



Officials point fingers while tuition triples

By Debbie Howlett
Of the Emerald

Tuition and fees, according to whoever happens to be talking, are either sky-rocketing or just barely inching upward.

One method of gauging the cost of tuition is via comparison. Figures from Bill Lemman, the vice chancellor for the administration's office, show that 13 years ago, in 1970-71, a student paid a total of \$136 a term to attend the University. This fall, the total cost of attending the University as a full-time student, excluding the \$50 general deposit, is \$460 — an increase of 235 percent.

Another barometer, the one Wil Post, vice chancellor for public affairs, likes to use, is the percentage of instructional costs that students pay. Post explains that the State Board of Higher Education has "reluctantly allowed tuition to creep up."

Post places the student's share of paying "cost of instruction" at 25 percent, he adds that the increase is only a few percentage points, up to about 27 percent of instructional costs. Two-percent, Post says, isn't much of an increase.

"We have a rule of thumb in Oregon," Post says. "Students

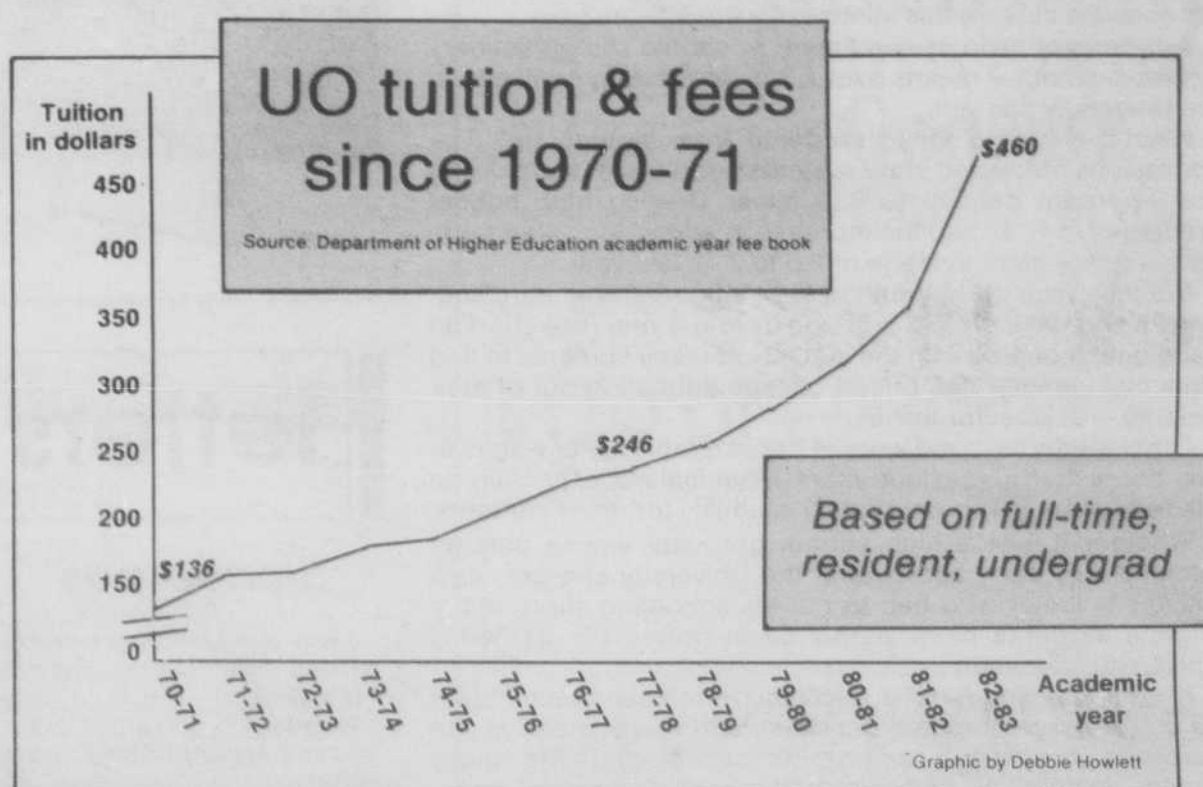


Photo by Bob Baker

The Legislature, in regular session, sought "a lot more money from students." These students, lined up outside Oregon Hall Wednesday, are paying the price of a University education.

pay 25 percent of the cost of instruction, 75 percent comes from other sources, legislative acquisitions."

"Because of budget pressure, the Legislature has not met that need," he says. "If the state board had their way, access would be high and tuition would be low."

However, Post says the 235-percent figure might be misleading — if one doesn't consider the effect of inflation.

A quick look at the Consumer Price Index shows that during the 13 years tuition was creeping up to \$460, the consumer price index rose 133 percent.

The index works on the basis of what \$100 would buy in 1967 compared to what those goods are worth in another year.

Another figure that has risen in the past 13 years is the amount of money the state appropriates for higher education. The percentage of increase (134 percent) for the past six biennial budgets is nearly identical to the increase in the consumer price index. It is also far below the percentage of

increase students have seen for tuition.

Sen. Ed Fadeley, D-Eugene, who is co-chairer of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, says he feels the last time the Legislature "did right" on funding for higher education was in 1977.

Since that time, Fadeley says there has been "substantial pressure to increase tuition by the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission and the state board."

"The pressure has been there for some time," Fadeley says.

He adds that the major thrust at the regular sessions and the first two special sessions of the Legislature was to "get a lot more money from students," mostly through tuition increases.

"There are limitations (for the Legislature) because of a lack of money," Fadeley says. "I think the state has done the wrong thing by increasing tuition as much as it has."

Fadeley adds that he feels the amount of the instructional costs students must pay is

closer to 30 percent. Fadeley also says that may be the beginning of a trend toward "elitism," favoritism among the economically advantaged, through prohibitive costs of education.

"I don't mind elitism at Stanford," Fadeley says, "but it doesn't belong at a public institution. Whether parents, or students, have enough money (to afford rising education costs) is no indicator of whether it is good for society."

Lemman, who handles the budget details for the state systems, says that "one can make a good case philosophically for no tuition and you can make the same case for paying full cost. Anything in between is arbitrary."

Lemman says the trend to increase the share of costs students pay is related to political philosophy. "Republicans tend to say yes, Democrats, no."

And depending on who you care to talk to, tuition is either creeping up or going through the ceiling.

Judge frees Springfield from WPPSS debt

EUGENE, (AP) — A circuit judge ruled Wednesday that Oregon publicly owned utilities are not obligated to help pay for two unfinished nuclear power plants in Washington state.

Judge George J. Woodrich ruled that the utilities lacked authority to obligate themselves to help pay the \$2.25 billion debt on two Washington Public Power Supply System plants, known as WPPSS 4 and 5. The system wants to collect the money from the 88 utilities that signed on as participants in the projects, which ground to a halt after generating millions of dollars in cost overruns.

The ruling resulted from a suit filed last December by 26 Springfield, Ore., ratepayers who contended the Springfield Utility Board lacked authority to sign a contract to take part in WPPSS Plants 4 and 5 without voters' approval, as it had done.

The Springfield utility's share of the debt was \$57.8 million. It was not immediately clear who, if anybody, would make up the money.

Woodrich ruled that the participants' agreement for financing the two plants doesn't fall within Oregon's legal provisions for public bodies to go into debt without voter approval.

Projects qualify for the "special-fund financing" if revenue from the project is used solely to retire the debt obligation.

"The participants agreement exceeds the authority of special-fund financing, creating an obligation requiring a vote of the people of each of the Oregon districts signing the agreement, as debt limitations of the districts would be exceeded," Woodrich ruled following a conference call among participants.

In a news conference after the ruling, lawyers for the plaintiffs said if the ruling

withstands appeal, it will affect all Oregon publicly owned utilities participating in Plants 4 and 5.

Craig Doupe, WPPSS legal counsel, said top supply system officials would have nothing formal to say about the ruling until Thursday.

"We are disappointed in the result and probably will appeal," Doupe said. He said the Springfield suit affects only Oregon utilities, "which are a relatively small percentage of the participants."

Appeals from an Oregon circuit court are to the Oregon Court of Appeals and then to the state Supreme Court.

The ruling is not connected with a plan announced Monday, asking Congress to bail out the system by loaning Bonneville Power Administration \$1.5 billion, which then would be loaned to WPPSS for reinvestment at a higher interest rate. The profits would be used to pay off the

WPPSS debt.

But chances are "very, very low" that Congress will approve a plan to have the federal government pay off part of the huge debt on two abandoned nuclear power plants in Washington state, says former Washington Gov. Dan Evans.

"When you strip away the complexity of the proposal, it is simply a federal subsidy," Evans said Tuesday.

The former Republican governor, who now heads the Northwest Power Planning Council, was in Washington, D.C., to brief members of Congress on the council's activities.

Several Northwest congressmen said they would keep an open mind toward any scheme that might help pay the multibillion-dollar debt on abandoned Washington Public Power Supply System nuclear project No. 4 at Hanford and No. 5 at Satsop, Wash.