

June 24, 2010

Clemson raises tuition and fees 7.5 percent for the fall

By John Staed

GREENVILLE — Clemson University trustees decided Thursday to raise tuition costs 7.5 percent for in-state students this fall.

The decision by the trustees, who met in Greenville, follows a 4.5 percent increase approved for this year's students. Nearly all South Carolina public colleges have raised the cost for students to attend this fall. The University of South Carolina recently increased its tuition 6.9 percent for the fall.

Cathy Sams, spokeswoman for the university, said the Clemson tuition increase will raise roughly \$17 million per year and will help offset \$2.3 million in mid-year state cuts and \$23 million in state cuts the previous fiscal year.

Although Clemson's academic program did not take any budget cuts this year, legislators used federal stimulus money to plug the gaps, leaving the possibility of further cuts in state revenue in the next fiscal year when that money is no longer available. The school was cut \$4 million in its Public Service Activities budget, but that includes more non-academic programs such as its extension program.

The trustees also approved an average 3.9 percent increase in room and board fees.

Clemson student Lacey Thomas had mixed feelings about the increase.

"I understand why they have to increase tuition every year, but in my opinion the direct benefits of (the) increase have no connection to the students," she said. "While the administrators want us to believe that the tuition increases and budget cuts will, in the long run, help us to become a 'Top 20 Institution,' the short-term results aren't as positive."

Clemson President James Barker said the increases will provide needed courses for graduation, honor scholarship and faculty hiring packages and start construction of an Academic Success Center and a life sciences center.

"This plan allows us to manage significant state funding cuts, continue to provide a top-quality education for our students and maintain our commitment to drive economic development and create jobs for South Carolina," Barker said in a statement.

Clemson spokesman John Gouch said the school has lost \$75 million in state funding since 2008.

Thomas said Clemson's overall budget decisions have affected students financially. Being an out-of-state student, she has to pay more, and wonders if she made the right decision to attend Clemson, she said.

"As a result of tuition increases, many students find themselves having to withdraw or take semesters off, which, I feel, compromises the integrity of the diversity of the student body simply because they do not have the means to fully pay for their education," she said.

"I feel that if the Clemson administration truly examines how their decisions are impacting their students and reprioritize and reallocate their funds, then maybe such drastic measures would not be necessary. Since I am an out-of-state student, the tuition increases are extremely detrimental because it means that I will potentially become further in debt in order to continue my education."

The tuition increase adds \$415 per semester for in-state students and \$1,016 per semester for out-of-state students, according to a Clemson statement.

Higher costs for on-campus housing will range from zero to \$85 per semester, depending on the residence hall chosen, with new revenues going to offset inflation and fund renovations, Clemson officials said.

All new revenues from meal plans are earmarked for construction of a new dining facility. Student housing and dining services are auxiliary enterprises, which by state law must be self-supporting, according to the statement.

Graduate program fees will increase by 2.2 percent, and a differential fee of \$200 per credit hour was approved for a new cardiovascular technology concentration in public health.

John Bednar, a retired Clemson professor and critic of the Clemson administration, called the increases "shameful," especially at a time when higher costs put a larger financial burden on families.

© 2010 Anderson Independent Mail. All rights reserved