to consider two additional categories:

- 1) Differential Tuition for professional programs such as in Business and Engineering as many universities already do.
- 2) Mandatory fees, such as a Career Center fee which is currently a user fee. Dr. Gates asked the Council to consider the dollar amount of fees for fairness, as well as which fees should be considered.

It will be important for the Fee Committee and TPAC to work together in this effort. Therefore, Dr. Gates asked that he be given a recommendation as to how TPAC and the Fee Committee will interact.

Dr. Gates is willing to meet with the Council either as a group or individually any time necessary.

A copy of the April 26 NEO e-mail message that President Gates sent to the University community regarding the changes to the tuition structure, such as undergraduate students taking 12 or more semester credit hours will pay tuition at the rate of 15 semester credit hours and students taking less than 12 semester credit hours will pay tuition on a per hourly basis was distributed to the Council members. There is also opportunity for rebates; e.g. a portion of tuition and fees may be rebated for students who complete 30 or more semester credit hours during the course of an academic year, and graduating seniors may also be eligible for a rebate.

A significant revision to the tuition policy was the creation of an Appeals Panel. It was suggested that the tuition structure no longer be called "flat rate tuition", but rather something to the effect of "part-time" and "full-time" tuition. The term, "flat" tuition lends itself to the misconception by students that if they add hours beyond the 15 semester credit hours, their total tuition charges will not change. However, in reality, the University must charge State Mandated Tuition, as set by the State Legislature, for any additional hours incurred.

A tuition report based on fall 2005 unofficial 12<sup>th</sup> class day data shows that the implemented tuition policy has increased semester credit hour production by almost 6% over last fall. This equates to an increase of approximately 20,000 semester credit hours for the undergraduate population. Behavior has changed, but it is still unknown how retention and graduation rates will be affected. Additionally, the number of part-time students has increased by only about 20 people. There had been concern that there might be a mass exodus of full-time students switching to part-time status to avoid the additional tuition. However, as the numbers indicate, this did not occur.

In order to assure that the behavioral change has not had a detrimental effect on students, it was suggested that some comparisons be made either at mid-semester or the end of the semester to the same time period last semester to determine whether there has been a dramatic increase in the number of financial aid applications and/or Q-Drops. It might also be beneficial to see if there has been a significant drop in GPR.

It was reported that the interim appeals process worked well. The purpose of the Appeals Panel was explained to the new panel members during its initial meeting. In two subsequent meetings, 165 appeals were reviewed and all but 30 of those appeals were approved. Most of the rejected appeals dealt with issues such as the student wanting to take fewer hours in order to maintain a high GPR or to work, etc. The appeals that involved disabilities were referred to the Office of Disabilities for determination of eligibility. Most of the appeals that were approved were programmatic in nature, e.g. programs that require no more than 12 hours be taken in a semester, such as study abroad and student teaching. These types of situations are being reviewed for the development of a blanket approval. A number of the approvals were also for seniors who needed less than 30 hours in the academic year or 15 hours in the semester to graduate.

An FY2006 budget briefing presentation was given to the Council. The majority of revenue for the University comes from three main sources: 25% from State Appropriations; 20% from contracts, gifts and grants; and 17% from tuition and fees. Designated tuition accounts for 10% of the University's revenue.

Approximately \$50 million was placed in the FY2006 budget for utilities. However, the cost for utilities has since sky-rocketed. As of August 15, the anticipated cost for utilities for the coming fiscal year was in excess of \$61 million. Since that time, the cost for natural gas has continued to climb dramatically and the University will explore many options for finding funding for the difference.

The budget summary spreadsheet details that the total incremental revenues for FY2006 was initially \$32.8 million and the total incremental expenditures were \$45.3 million, thus causing a \$12.5 million budget shortfall. An increase in designated tuition of \$1 per semester credit hour equates to about \$1 million in revenue, therefore making it necessary to raise tuition for Fall 2005 by \$12.50 per credit hour.

Discussion items for the next TPAC meeting:

- TPAC web site—needed updates and whether or not it should continue to be linked to the Student Government Association web site.
- Six hour requirement for Graduate Assistants in summer—Jamie Rae Walker stated that Graduate Assistants must take six semester credit hours in the summer in order to retain their assistantship. However, many colleges do not offer summer graduate courses. This could be construed as a tax to Graduate Assistants in order to keep their jobs. Jamie Rae will discuss the issue with Dr. Rick Giardino, Dean of Graduate Studies.
- TPAC/Student Fee Committee Interaction.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.