

Northern Illinois University Students Face Tuition Hike

By Surajit Sen Sharma

According to members of the board of trustees of Northern Illinois University (NIU), the disparity between the rates of inflation and state funding can be made up for only by raising tuition fees.

In a meeting held in May, the finance committee of the NIU board of trustees approved a proposal to raise tuition fees by 10.8%. The hike would raise tuition for graduate students from \$204 to \$226 per credit hour. For law students, the tuition rate would increase from \$398 per credit hour to \$441 per credit hour.

The fee escalation comes in the wake of the passage of the Truth-in-Tuition law, which requires incoming freshmen and transfer students to be charged at the same rate for the following eight semesters. John Peters, NIU president, said, "It is difficult to peer four years into the future and estimate exactly what our costs will be. However, we can say with almost absolute certainty that our costs won't be going down, and it is unlikely that we will see any substantial increase in state funding to offset those costs."

Eddie Williams, NIU's vice president of finance and facilities, lent support to Peters' contention, saying, "All of these tuition increases are connected to the fact that our state appropriations have fallen short over the years."

J.D. Bergman, a member of the board of trustees, said of the issue, "The reason this happened is salary increases and inflation rise at 3% each year. The state funding rose last year by 1%. The only way we could make up the difference was to raise tuition."

If approved, the proposal would mandate a cost of \$468 per credit hour for new out-of-state students, while incoming students from Illinois would pay \$224 per credit hour. Residence hall rates and meal plan rates are also slated to increase as part of the same proposal.

Although the proposed measures indicate that the sliding tuition scale at NIU favoring students taking heavier class loads is going to end, students would still only pay for a maximum of 16 hours per semester—additional hours would be provided free of charge.