

OCC ponders a 13.7 percent tuition hike

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

Students at Oakland Community College face a 13.7 percent tuition increase next fall under the administration's proposed budget.

Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson and vice chancellor Anthony D. Jarson asked that tuition be hiked \$4 a credit hour for OCC district residents — from \$29 to \$33. Out-of-district residents from Michigan would pay \$9 more — \$55 a credit hour instead of \$47.

"We are still below Macomb, Henry Ford and Wayne County community colleges," Jarson told trustees. "We would be above Schoolcraft College, which has a 2.27 mill (property tax, compared to OCC's 1.4 mill)."

The budget will be taken up at the board's June 23 meeting.

"I DON'T LIKE the idea of increasing tuition, ever," said veteran trustee David Hackett, asking the administration to explain to students

OCC insists there is 'severe underfunding' by the state. State aid had been risen 6 percent a year since 1983, but this year will be up 1-2 percent.

why it has to be done.

"We can do a brochure," replied Nicholson.

The gist of OCC's case will be "severe underfunding" by the state, Nicholson said. State appropriations, which had been rising 6 percent a year during the economic recovery that began in 1983, this year will be up 1-2 percent. Meanwhile, the consumer price index has been rising in the 4.5 percent range.

Among community colleges, he said, OCC has been similarly underfunded — \$849 per student vs. a

state average of \$1,623.

The difference of \$783 times OCC's enrollment of 14,609 full-time equated students amounts to \$11 million a year on a base budget of \$48 million.

THE TUITION was no surprise to trustees, who heard Nicholson a week earlier say it was necessary to hike tuition before it would be possible to convince voters to increase the property tax rate.

Around the state, colleges are hiking tuition rates 10-14 percent for

the fall semester.

Jarson proposed a \$61.7 million budget, up 4 percent from the current level. He said that still is less than the 4.5 percent increase in the consumer price index (CPI).

The tuition increase isn't as burdensome as it appears, Jarson said, because "25 percent of our students receive some form of financial assistance. And as much as 25 percent more receive assistance from a third party," usually an employer.

Chief sources of revenue, as proposed, would be \$18.7 million from a 1 mill property tax (36 percent); \$13.7 million from state aid (26 percent); \$17.9 million from tuition and fees (35 percent); and \$1.4 million from investments and miscellaneous revenues (3 percent).

THE SPENDING side, said Nicholson, is aimed at five targets.

They are: to continue programs; to continue "leading edge" programs; to add equipment where the college is lagging; to stay close to state

norms, "not too far above or below"; and to stay close to the CPI.

"It's hard to hit five targets at once," the chancellor said. Trustee Judith Wisner asked why a dental assistants program was being dropped when her dentist husband and others are in great need of dental assistants.

Ned Brodbeck, president of the Highland Lakes Campus, said the courses are offered although the program isn't.

Nicholson added, "Enrollment is a function of students' perceived opportunities. . . It's a matter of what people in the profession are willing to pay."

Microbes gobble up PCBs

Strains of super microbes may soon gobble up PCBs and other harmful compounds just as the cartoon character Pac Man munches on his foes, thanks to a breakthrough by an Oakland University researcher.

Biologist Satish Walia said strains of bacteria that can degrade PCBs have been identified. "In my lab we have isolated microbes capable of breaking down PCBs to less toxic and easily biodegradable water soluble chemicals," Walia said.

He has now cloned the genes responsible for the four enzymes that break down PCBs. His OU lab is first in the United States to accomplish this feat.

HE IS CREATING a hybrid microbe that will degrade potentially toxic PCBs and similar organic compounds quickly and completely.

The Environmental Protection

Agency is excited about the project, Walia said. The scientist has received a continuation grant of \$302,000 from the EPA based on the previous success of his research.

This is the third year of EPA funding, and he has reported on his work at an international conference in Seattle. Aspects of his new success in gene cloning will be presented at the eighth international conference on Global Impacts of Applied Microbiology and the International Conference on Applied Biology and Biotechnology. Both sessions will be held Aug. 1-5 in Hong Kong.

WALIA SAID his research can aid in the elimination of environmental health hazards.

The microbe degrading treatment will be particularly useful in areas where conventional treatments for toxic materials are less effective,

like contaminated soils of abandoned factories, industrial waste water,

and contaminated areas along riverfronts and lakes, he added.

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