

Kentucky universities to hike tuition

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The University of Kentucky (UK) announced Friday it is planning to raise tuition by 6 percent and suspend raises for faculty and staff in order to deal with a \$43 million budget shortfall. Six percent is the highest that universities may raise tuition in accordance with the caps set by the Council on Postsecondary Education.

This would raise tuition for in-state freshmen and sophomores from \$9,128 this year to \$9,676 in the 2012-2013 academic year. For out-of-state students, tuition would increase from \$18,740 a year to \$19,864, according to the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

If the UK Board of Trustees passes the measure, as expected, it would constitute a 147 percent tuition hike since 2002.

UK president Eli Capilouto sent out a campus-wide e-mail Friday afternoon insisting, “we live in a ‘new normal’ with reduced or flat state appropriations and heightened concerns about affordability and access.” He continued, “challenging budgets and hard decisions, however, cannot be an excuse to shrink from our responsibilities. We must remain true to our founding mission and think anew about how to accomplish our goals. In other words, we increasingly must find the answers to our challenges from within.”

The e-mail was primarily intended to render blameless the administration. Capilouto himself makes \$500,000 a year, according to a records database of UK employees.

Across the country, state funding for higher education is being slashed, which places pressure on universities’ operating costs and propels the drive toward profitability in higher education.

For the fiscal year 2012-2013, UK’s general fund budget will be cut by 6.4 percent, which constitutes nearly \$20 million dollars. Since 2007, the university has experienced \$50 million in cuts to its general fund budget, from \$335 million to \$284 million. In addition, UK expects an increase in fixed costs to \$23 million in

the next fiscal year.

The austerity plan is compounded by recent changes in the Pell Grant program spearheaded by the Obama administration. Starting next year, students will qualify for Pell Grants only for six years. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, a mere 33.7 percent of students attain a bachelor’s degree within four years. Cuts in funding, limits on grant years, and the everyday life pressures faced by students constitute a direct assault on the right to higher education.

The university will freeze wages for the 2012-2013 fiscal year, and housing in some dorms will rise by 6 percent.

In an effort to increase revenue, the university is planning to increase enrollment and retention. This, however, is a short-sided measure that is unlikely to prove successful, considering that the official unemployment rate in the state is 8.2 percent.

Many prospective students will likely forgo a college education considering the raise in tuition, the bleak job prospects after graduation, and the decrease in Pell Grant eligibility to six years.

Community college attendance, as well as enrollment in online, technical schools, and for-profit private universities, has risen as students seek cheaper alternatives to the universities. Significantly, Kentucky graduates, who are poorer and older than the national average, have among the highest rates of student loan default in the country.

In addition to UK, the Council on Postsecondary Education voted to allow a 6 percent tuition increase at the University of Louisville, a 5 percent increase at the regional schools, and a 4 percent increase for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.



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