Breaking the Piggy Bank: Why Online Classes Cost More Money Than Traditional Classes

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Metropolitan State University is known for its flexibility. And its ability to accommodate individuals who already lead busy lives and have responsibilities outside of school. Metro State is able to do this partially by offering online classes.

However, there is a major flaw with them: online classes cost more than traditional classes.

Doing some simple calculations will show that online courses are about 33 percent more expensive than traditional classes. For working adults who are trying to juggle a career, family and school, 33 percent more for college can be a big deal. Why is there such a large price difference?

“There are a lot of things that go on behind the scenes,” said Robert Bilyk, the director of the Center for Online Learning.

According to Bilyk, Metro State pays multiple expenses when offering online courses. Some of these costs include payment for the Center for Online Learning, payment to corporations like D2L Brightspace and expenses developing new classes. Each of these expenditures is necessary to keep online classes running and working smoothly.

Bilyk quotes the Center for Online Learning as being the largest expense. The Center for Online Learning is staffed with multiple individuals whose job is to develop new online instructional techniques and help online courses run efficiently.

In addition to this, Metro State must pay for D2L, a corporation that offers a learning platform designed to help instructors and students interact online. Sites like D2L force universities to increase online class tuition.

Developing the course itself takes up time and resources. Each year, Metro State offers new online courses. Because of this, they are required to hire personnel who have the ability to develop these new courses. “Professors are paid to teach, not to learn new software,” said Bilyk.

Moreover, Metro State has to have the ability to give training for professors who need to learn how to operate D2L and use different programs and software.

In addition to all of these costs, Metro State also hopes to continue improving online classes through adaptive learning. This would give students at Metro State the ability to study from a curriculum that is more specific to each individual. Also, online proctoring is something that is being researched, which would help add academic honesty to online classes.

To help clarify this subject of online course expenses, let’s look at two different situations. In one situation, a professor is teaching a traditional class. In order to teach this class, the professor will need a salary and a room, which would include chairs, tables, utilities, and a whiteboard.

Conversely, in an online class, there is no longer a need for a room or the utilities. However, in exchange, a university has nontraditional costs that are more expensive. A university must now pay for an interface that allows students and professors to communicate effectively. Technology support groups have to be staffed to help professors get their material online. The university also needs IT help desks and personnel who assist students and professors as they use and work through the online course.

These hidden costs are the reasons why online class tuition is so high. Money talks, so listen and prepare to break the piggy bank for your online class.