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Increase in UC student fees could swell Cabrillo enrollment

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A proposed 40 percent increase in student fees at UC-Santa Cruz means bad news for UCSC students, but a mixed blessing for Cabrillo College.

Cabrillo College Interim President Cliff Nichols said the fee increase would probably turn some students away from UCSC, many of whom will then enroll at Cabrillo because of the lower cost.

"That's good news and bad news," he said.

Nichols said Cabrillo could expect "a more qualified" student, which he welcomes, but the increase in enrollment would tax an already strained school budget. He said the college is expecting cuts

in funding that "could be rather significant" for the 1991-92 budget, but he does not know how deep those cuts will actually be. Getting answers from state officials on the matter is rather difficult, he said.

"They are stepping around the questions," Nichols said.

What is becoming clear, Nichols said, is that the college can expect no cost-of-living increase, no funds for school growth and no additional money for hiring new teachers. This year's budget, which is at about \$26.2 million, is not expected to increase by much next year.

This year, a state resident attending Cabrillo full time pays about \$85. That covers all tuition and fees. Current enrollment is about 13,700.

As the state budgetary noose around the UC system tightens, the nine UC campuses are being forced to take steps to stay afloat. But the UCSC financial-aid director believes increasing fees is a survival tactic that actually goes against one of the school's basic principles, which is to provide equal access to all students.

Poor and minority students will be most affected by the fee increase, said Esperanza Nee, director of financial aid at UCSC. Spots left vacant by these students would most likely be filled by higher-income students, Nee said. As money gets tighter, UC campuses will have a larger portion of higher-income students, chipping

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away at the student diversity at the campuses as minorities and poor students are pushed out of the market, Nee said.

But poor students are not the only ones negatively affected by the increase, Nee said. Of the 10,000 students at UCSC, nearly 3,600 receive financial aid to pay for both living expenses and the cost of attending school. Many of these students come from middle-income households. Close to 2,500 students must get loans to pay for expenses, she said.

In the last 10 to 15 years, it has become increasingly difficult for middle-income families to get financial aid as formulas used to determine qualifications for aid get stricter, Nee said.

In the fall, the cost of attending UCSC will go up by about \$400, Nee said. Room and board is expected to cost more than \$5,700, more than \$270 above this year. Books, transportation and personal expenses will hit nearly \$2,400, about \$90 more.

To help students meet those costs, Nee expects an additional \$1.4 million in financial aid, which will bring the total to about \$4.5 million. But even with the increase, the demand will continue to outpace the supply. Nee has grown accustomed to operating her department under these conditions.

"It's pretty depressing," she said.

She expects the number of students seeking financial aid to go from 3,600 to more than 4,000

"The people of the state of California should wake up to the fact

that their education system is on the brink of a breakdown," Nee said. "What we are seeing now is the worst in the 123-year-old history of the state's educational system."

The UC regents decided last week to increase student fees by 40 percent in anticipation of funding cuts proposed by Gov. Pete Wilson. That increase, which would go into effect in the fall, would raise fees to \$650. That brings the total to \$2,470 for resident undergraduate students per semester.

Gov. Wilson's proposed cuts to the UC campuses would amount to \$295 million.

"I can't even imagine that much money," Nee said.

University officials are developing strategies to combat the cuts, Nee said. An option receiving strong support from administrators is to cut enrollment by 5,500 at the nine campuses starting in the fall.

Officials are also considering layoffs and no cost-of-living pay increases for employees, Nee said.