

Funds aimed at tuition, raises

► State regents plan to use most of the \$1.02 billion allocation to keep tuition down and hike faculty pay.

By APRIL MARCISZEWSKI
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OKLAHOMA CITY — State Regents for Higher Education plan to give most of their expected \$1.02 billion state appropriation directly to Oklahoma's public colleges to keep tuition and fee increases down and to pay for faculty raises.

Chancellor Paul Risser said he expects colleges to propose tuition increases of about 5 percent or less. State regents are scheduled to vote on tuition and fee rates on Thursday; state law requires any changes to be announced 30 days before fall classes start.

Regents voted Friday to allocate \$85 million to the colleges, contingent on the Legislature and governor approving a state budget.

The lawmakers have said they plan to appropriate \$130 million more to higher education than they did last year — a 14.6 percent increase.

"This is going to move us toward national competitiveness," said Maryanne Maletz, vice chancellor for budget and finance.

It would have taken \$160 mil-

Proposed allocations

Proposed allocation of state money to colleges and the increase from last year's allocation:

Oklahoma public higher education appropriation: \$1.02 billion, up 14.6 percent

University of Oklahoma: \$243 million, up 13.64 percent

Oklahoma State University: \$241 million, up 10.49 percent

Northeastern State University: \$38 million, up 11.68 percent

Langston University: \$19 million, up 9.61 percent

Rogers State University: \$14 million, up 14.43 percent

Tulsa Community College: \$36 million, up 15.52 percent

Source: State Regents for Higher Education

lion in extra state money to bring Oklahoma up to the national average of per-student funding, and this year's expected appropriation takes a big step in that direction, she said.

Risser thanked the Legislature, Gov. Brad Henry and "all those who helped in the process," including several college presidents and state regents staff members.

The extra money would enhance students' education by allowing colleges to hire more faculty and reduce class sizes, increase research and include more students in research, and work more with their communities, Risser said.

With the expected appropriation, "Oklahoma said higher education is worth investing a billion dollars in," he said.

He said the state also recognized that higher education boosts the state's economy.

State regents and staff members designed the allocations to

try to equitably fund colleges, so they proposed to set aside \$8.5 million to help underfunded institutions, including \$2.5 million extra for the University of Central Oklahoma and \$422,613 for Rogers State University.

The University of Oklahoma would be the highest-funded college in terms of taxpayer money, with \$243 million. Oklahoma State University would receive \$241 million. Tulsa Community College, which also receives a large amount of local property taxes, would get \$36 million in state money.

Colleges have different monetary needs based on their enrollment and the costs of different academic programs, Maletz said.

Regents also voted to put \$36 million toward debt service on capital bond issues, \$48.2 million toward three scholarship programs, \$500,000 into a forthcoming adult degree-completion program and \$4.6 million toward a nursing and allied health initia-

tive.

The nursing and health push will expand academic programs by increasing the faculty ranks, said Jim Purcell, an associate vice chancellor. Two years ago, 32 percent of qualified applicants to bachelor's degree programs were not admitted, largely because the programs did not have enough professors to meet the demand.

The initiative is meant to help address a nationwide shortage of registered nurses. At Oklahoma's current rate of production of nurses, the state would lack more than 3,000 needed nurses six years from now, according to a 2006 report on health care by the Governor's Council on Workforce and Economic Development.

"We do understand there's a shortage, and we need to begin to address it now," Purcell said.

Also at the regents meeting, the board voted to spend \$3.7 million on Brain Gain programs, including programs to keep students in college and help them graduate, and "programs of excellence" that first received grants last year.

Brain Gain already has paid off by increasing the number of students who earned degrees by one-fifth from 2000-01 to 2004-05, Purcell said. In 2004-05, 3,887 students earned degrees.

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BUDGET:

The new budget includes a \$3,000 across-the-board raise for teachers.

FROM A-1

begins July 1, leaving many agencies in limbo.

Veteran lawmakers said it was the closest state government has come to a shutdown in recent history.

The new budget gives teachers a \$3,000 across-the-board raise, appropriates \$130 million in new money for higher education and gives state workers a 5 percent pay hike.

In the final hour of the House session, members approved a state employee pay bill that came over from the Senate with corrections officers included in the 5 percent raises.

An amendment cutting out the corrections officers had been withdrawn by House GOP leaders when they learned that there was enough opposition to kill it, said Rep. Jari Askins, D-Duncan, House minority leader.

Earlier in the session, corrections officers had been given a \$2,800 "retention" pay raise.

The day was not without problems for the tax-cut bill, House

Bill 1172, which bogged down in the Senate over an amendment offered by Sen. Glenn Coffee, R-Oklahoma City, Senate minority leader, that didn't jibe with a budget agreement worked out by Senate President Pro Tem Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, Gov. Brad Henry and House Speaker Todd Hiett, R-Kellyville.

The Democratically controlled Senate put the tax-cut measure on hold.

Coffee wanted to speed up elimination of the estate tax to July 1, 2007, from Jan. 1, 2010, saying he was not part of the budget agreement. The measure had already been amended to provide tax relief to lineal heirs such as children and grandchildren.

The Senate eventually voted along party lines to move the bill forward without the Coffee amendment. Final passage came on a 43-4 vote.

Awaiting the outcome of the tax-cut bill, House Republicans stalled on the \$6.6 billion general appropriations bill and later approved it. Hiett said the House would not consider the spending bill until the tax-cut measure had been approved.

Meanwhile, school officials said that although teachers were granted pay raises, there is no money in the budget to pay for additional Social Security and teacher retirement costs.

The price tag for those items is about \$21 million, state Superintendent Sandy Garrett said.

TUITION:

Double-digit tuition increases spurred the action, a legislator says.

FROM A-1

his regents that OU's tuition be increased by 5 percent or 6 percent for the next year of classes. He said higher education officials are thankful for the \$130 million increase that state lawmakers gave their total budget this year.

Rep. John Trebilcock, R-Broken Arrow, said the action to move tuition-setting authority was taken because regents have imposed double-digit increases on students since receiving that authority in 2003.

"These are the people's schools and the people need input through the Legislature," Trebilcock said.

The measure approved, 59-35, by the House now heads to the Henry's desk.

The governor's spokesman,

Paul Sund, said Henry will have to review the bill before deciding whether to sign it.

On Wednesday, Sen. Frank Shurden, D-Henryetta, offered the amendment to return the tuition-setting authority to the Legislature. Earlier in the session, the same amendment offered by Shurden was killed.

Rep. Tad Jones, R-Claremore, said higher education officials have told the Legislature if colleges and universities don't get more money, then regents will raise tuition.

"We might as well have the authority, if we have to take the blame," he said.

Boren noted that OU and Oklahoma State University remain 11th and 12 respectively in the Big 12 in cost of tuition.

Chancellor Paul Risser said higher education officials are closest to the needs of the universities.

"They know what money is needed," he said.

World staff writer April Marciszewski contributed to this story.

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"This is a real sad thing, particularly for a lot of school districts that are already suffering," she said.

Tulsa Public Schools Superintendent David Sawyer said additional Social Security and teacher retirement will cost his district \$1.4 million.

"We would have to reduce other expenditures to cover that amount," he said. "Of course, it is wonderful that the state is supporting teacher pay, but the impact could be substantial."

Also Friday, the House approved a \$5 million appropriation for an early childhood pilot program aimed at children up to age 3 who are in day-care centers. The measure now goes to the governor.

Through the efforts of the Kaiser Foundation of Tulsa and other philanthropic groups, special programs will target low-income

children and their parents.

The Senate adjourned about 9:30 p.m. and the House shortly before 10 p.m.

Morgan said the session was the most difficult and contentious he has experienced in his 10 years as a lawmaker.

"Although the Legislature absolutely should have finished their business months ago, I am pleased that the legislation passed during this special session will help move Oklahoma forward," Henry said. "We are building on the strong momentum that we have achieved over the past years, making crucial investments in the future and providing meaningful tax relief."

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TRIAL:

A forensics specialist testifies none of the stains contained sperm.

FROM A-1

records from the Springer Clinic in Tulsa, detailing a host of ailments.

Thompson's medical records showed that he had been having problems with his erections for years and had tried a variety of treatments for the problem, Dakil said.

Among the treatments were drugs, dental suppositories and injections, and finally Viagra, according to those records.

In 1995, Dakil said, Thompson's doctor gave him a video to watch at home concerning penis injections and the use of a penis pump.

With special prosecutor Richard Smothermon holding up a penis pump seized from Thompson's chambers, Dakil described to jurors how the relatively simple device works.

A clear plastic cylinder is placed over the penis, down to its base. The other end of the cylinder has an air hose extending to a pump with calipers.

When the calipers are depressed, air is drawn away from the cylinder and the vacuum draws blood into the penis, causing it to stiffen, Dakil said.

As Smothermon demonstrated the pumping action, the resulting sounds seemed to match the cadence of noises described by former jurors at two 2003 trials over which Thompson had presided.

Eight of those former jurors testified Thursday at having heard noises like the sounds of a bicycle pump coming from Thompson's bench throughout the trials.

Dakil said a penis subjected to a pump would be engorged and purple in color.

Dakil also noted from Thompson's medical records that the judge was diagnosed with a calcification of his penis.

Such a condition, he said, would produce a bent erection, possibly even a right angle.

Dakil's description of the color and size of a penis subjected to a pump, along with a calcification problem, seemed to be laying a foundation for the prosecution's next witness, Thompson's former court reporter, Lisa K. Foster.

She has claimed to have seen Thompson's penis "12 to 15" times during trials.

In legal papers filed by prosecutors, they noted:

"Of all the descriptors in the English language that could have been utilized by Ms. Foster in her previous descriptions of what she observed, the state would argue it to be more than a coincidence that she is able to accurately describe the color and size correctly."

Foster will testify next week, possibly Monday.

On Thompson's urinary ailments, Dakil said the judge had persistent burning sensations when he urinated, along with frequency and low-flow problems, going back to 1988.

Dakil said the antibiotic Cipro was prescribed, and that helped ease Thompson's discomfort.

The urologist, though, said Thompson did not have a prostate infection, nor did the judge suffer from a urine leakage — "dribbling."

Dakil noted Thompson also was prescribed Prozac for depression.

Much of Friday afternoon's testimony came from the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation and its lab testing of stains found in Thompson's office and chambers.

J.D. Lindstrom, an OSBI forensics specialist who tested those stains, said he found traces of "P30," a protein found in semen, on one of Thompson's judicial robes, on a small chair in his chambers and on a carpet, also in the chambers.

He said DNA tests matched them to Thompson.

Lindstrom also tested the pump and found "faint positive" results.

None of the stains that tested positive contained sperm, he testified.

Thompson had a vasectomy performed in 1988.

Defense lawyer Rob Nigh questioned Lindstrom about those results, especially the results on stains found on the judge's courtroom chair and the carpet in front of it.

Earlier this week, another OSBI agent testified that he did a field test on the stains on the chair and carpet and found them to contain semen.

But on cross-examination by Nigh, Lindstrom said the carpet did not show semen.

Lindstrom said there wasn't enough material on Thompson's court seat for him to test.

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