

Crisis means price hikes for thousands

(CPS) Students will be paying higher prices for classes, some as soon as next month, various campuses have announced.

The funding emergencies that have crippled states across the country have forced a number of campuses to impose unusual midyear tuition hikes.

As a result, hundreds of thousands of students will be writing bigger tuition checks for spring term than they wrote for fall term.

Massachusetts students will take the biggest hit, paying as much as \$625 more for spring semester at most of the commonwealth's public campuses. It could have been worse. Voters Nov. 6 defeated a proposal that would have rolled back all taxes and fees to 1988 levels.

In New York, North Carolina, California and Virginia, students at some campuses will pay more this spring in the form of emergency fees, tuition increases or special "user" fees for anything from health care to the right to use computer labs.

Additionally, students at the University of North Dakota, St. Cloud State University in

Minnesota, Loyola University in New Orleans and the University of California-Davis could end up paying more this spring for various services.

"There's going to be some (more) for sure," declared Richard Novak of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, a Washington, D.C.-based group.

Many students, however, resent the increases, saying they've been unfairly targeted.

"Every time we pay more, we don't get anything back," complained Massachusetts College of Arts student Kirsten Friar.

Others say the campuses should trim the budget by cutting jobs of high-paid administrators.

Higher Fees, Too

"It's really obvious there is a lot of fat at the administrative level," said David Topitzer, a student government member at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, whose spring tuition bill is up \$400 over fall's.

Following a "temporary legislative surcharge" of \$41.50 levied on all students in the University of North Carolina

system, students at Appalachian State University may be hit with a \$270 increase in fees for athletics, health services, student activities, student union expansion and textbook rental.

Similarly, students at the State University of New York system may have to pay \$50-\$100 more next semester.

The tuition hike would help offset an anticipated cut in funds as the state tries to reduce spending to close a growing budget gap.

Earlier this fall SUNY trustees decided to charge students at 26 of the system's 34 campuses \$50 per semester for health services. And in late September, University of Buffalo students got a new mandatory \$50 per semester fee to ride buses the three miles between the north and south campuses.

Public campuses in Virginia were the first to announce mid-year tuition hikes, hoping to plug a \$1.4 billion hole in their two-year budget.

The price hikes in Massachusetts were emergency measures, maintained Peter Chisholm of the state's Board of Regents.

Over the last three years, he

noted, state funding for higher education there has dropped by \$160-\$170 million.

This year across-the-board cuts, coupled with budget revisions, have left the state's 29 campuses with a \$50 million shortfall.

"Only in the most dire situations do they occur," said Novak of the midyear price hikes.

A Tax Problem

By all accounts, this is one of the most dire years on record in terms of state funding of higher education. The rate of increase in state support for higher education is at a 30-year low, according to a mid-October study by the Center for Higher Education at Illinois State University.

States will spend \$40.8 billion in 1990-91, 11.6 percent more than they did two years ago. It's barely enough to keep up with inflation, the study found.

At least a dozen states -- Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia and Washington -- are facing funding crises.

Many state legislatures, hurt

by slowing sales tax revenues, lower-than-expected income tax receipts and slow economic growth, don't have as much money to allocate as they'd anticipated.

In addition to price hikes, many campuses are drastically cutting services.

The SUNY system, for example, in mid-November put an immediate freeze on all sorts of transactions, including most out-of-state travel, all in-state travel, equipment purchases, contracts for any outside services and the filling of any permanent or temporary position.

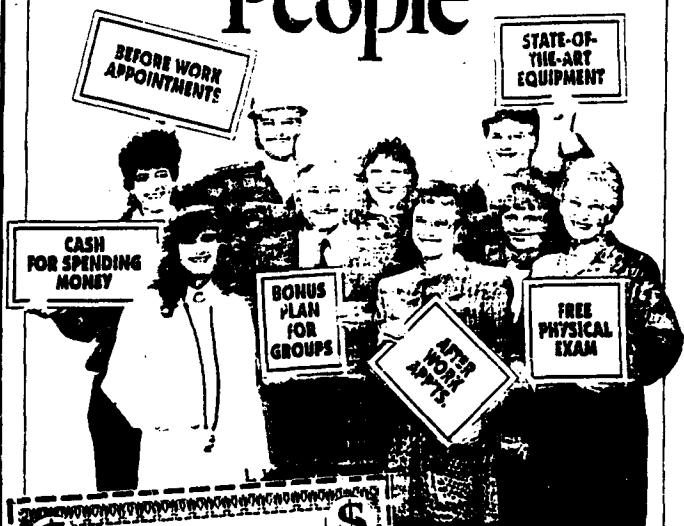
If anything, emergency price hikes often help send a message to the public and state legislators about the situation in higher education, Novak said.

In Illinois, he said, wildly unpopular budget cuts that forced midyear tuition hikes two years ago prompted state legislators to implement a temporary increase in the state income tax. The new tax in turn amounted to a 22-percent two-year rise in state support for higher education.

The mid-year price hike, Novak said, "definitely played a part."

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