Questions and Answers About Proposed UW Tuition Rates
June 7, 2012

Q: I heard the legislature didn’t cut higher education this year. Why does the University need to raise tuition again?

A: The University of Washington and all Washington public higher education institutions have seen a gradual decline in state funding over the past 20 years with a dramatic drop in the past few years. State funding for the University of Washington has decreased by nearly 50 percent since 2009.

Last year, the legislature adopted a higher education budget for the 2011-13 biennium that included a $217 million cut in state funds for the University of Washington compared to the prior biennium. The budget also assumed that the University of Washington would increase tuition by 16 percent a year for the next two years to partially offset these cuts.

When the legislature passed a supplemental budget in April 2012 to deal with additional projected revenue shortfalls, the budget included no additional major cuts to higher education. This was a pivotal step toward stabilizing the UW's budget situation and prevented even greater impacts on UW students, faculty and staff. However, the budget did not reduce the cuts that were enacted last year. Thus, the planned second-year tuition increase of 16 percent has been adopted.

Even with a legislatively-authorized 16 percent tuition increase for 2012-13, funding per student at the UW will still be $3,000 lower than it was in 2008.

Q: How much will tuition be next year?

A: The Board of Regents approved a 16 percent resident undergraduate tuition increase for the 2012-13 academic year. Total resident undergraduate tuition plus mandatory fees for 2012-2013 will vary slightly by campus, due to differences in campus-specific fees. Total resident undergraduate tuition plus mandatory fees will be $12,401 at the Seattle campus, $11,901 at the Bothell campus, and $11,902 at the Tacoma campus.
Q: Last year, UW increased undergraduate resident tuition by 20 percent. Where is all this money going?

A: In the 2011 session, the legislature granted university Boards of Regents and Trustees the ability to set their own resident undergraduate tuition rates. Any institution choosing to raise tuition over legislatively-authorized levels (16 percent for the UW) was required to meet certain conditions, including providing greater financial aid to low and middle-income students. The University of Washington Board of Regents used this authority to raise undergraduate tuition 20 percent—4 percent more than the legislatively-authorized level.

The revenue generated from last year’s resident undergraduate tuition increase went toward back-filling some of the cuts in state funding. Additional revenue went toward expanding student financial aid and improving student services. The increase allowed the UW to:

• Preserve the Husky Promise Program. Over 8,500 low-income students continue to pay no tuition and fees next year through the Husky Promise program;

• Expand financial aid to an additional 2,000 middle-income students who typically do not qualify for grant assistance;

• Add course sections to high demand classes to ensure students get the classes they need to graduate on time; and

• Re-open writing and tutoring centers to improve support services for students.

Q: Who has been involved in the budget and tuition setting process? Was there any opportunity for public or student input?

A: Initial budget recommendations were developed in cross-campus consultation with a variety of stakeholder groups, including faculty and students:

• Faculty Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (which includes representation from ASUW and GPSS student leadership) advises the administration and informs the Faculty Senate on long-range planning, preparation of budgets, and distribution of funds.

• Board of Deans and Chancellors share with the President and the faculty the responsibility for the governance of the University. They meet on a regular basis under the co-chairmanship of the Provost to consider a variety of matters of educational and administrative interest including the annual budget.
• Provost’s Advisory Committee for Students (PACS) advises and makes recommendations to the UW administration on preparation of budgets, tuition levels, state policy proposals, financial aid proposals, long-range planning, distribution of funds and admissions and enrollment management.

In addition, the Board of Regents held two open public meetings on campus to gather faculty, student and staff input on the budget and the Provost’s office held a student roundtable in May to discuss the budget and tuition. Information gathered from these meetings helped inform final budget and tuition decisions. A final opportunity for public comment was provided at the June Board of Regents meeting.

Q: How will UW tuition compare with similar universities?

A: At this point it is difficult to predict exactly how UW undergraduate resident tuition will compare. Many peer institutions have not adopted final rates. In other cases, legislative sessions have not yet concluded. From initial publicly available data, we project with the 16 percent increase UW’s undergraduate resident tuition will beat the average of its official Global Challenge State (GCS) peer universities.

Q: Are there more non-resident and international students at the UW than students from Washington?

A: The UW is a proudly public institution, and our enrollment mix has always favored students from the state of Washington. Eighty percent of University of Washington undergraduates are from the state of Washington. This year, the University is returning to its normal commitment of a minimum of 4,000 Washington residents in the freshman class at the Seattle campus. In addition to helping create a diverse student body, non-resident students pay about two and a half times what resident students pay in tuition (anticipated to be approximately $31,000 next year), which provides additional revenue to help mitigate state budget reductions and ensure that resident undergraduate tuition is lower than it would otherwise have to be.

Q: Why doesn’t the UW use the millions of research dollars it brings in each year to help solve its budget problems?

A: Our faculty’s prowess in competing for research grants helps drive $3 billion in economic impact for the state of Washington each year, which accounts for over 22,000 direct and indirect jobs. When top faculty compete and win federal and industry research grants, these funds can be spent only on the research project itself. Federal law prohibits using the monies for other university needs.

Student tuition and taxpayer support are what pay primarily for what we call “core educational expenses” which contribute to faculty salaries, provide financial aid, improve access to high-demand degrees, ensure enrollments, etc. When state funding declines, not only does our teaching enterprise suffer, but we also risk losing top faculty who win these job-producing research awards.
Q: Why doesn’t the UW use money it raises in private donations to help deal with the budget crisis?

A: During the last private fund-raising campaign which ended in 2008, the University was fortunate to raise more than $2.68 billion, and while it made a terrific difference in so many important ways, it cannot be applied to offset budget cuts or mitigate their impacts. Like the research dollars the University receives, spending of private philanthropic dollars is directed by the wishes of each of our donors. The vast majority of these private gifts are directed to specific purposes such as professorships, scholarships or capital projects like the new Foster School of Business building, Paccar Hall. We are also fortunate to receive gifts into the University’s endowment — gifts whose principal cannot be spent. Annual earnings from the endowment do supplement the University’s annual budget, providing over $50 million of support to the UW core education enterprise in 2011.

Q: If the University is facing such a dire budget shortfall, why are you renovating Husky Stadium?

A: The UW’s Athletic department receives no state funding, and there are no state dollars, no University funds, and no tuition or student fee dollars whatsoever going to support intercollegiate athletics, either in operations or in capital expenditures. The stadium renovation is being funded with a combination of athletic department revenues generated from ticket sales and major gifts from supporters of intercollegiate athletics.

Husky Stadium is in significant need of repair and upgrade. The football program generates the vast majority of all Athletic Department revenues, so renovating Husky Stadium is an investment that will pay dividends to all athletic programs at the UW for many years to come.