

Wyoming Community College Commission

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Memo

To: Commissioners

From: Dr. Sandy Caldwell, Executive Director, Wyoming Community College Commission
Dr. Stefani Hicswa, President Northwest College and President of the Presidents Council

Date: October 5, 2020

Re: Tuition 2021-2022

This memo is a recommendation from the Executive Council (EC) of the WCCC consisting of the Executive Director and the seven community college Presidents.

The WCCC took action in October 2018 to increase the tuition rate from \$94 per credit hour to \$99 per credit hour and raised the tuition cap from 12-credits to 15-credits. Per the recommendation and action to maintain the existing tuition rate in September 2019 below the Tuition Policy framework, the EC met to discuss the impact and implications of a tuition rate increase including the potential differential tuition structure for the out-of-district students. Of consideration in the conversation was also the work currently being conducted by the WCCC Sustainable Funding Workgroup as well as the realities regarding the current 10% budget cuts and pending additional 10% budget cuts.

Per the Tuition Policy adopted in October 2018:

Tuition Policy

The current tuition rate is \$99 per credit hour for in-state students, \$148 per credit hour for WUE (and Nebraska) students, and \$297 per credit hour for out-of-state and international students.

Effective with the Fall 2019 term, the 12-hour tuition cap shall be raised to 15 hours. Tuition shall be set for two-year periods that mirror the state's biennial period, however, as stated in Commission Rules, Chapter 3, Section 4 (c), the Commission may change the rate in the interim. Tuition reviews, policy enhancements and/or changes, and tuition rate changes shall occur during the Commission's October meeting in each odd-numbered calendar year, and shall take effect during the next Fall term.

Beginning with the October 2019 Commission meeting, staff shall provide for consideration of adjusting tuition, the actual or estimated college revenue for the previous fiscal year and the estimated revenue for the current fiscal year in the following categories:

- *State Aid as presented in the funding allocation model on 1 July of each odd-numbered calendar year*
- *Local revenue as presented in the recapture/redistribution workbook on 1 July of each odd-numbered calendar year*
- *Student, course and other fee revenue as presented in each college's annual budget for the previous and current fiscal years*
- *Tuition revenue as presented in each colleges annual budget for the previous and current fiscal years.*

Potential Tuition Rates and Recommendations:

Please consider the following rate considerations with the understanding the no one wants to or is in favor of raising tuition rates. However, the current rate is below the Tuition Policy framework of 23-28% and the WCCC took action previously to raise the rate incrementally with anticipation of an additional increase to meet the Tuition Policy.

1. The EC was in support of incorporating an out-of-district tuition differential of 25% above in-district rates. This places the out-of-district rate between the in-district rate, but below the WUE rate and below the UW tuition rate. Should the legislature act upon the potential sustainable funding workgroup recommendation to add a statewide mill, the EC recommends reconsideration depending on legislative action.
2. The EC does not recommend a differential tuition rate for Service Area counties. The Sustainable Funding Workgroup funding strategies sub-committee found that the impact was not efficient. Further, the Service Area counties provide support in other ways including support for dual and concurrent courses, which offsets the total cost for Service Area students.
3. All but one president was in support of increasing tuition. A couple of the colleges have modeled their budgets anticipating the increase. The EC recognized that the current rate is below the Tuition Policy framework and the WCCC enacted a more modest tuition rate than the Tuition Policy to allow for an incremental increase.
4. Under the current budget constraints of the State of Wyoming and limited ability to impact revenue, the colleges are facing significant budget cuts. Given the fact that the current tuition rate is below the currently adopted Tuition Policy, making a budget request or appeal for a lesser budget cut without consideration of increasing tuition may have negative impacts in the executive or legislative branches. Further, the Sustainable Funding Workgroup recommendations currently include a tuition increase recommendation.
5. CFO Larry Buchholtz prepared a tuition and budget excel sheet for the colleges resulting in all the colleges having the ability to see the impacts of a tuition rate change on their respective budgets.
6. Tuition rates discussed in EC: In-district: \$105, 107, and 109 with the corresponding 25% increase in out-of-district. EC did not make a recommendation of any one of the specific rates.

Considerations:

1. The EC considered whether or not the only county considered for in-district is the specific college (i.e., 1 in-district county and 22 out-of-district counties) or whether all seven of the taxing counties would be considered in-district regardless of which college a student might attend (7 in-district counties and 16 out-of-district counties). While there was no definitive recommendation from EC, there was recognition that having 1 in-district possibility encourages students to attend the community college in her/his in-district county of origin.

2. The WCCC raised the tuition cap from 12-credits to 15-credits in alignment with “15 To Finish” Complete College Wyoming/Educational Attainment efforts when it enacted the existing Tuition Policy. Per WCCC staff analysis, the increase in the tuition cap did not adversely impact enrollment. While the impact of the tuition cap is based on only one year of Wyoming data, it is consistent with national research on the topic. Further, the increased cap did have a positive impact on system-wide tuition college revenue. While not all the presidents supported the lift of the 15-credit cap, several do think this is a viable option.
3. Tuition rate increases impact the most vulnerable and disproportionately impacted student populations of first generation, low income, minority, women, and adults. As such, raising the tuition rate as indicated by the adopted Tuition Policy may potentially impact those students the colleges are most challenged to recruit and retain through credential completion.

Cc: Executive Council members

WCCC Deputy Director, Dr. Ben Moritz

WCCC Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Larry Buchholtz