

State colleges compete for fewer high school grads

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Public and private universities in Michigan may find themselves competing for students as well as dollars in the 1990s, and it worries a key state lawmaker.

Reason: The pool of high school graduates is continuing to dry up. According to University of Michigan projections:

- In 1981, more than 135,000 received 12th grade diplomas.
- This year, 105,000 will graduate.

- By 1994, fewer than 100,000 will graduate.

And U-M is attracting more and more of them. President James Duderstadt unveiled figures showing U-M's Ann Arbor campus increased its admission of high school graduates from less than 3.5 percent of the 1980 pool to 4.7 percent currently.

"There may be a lesser number of top students in other schools, and there could be an impact on the Alhons, Kalamazoo, Hope and Calvins (private colleges)," said state

Sen. John J.H. Schwarz after legislative budget hearings on university budgets.

SCHWARZ, R-Battle Creek, new chair of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on higher education, said, "The trickle-down effect (on other universities) is not good. U-M and Michigan State could wind up clobbering Western Michigan, Eastern Michigan and some of the others."

"It might be appropriate for U-M and MSU to increase by 1 or 2 percent their out-of-state students."

Schwarz was the center of much attention Monday as he opened hearings on Gov. John Engler's proposal to raise all 15 state universities by 4.4 percent — to \$1.3 billion — in the face of massive cuts in other departments.

Schwarz succeeded William Sederburg, a Ph.D. in political science who didn't seek re-election, in the powerful position. With a bachelor's degree from U-M and a medical degree from Wayne State, Schwarz, a second term lawmaker, has been singled out by Engler, among others, as the best

mind in the Senate.

"The outcome could be close to the executive recommendation," Schwarz said in an interview. "This is my first budget. You can't be creative with. We'll try to keep programs going."

"I have some long-term goals. There are some flagrant inequities in the way some campuses are funded. They have political patron saints. I'd like to purge the system," said Schwarz, declining to name publicly which campuses have been politically protected.

MOST PRESIDENTS said they plan to level out enrollments, which now total about 350,000.

All but WSU's David Adamany supported Engler's proposal to eliminate the \$25 million research excellence fund set up by former Gov. James Blanchard and lend the money into their general funds. Engler's budget has targeted many programs begun in the Blanchard years (1983-90).

"I'd prefer to see it (research fund)

a line item," said Adamany. "We keep them restricted. I fear it could be a target of clamorous debate" among competing campus interests.

All but U-M's Duderstadt deplored large tuition increases.

"Tuition levels in Michigan have been increasing less than or equal to the national average in the last eight years," Duderstadt said — 47 percent here versus 52 percent nationwide.

He said U-M has used 70 percent of its increases in recent years to fund scholastic aid for lower-income students. "The lion's share of tuition increases went to student aid. Constraining tuition can have the perverse effect of limiting enrollment," said the third-year UM chief.

Four years at UM cost \$18,000; Harvard costs three times as much.

ADAMANY, however, said Wayne State's enrollment is tuition-sensitive. "Every time we raise tuition, it's obvious what they do. They take fewer credit hours."

From 1975 to '90, Adamany said, the other 14 state campuses saw average credit hours drop from 12.1 to 11.6 — one-half an hour. At WSU, the drop was from 11.6 to 9.2 — or 2.4 hours. The effect is to raise WSU's administrative, library and parking costs.

Despite suburbanites' fears of Detroit, he said, WSU is becoming more attractive to residents of Macomb, Oakland and western Wayne counties as federal aids dry up.

This year, for the first time, WSU's percentage of graduate students (36.9) topped UM's Ann Arbor campus (36.8) for the first time. WSU

is strong in medicine and advanced engineering programs, he said. Eastern Michigan University President William E. Shelton said tuitions at state universities "are increasing at an alarming rate." EMU gets 40 percent of its general fund budget from tuition; the state average is 38 percent; the U.S. average, only 25 percent.

BLENDA WILSON, chancellor of the U-M (Dearborn) campus, a separate line item in the state budget, said graduate enrollments have increased 61 percent as overall enrollment rose 17 percent in the last five years. Total is now 7,700.

"Enrollment growth will not — cannot — be our priority in the years ahead," she said.



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