

Bowman: Big tuition hikes top inflation

By Tim Richard
staff writer



Robert Bowman colleges need scrutiny

Parents should start asking colleges why they're raising tuition faster than inflation, state Treasurer Robert Bowman told an audience of 2,000 mothers, fathers and young children.

Speaking on the new state tuition investment program in a nearly packed Southfield Leadership High gym, Bowman called for more media, legislative and parental scrutiny of spending by the 15 state universities.

"It's incomprehensible to me why tuition has to go up at three times the rate of inflation each and every year," Bowman said. "I don't know what they buy that costs so much more than what everyone else buys."

"Instead of having parents of just 17- and 18- and 21-year-olds, we're going to have parents of newborns now worrying about college costs — a whole new generation of parents worried about colleges. They should have an influence, a say over how much colleges are charging."

IN A BRIEF interview with this newspaper, Bowman, chief financial mind in Gov. Blanchard's administration, said rising tuitions "show why we need the program."

"The state should be involved more than we are in keeping tuitions down. Tuitions will... (up 12 percent some years, 3 percent in others," he said, indicating the state investment program could guarantee to cover tuition costs of newborns 18 years down the road.

Gov. James J. Blanchard's 1989 budget asks for higher education increases in the 1-2 percent range. "We're focusing more on quantity, less on quality. That's all right," said Bowman.

Currently, the consumer price index is increasing in the range of 4 percent annually. Colleges, however, use a higher education price index (HEPI), reflecting their heavy personnel costs (particularly health insurance), costs of international journals and utilities.

A man in the audience complained that U-M levies computer fees even on students who don't use computers and one day may levy a "walk on the grass" fee. Will those fees be covered?

"We saw those devils coming," answered Bowman. "All mandatory fees will be covered."

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY already has announced a 9.67 percent tuition increase for fall, and the University of Michigan is talking about a double-digit increase. Other state universities are talking of increases in the 10-13 percent range.

At Oakland University, Keith Kieckhefer, senior vice president and provost, said OU's tuitions haven't risen every year. "There were two years (1984-5) we didn't raise it at all. Nobody did. And in fall of '88 there was great stress by the admin-

istrators) to hold it to inflation, 4.3 percent."

OU's 1987 increase was about 6 1/2 percent, he said.

"Our basic claim is that we have had the highest student-faculty ratio (in the state) for a decade," Kieckhefer said. "In the 1970s we had 3.1 percent of the students and 3.1 percent of the funds (state budget for higher education). Now we have 5 percent of the students and still 3.1 percent of the funds."

James J. Duderstadt, U-M's provost and academic vice president, said U-M asked an 11 percent (\$50.2 million) increase in state aid over its \$444 million current budget, but Blanchard recommended only 1.5 percent (\$3.6 million).

Of the \$50.2 million, \$36 million is a "minimum increase to meet current needs and \$14.2 million (to) help close the funding gap resulting from two decades of decreased state support," according to a U-M spokesman.

ASKED IF the state tuition program would mean more student competition to get into such research universities as U-M, Wayne State and Michigan State, Bowman said:

"Yes. We're going to overfill our colleges instead of our jails."

If demand to get into the tuition program is great, children will be accepted on a "first come, first served" basis.

Asked by one father what would happen if college tuitions outstrip the state investment fund's earnings, Bowman said adjustments can be made in six months to a year in three ways:

- New enrollees can be asked to pay more to join.

- The Legislature can be asked to appropriate more for colleges in order to decrease the burden on tuition.

- The state could admit the program is unsound and dissolve it, returning people their principal plus interest minus administrative costs.

tions against dog fighting, make it easier for the victims of dog attacks to sue dog owners and place some restrictions on the owners of pit bulls.

But the committee rejected a Senate-passed provision requiring pit bull owners to purchase \$100,000 liability policies, deciding it is often difficult to identify such dogs and would be better to punish all irresponsible dog owners.

"When you're bitten by a dog, who cares what breed it is or what it's called?" said Fred Miller, president of the United Kennel Club.

The committee, however, did pass a separate bill placing several minor restrictions on the owners of several breeds, which are often generically referred to as pit bulls.

Owners of killer dogs face prison

AP — Michigan dog owners could be sent to prison for up to 15 years if their dog attacked and killed someone under a bill approved last week by a House panel.

Acting to quell the turmoil over recent attacks by pit bull dogs, the House Judiciary Committee unanimously approved a bill establishing the first statewide criminal penalties for the owners of vicious dogs or any other dangerous animals.

"I would think this bill impresses on people the seriousness of allowing their dogs to attack and bite people. And I think most people will be deterred by the criminal penalties," said Rep. Willis Bullard Jr., R-Milford, the bill's sponsor.

The committee approved three other bills to toughen criminal sanc-

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