

COST OF TUITION ON THE RISE

BY KRISTEN WOHLERS

It's official. Tuition is going up for the next school year, and it doesn't stop there. It will likely continue its climb over the next five years.

The Clackamas Community College Board of Education voted unanimously to increase tuition at its March 8 meeting.

Tuition will go up by \$3 per credit for the 2017-2018 school year, taking it from \$90 to \$93 per credit. There will also be a per credit increase in the general student fee from \$2 currently to \$2.50 and in the student technology fee from \$4.50 to \$5.50.

"I don't want to pay more money for school, so I don't want it to go up," said student Mason Gorman. "It means I have less money to do stuff, like rent, gas."

Over the last 15 years, the college has seen the per credit tuition rise by \$50, from \$40 per credit in 2001-2002; over the next five years, it's likely to shoot up by \$15 more, according to Vice President of College Services Alissa Mahar, bringing the projected cost to \$105 per credit in the 2021-2022 academic year.

Even with the increases, Clackamas has remained affordable when compared to other Oregon community colleges. Portland Community College informed students that tuition will go up by as much as 7 percent for the next academic year, according to the Oregonian. Clackamas has the second lowest tuition and fees in the state, with Chemeketa Community College being the lowest.

Still, the increase means the cost of going to Clackamas full-time with 12 credits will cost \$1,235 beginning this summer before individual class fees and books.

School board member Ron Adams questioned the rising tuition at the board meeting on March 8.

"What if we were actively trying to lower tuitions, rather than staying within the competition?" Adams said. "When does it simply drive away students?"

To keep up with inflation and expenses, such as the rising cost of the Public Employees Retirement System, the college is looking at a five-year financial plan, according to Mahar.

"We would be in really bad shape if we just looked

at one year at a time and didn't think about the long range," Mahar said.

She expects that tuition will increase by \$3 per credit each year over the next five years.

After waivers are paid to students in various programs, the projected net amount of revenue from student tuition for the 2016-2017 academic year is \$14.6 million.

The \$3 increase would generate approximately \$460,000 more for the 2017-2018 school year.

But even with this revenue as well as funds from the 2014 \$90 million bond, President Joanne Truesdell projects a budget deficit in the upcoming year.

"Our gap for next year, even with this tuition increase, is still at \$1 million," Truesdell said at the Feb. 8 board meeting.

There are many reasons for rising costs, including decreases in state funding, Title IX mandates, increasing healthcare costs and PERS costs. PERS cost escalation is a statewide problem.

"They're looking at ways to mitigate those PERS

costs as much as they can," Mahar said. "There's a number of legislative bills that are on the table to try to mitigate that."

The greatest relief in PERS costs will only occur when high-level payments no longer have to be made.

But a new expense that the college must consider is the price of operation and upkeep on new construction built with bond money. These buildings come with expenses such as IT support, custodial staff and bigger power bills.

"The cost of living increases, so there are important things that are necessary for the school to consider, like the costs of operating," said student Brandon Minnis. "So it's unfortunate that we have to pay more in tuition, but it's probably also necessary."

Like Minnis, Jairo Rodriguez, the Associated Student Government president, expressed at the Feb. 8 board meeting that he understands the need for the increase.

"As long as the college puts a strong effort in

making sure that textbooks get reduced, then that's overall where my concern would be," Rodriguez said.

The college is working to keep expenses down for students and to prevent tuition spikes, despite rising costs, and this effort includes looking for ways to reduce the cost of textbooks.

"Forty percent of our books are either free or reduced," Mahar said at the Feb. 8 meeting. And they're hoping to get that percentage up.

The college is also printing less paper and is seeking a grant, which would amount to somewhere between \$2-2.5 million. Overall, Mahar's focus is on efficiency.

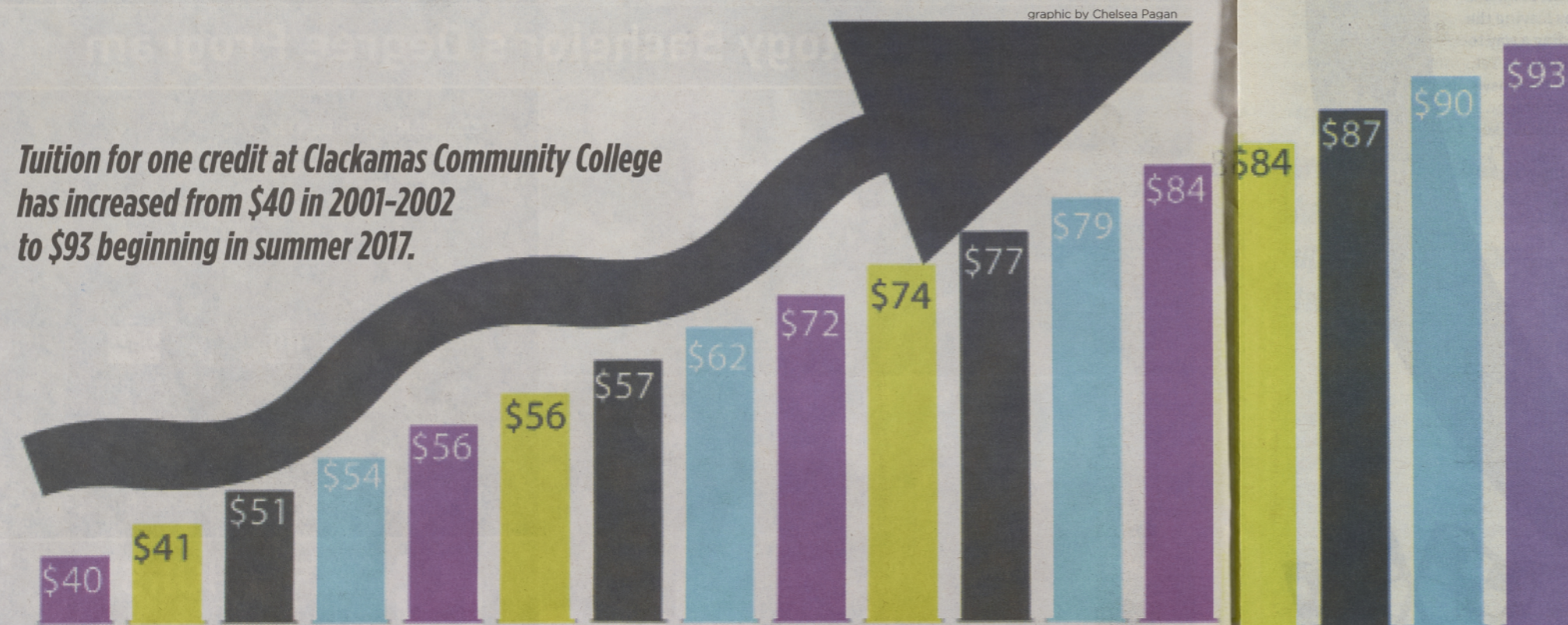
"I have a son who is in community college, so this kind of stuff matters a lot to me," Mahar said.

Mahar also said that she would love to hear back from more students with any ideas or concerns they may have.

"Email me," Mahar said. "Even if it's subjective, it's their experience, I'd love to hear about it."

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**—Ron Adams
CCC Board Member**



Tuition for one credit at Clackamas Community College has increased from \$40 in 2001-2002 to \$93 beginning in summer 2017.

COLLEGE PRESIDENT JOANNE TRUESDELL RETIRING JULY 2018

College President Joanne Truesdell announced at the March 8 Board of Education meeting that she will be retiring in July of 2018.

With a strong board and finances, Truesdell felt it was the right time to leave. She is the eighth president of the college.

Truesdell became the college president in 2007, more than 30 years after first attending Clackamas in the 80s. She has earned degrees at Portland State University, the University of Portland, and a doctorate in education from Oregon State University.

The moment of her announcement was very emotional. While Truesdell read her prepared letter to the board, several members started crying.

The college will hire a firm to help decide who will be the next president of the college.

—Elizabeth Kessel and Blake Swan



Joanne Truesdell opens the time capsule at CCC's 50th anniversary celebration on May 21, 2016.