

Community colleges seek more state aid

By Tim Richard
staff writer

The state Senate budget bill may boost Schoolcraft College by one faculty salary and begin the phase-out of Wayne County Community College's unique subsidy.

But Sen. Harry Gast, who chairs the community college appropriations subcommittee, Tuesday

warned officials of 29 two-year schools they're unlikely to get the \$37.5 million boost they want to fully fund a state aid formula.

"The way they (college lobbyists) start a conversation is, 'What's going to be your excuse this year?'" Gast said, only partly in jest.

Gov. James Blanchard proposed \$223 million for community colleges for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1 —

5 percent more than the current year but \$37.5 million short of an ideal legislative formula worked out several years ago.

AT THE CLOSE of a hearing, Gast had a staff member outline what the Senate substitute is likely to include when it is reported out this week:

• Boosts per college will be 3.5 to 7.5 percent instead of the 2 to 9 percent proposed by Blanchard.

That's good news for Schoolcraft, which was scheduled for just 2.9 percent by Blanchard. Vice president A.H. (Butch) Raby said it would amount to \$35,000, the equivalent of one salary. No figures were available for Oakland Community College, which the governor scheduled for a 4.8-percent increase.

• Blanchard's proposed "teaching excellence" prizes of \$100,000 for 40 faculty members will be dropped.

• Wayne County Community College, which has been getting a special \$10 million state grant because voters have refused to approve a property tax, will see the grant phased out over five years beginning in fiscal 1992. WCC is the only community college that has no voter-approved property tax. WCC also gets \$12.6 million in state aid.

JAMES STEVENSON, president of Muskegon Community College and former provost of OCC's Orchard Ridge Campus, said tax increment financing authorities (TIFAs) have hurt his school. Cities set them

up to "capture" all new property taxes on downtown developments.

"We don't want to be obstructionists," said Stevenson. "But it seems unfair that we're credited with valuation increases. We have to roll back millages because of tax increases we never received."

Gast replied TIFAs would likely stay, but he blistered General Motors Corp. for battling its assessments.

"GM is getting a lousy image fighting all these assessments," said Gast, a former township supervisor and assessor. "The state is paying \$1 million a year to fight GM and their battery of tax cases."

Gast quoted state treasurer Robert Bowman as saying the state subsidizes communities \$1 million a year by fighting GM's protests through the attorney general's office.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE spokesmen generally praised the Blanchard budget but said they hadn't been treated as well as kindergarten-through-12th-grade schools and four-year state universities.

Richard Norris, president of St. Clair Community College, said that since 1982 kindergarten-through-12th-grade appropriations have been increased 85 percent, universities 82 percent and community colleges 57 percent.

They were pleased Blanchard had exempted education from the 2.5-percent budget cuts he imposed on most state departments.

But Gast warned that "getting education exempt from that 2.5-percent cut didn't just happen" — there was a lot of pre-announcement argument to make it happen.

Gast said the Senate Fiscal Agency estimates state revenue at \$200 million less than the administration.

Enter Earth Day writing contest

Students ages 13-18 are invited to participate in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers' Earth Day 1990 writing contest.

Theme is "What Will the Earth Be Like 20 Years From Now?"

Those entering the contest should submit an original essay of no more than 500 words. Essays must be received in the O&E's Livonia headquarters no later than 5 p.m. Friday, March 30.

First, second and third place prizes will be awarded in two age categories — 13-15 and 16-18. First



prize is a \$50 U.S. Savings Bond, second prize is a \$25 bond and third prize is \$15 cash. The top three

winners will also receive an Earth Day beach ball.

The six winning essays will be published in the O&E on Thursday, April 19. A picture of the winners along with a short story about them will appear along with the essays.

Essays should be mailed or delivered to: Earth Day Writing Contest, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, Mich. 48150.

O&E reporters and editors will select the winners.

So exactly what is Earth Day?

Earth Day, April 22, 1970, was the symbolic start of the nation's environmental movement.

On that date, thousands of Americans attended peaceful environmental demonstrations in numerous cities — including Washington, D.C. Though the nation's smoky skies and murky waterways had long been a concern, the highly visible show of public concern was credited with spurring Congress to act on air and water issues.

The results were immediate. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the nation's chief watchdog of environmental issues, was established in December of that year. Within the next few months, massive clean air and water legislation was also enacted.

Now, as Earth Day 20 approaches, the nation is faced with another environmental crisis. Though major strides have been made in curbing

factory and automotive contamination, pollution still exists.

A new clean air bill has come under attack from many environmental groups for being too lenient to polluters.

Beyond that, there are new environmental issues, including damage

to the earth's protective ozone layer, global warming and destruction of the Brazilian rain forests, that weren't even considerations 20 years ago.

It is those issues that point the way to Earth Day 20.

Helping youngsters read

Interested in helping 4-year-olds with reading?

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Catholic Services of Oakland County is seeking volunteers to work with pre-schoolers in its classroom reading program.

The program is coordinated with the Oakland County Literacy Council under a grant from the United Way. RSVP volunteers work one-on-one with youngsters to enrich their lan-

guage skills. Workshops are also held for parents to help develop supportive home activities.

Volunteers are particularly needed in Berkley, Ferndale and Oak Park. A minimum commitment of one hour per week is required. Orientation and training are provided.

Additional information is available through Colleen Williams at 333-3716.

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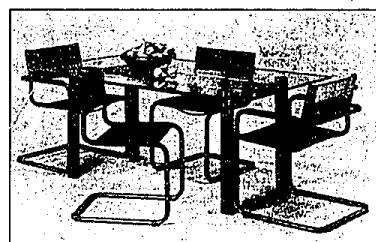
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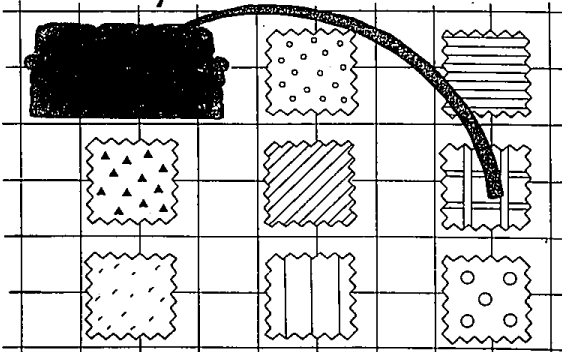
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