

Despite state cuts Enrollment jump helps OCC

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

Despite state aid cuts, big jumps in enrollment and tuition saved Oakland Community College from dipping into its reserve funds this year, according to President Robert P. Roelofs.

Meanwhile, he said, Michigan's community college presidents are teaming up to propose a state aid formula better than one proposed by the Milliken Administration.

"We (presidents) have found ways to get around our differences — large versus small, urban versus rural," Roelofs told the OCC board of trustees last week.

The basis of the formula will be enrollment. More aid will go to small schools, which can't refine their faculty-student ratio, and more to the teaching of vocational-technical and allied health programs.

"Then, once we get the dollars, we'll decide how to allocate them. Local authorities will make that decision, not the state. We don't want the state telling us what to do anyway," said Roelofs.

THE OCC president's remarks came at the end of his report on 1981-82 finances, which showed that big jumps in enrollment and tuition revenue.

Community colleges have three major sources of revenue: state aid, local property taxes and student tuition-fees. Here's the revised picture at OCC for this year:

- State aid — \$4.5 million, down 4 percent (\$355,000) from what the Michigan Legislature voted last year.
- Tuition and fees — \$9.3 million, up 14 percent (\$1.3 million) over projections. It's a common phenomenon among community colleges in recession years to see enrollment soar as jobless persons seek to upgrade their skills.
- Property taxes — \$12.8 million, 6 percent (\$750,000) higher than expected.

The jumps in property tax and tuition income, said Roelofs, mean OCC will not have to dip into its working capital to the tune of \$450,000, as feared when trustees passed the budget last fall.

Total budget, as revised, will be \$32.2 million, some 4.5 percent above the original.

DESPITE THE federal government's dropping of the Trade Readjustment Act benefits, OCC students are managing to hang on, Roelofs reported.

"The feds pulled the rug out from under the students effective in September. They were left to pay their own way or drop out," he said.

'Once we get the dollars, we'll decide how to allocate them. Local authorities will make that decision, not the state.'

Of 395 students attending the Auburn Hills campus on TRA benefits, 375 managed to continue last fall, and 163 registered for the winter semester.

"It's a tribute to the individuals and a credit to the college's program," said Roelofs. "People feel it's worth their time and money."

Milliken's new budget, for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, "completely ignores enrollment — which is bad," Roelofs said.

"He balanced his estimate of property tax income with a state aid increase. If there's a high increase in your property tax revenue, you get a fairly low increase in state aid."

"That's probably not wrong. It's probably the state's function to balance off resources."

"In our case, he estimated too high an increase in our property tax. Our state aid increase came to 4.3 percent. Only Schoolcraft College had one lower, 3.3 percent."

"The state average was 9 percent, with the highest 14 percent."

"SO THE COMMUNITY college presidents got together in Ann Arbor last week and discussed that differential, and the fact that the estimates (of property tax increases) are pretty rough. In the past we had got

together to stick together and tighten the gap."

"We agreed on a plan to send to the Senate and the House."

"The consensus was to flatten the percentage increase (of state aid) to everybody. The small schools should be on the high side of the percentage. The logic is that they can't get student-faculty ratios as close as the big schools."

"I moved we grant the small schools 2 percent more than the rest of us. They were good enough to agree."

"That would give us 7 percent (state aid increase), which is better than the 4.3 percent (in Milliken's budget). That's contingent on the governor's \$144 million (total state aid to community colleges) holding up. We don't expect it to hold up."

"The matter must go to the Michigan Community Colleges Association board (which includes elected trustees). Goodness knows what those monkeys will do with it."

"I AM ALSO chairman of a committee to develop a long-range (state aid) formula," Roelofs went on.

"For several years we attempted to write a formula. It took into account such things as old buildings requiring more maintenance. But it became so complex that no one but Tony (OCC Vice-President Anthony Janson) and I could understand it."

"Our conclusion: Our job is to educate students."

So the formula, Roelofs said, will emphasize enrollment with more aid going to vocational-technical and allied health programs, and a great degree of local responsibility in budgeting the total state aid dollars.

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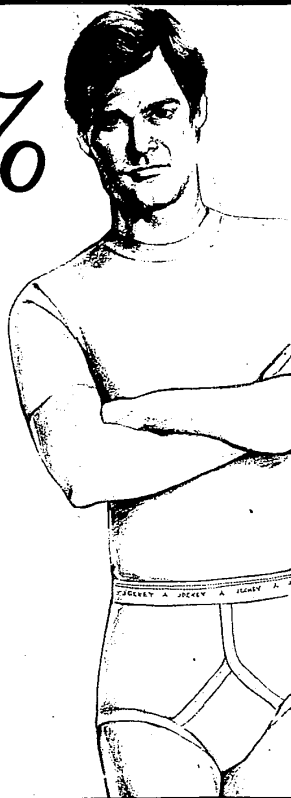
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