

# Tenn. State Students Alarmed by Tuition Decision

Contributed by Jennifer E. Butler, Ashleigh Taylor -- Black College Wire  
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Big change in amount charged to students taking high course load

Beginning fall 2009, Tennessee State University students will pay for every hour of coursework they intend to take, up to the 21-hour maximum overload.

As a result, a student who can only afford the 12-hour rate, will spend at least five years as an undergraduate. Previously, students could take 12-21 hours without an additional charge.

In a letter to public university presidents on Nov. 20, 2008, Tennessee Board of Regents Chancellor Charles Manning cited looming budget deficits as the primary reason for the tuition increases. He also introduced a proposed New Business Model for Long-Term Productivity Enhancement to increase student enrollment in online courses.

"Our campuses are making immediate budget adjustments using the standard set of cost reduction steps such as freezing positions and travel, cutting non-salary budget lines and reducing reserve account balances," Manning wrote in the letter.

"However, we need a longer term strategy to bring operations to a new and more productive steady state condition."

Manning suggested several ideas to rectify the current fiscal situation in TBR schools, such as mandating a certain number of online courses for all students, closing universities for at least one weekday and decreasing the number of full-time professors.

In the three weeks between the announcement of the proposal and the voting date, public outrage ensued.

Professors, students and concerned citizens expressed serious concern not only with the proposal, but with its ramifications.

Marc Bousquet, a noted author and education critic, awarded Manning the Chronicle of Higher Education's Turkey at the Top award, for asking Tennessee instructors to do more work for less money.

"The reality is that if you're really experienced and qualified, teaching 10 courses a year for (Manning) nets you about \$15,000 without benefits, or less than you'd make at Wal-Mart," Bousquet said.

The plan was ultimately rejected, with the TBR instead voting to increase tuition again and eliminate the tuition cap.

The removal of the tuition cap, coupled with the ever-rising cost of tuition in Tennessee schools, may make remaining at TSU a financial burden for many students.

"It comes at a bad time for the economy and our students," said Frankie Brooks, a school finance accountant. "We are already losing students due to various economic burdens. It makes it hard for students to receive higher education now."

With the university facing a \$5 million budget deficit, the amount of aid it has available to help students pay for school is diminishing.

Administrators and students alike worry about TSU's financial stability, especially in the face of a global recession. If out-of-state students cannot afford to attend the university, then it is in big trouble.

TSU currently earns most of its income from non-Tennessee residents. Though there are not many students interested in leaving the university, the reality it becomes a reality.

"Honestly, I can't see TSU keeping their doors open if tuition is increased," said Danny Glover, a junior political science major from Macon, Ga. "TSU depends heavily on out-of-state tuition. Students are losing interest in taking out high-interest loans just to attend college."

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