Tuition and Fees Increasing for Metro Students in Fall Semester

Kevin Miller

[millke03@metrostate.edu](mailto:millke03@metrostate.edu)

Tuition is increasing by 3.7 percent at Metropolitan State University in fiscal year 2016, effective fall semester 2015. Student fees will also be increased by $22.43 per credit to a total of $33.43.

Undergraduate students will pay an additional $7.81 per credit, bringing the total per-credit cost up from $210.97 to $218.78. Graduate students will see an increase of $12.82 per credit with totals rising from $342.42 to $359.24 per credit.

However, tuition for Prior Learning credits is decreasing by 40 percent, according to Amber Hamm, president of Student Senate. Web Walk Nursing credits have also seen a slight reduction.

“We do not take the tuition increase lightly,” said Metro interim President Devinder Malhotra. “Enhancing access to higher education is an important anchor of our mission and an important institutional goal.”

In 2013, Minnesota’s State Legislature funded a two-year tuition freeze for every institution in the Minnesota State College and Universities (MnSCU) system. MnSCU’s Board of Trustees asked the Legislature to do the same this year. Their budget proposal asked the State for an extra $142 million to cover the cost of another freeze. They also said that tuition would likely be increased if the allocation was smaller than the requested $142 million.

This May, the Legislature allocated $100 million to MnSCU for tuition relief. As a result, the 24 colleges and tech schools in MnSCU will have their tuition frozen for another two years.

This is not the case for MnSCU’s seven universities. On average, these four-year institutions will increase their tuition by 3.4 percent this fall. The universities will have their own tuition freeze enacted in fiscal year 2017, effective fall 2016.

Steven Rosenstone is the chancellor of MnSCU. “We are very grateful to Governor Dayton and the legislature for their support of the critical role that our colleges and universities play in ensuring prosperity for all Minnesotans, and the funding they provided that makes this possible,” he said in a written statement.

While tuition will be higher in fiscal year 2016, Metro will raise its scholarship budget in hopes of offsetting some of the student expenses. “It’s a fine line between preserving the integrity and the quality of our program offerings and the educational experience of the students on one side, and affordability and accessibility on the other side,” Malhotra said. “So in order to do that, as we increased [tuition] by 3.7 percent, we also added $200,000 additional dollars for scholarships for incoming students. Two hundred thousand dollars is roughly the amount we would raise by a half percent increase in tuition.”

The addition of scholarships was something Malhotra and the administration had discussed with student leaders when formulating this year’s budget.

“We are very grateful and appreciative of the student leadership for understanding the problem and making the tough decisions,” said Malhotra. “[These scholarships] are basically fulfilling the commitment we made to them.” He said the funding for the scholarships will come out of the University’s total operating budget.

Even with the tuition increase, Metro’s budget will still not be balanced in fiscal year 2016. As a result, Metro is cutting 3.5 percent from its expenditures.

“Essentially what we did was, we took last year’s budgetary allocations and said ‘this year, all divisions and units with the exception of tuition and technology would reduce their budget allocations by 3.5 percent,’” Malhotra said.

Metro formulated its budget for fiscal year 16 with plans for flat enrollment rates, according to Malhotra. He said current enrolment is on track to remain flat or increase in the next year. “It’s a possibility that fall enrollment, full time equivalency might be up a percent; however, we are being cautious and we have formulated the budget on flat enrollment,” he said.

From an enrollment perspective, Metro is situated better than many institutions in MnSCU. As a system, MnSCU has reported declining enrollment rates since fiscal year 2012. Moreover, continued declines in enrollment are projected through fiscal year 2017.

Fee Increase?

Student fees at Metro will rise from $10.43 to $33.43 per credit in fiscal year 2016. New fees include a $12 parking fee, $8.50 for the Student Center and $2.50 for campus health care services. These fees were proposed by Metro’s Student Senate and approved by MnSCU’s Board of Trustees.

Metro’s administration also worked with student leaders to determine fee rates. “We provide all the relevant information to the student body,” said Malhotra.

Brian Wermerskirchen, vice president of Student Senate at Metro, said the Student Center and parking ramp were paid for with revenue bonds, so the buildings are required to bring in revenue to pay off the bonds. At Metro, that revenue will come in the form of student fees. “[The fees] will be reevaluated every year,” he said. “As enrollment goes up, the fees will go down, especially with the parking ramp. Once the parking ramp is paid for, it should be self-sufficient [not including operating costs].”

Wermerskirchen said the new buildings are something Metro has needed for a long time. The parking ramp, he said, was “a requirement from the city. Basically, they said ‘if you want to expand your campus any more you have to figure out your parking situation,’ so without that ramp we couldn’t have the Science Center.”

These projects have been on the student agenda for a significant amount of time, according to Wermerskirchen. “I’ve seen files that we have in our archives going back to the 90s,” he said.

On-campus health care is required at all universities in MnSCU, per a head-office mandate. The fee for health care should not take effect until the program has started.

With its multiple campuses and a non-typical population, Metro presents some difficulty in providing health care services to students. “The Dean of Students is working closely with the student body and exploring the options,” said Malhotra.

“We want to make sure it is accessible to all students, regardless of where they take classes. My hope is that over the next few months we will finalize those details.”

Fees in Past Years

In previous years, Metro students paid only $10.43 in student fees. These included a $2.00 activity fee, a $2.00 Student Center fee, a $6.00 computer fee and $0.43 fee paid to the Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA). These fees will become part of the $33.43 total in fall 2015.

Tuition v. Fees?

In broad terms, tuition in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system is set by the Board of Trustees. Malhotra said once the Board approves a proposed budget, institutions must stick to that budget for the rest of the fiscal year. In other words, Metro’s administration cannot charge any figure for tuition other than the amount approved by the Board of Trustees.

Fees, however, are set by an institution’s Student Senate and approved by MnSCU’s Board of Trustees. Where tuition pays for classes, fees pay for student services available on campus and other non-class expenses.

Proposed Child Care?

Student Senate proposed another $2.00 increase to student fees that would be used to help bring child care to campus. However, MnSCU’s Board of Trustees did not approve this proposal. “There is something in the MnSCU rules that says we can’t charge everyone for child care services,” said Wermerskirchen.

Malhotra said the administration agrees with the need for child care on campus but that more research needs to be done before finalizing a proposal to the Board of Trustees.

Photo Caption:

For “cropped for Kevin tuition.jpg”

Student fees are going to be used in part to cover the costs of a new parking ramp and Student Center.

Photo credit: Kevin Miller

For “Kevin tuition 2”

The City of St. Paul would not have allowed Metro to build its Science Education center (pictured above) without also building a parking ramp, according to Student Senate Vice President Brian Wermerskirchen.

Photo credit: Kevin Miller