

# WPCC preparing for tuition increase

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MORGANTON — Lawmakers in Raleigh are expected to increase tuition for community colleges across the state for the fourth year in a row and Western Piedmont Community College is no exception to the 10 percent increase.

With approval by the state Senate and an agreement by the state House Appropriations leaders to charge the new rate, the State Board of Community Colleges gave the go-ahead to community colleges to increase the tuition for the upcoming school year.

"We have no choice. Our colleges need to bill students and they need to know how much to charge," said System President

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H. Martin Lancaster.

Tuition rates for students at WPCC increased this year by 10 percent and school administrators say they have no control over the increases.

"This is a hardship to students," said Cyndie Callaway, vice president for institutional advancement at WPCC. "We have gone from \$21 per credit hour to \$34 per credit hour in the past four years and that is an exponentially huge increase. In many cases our students here are not in a position to pay a great deal of money to get an education."

The increases are dictated by next year's state budget legislation — a spending plan not yet passed by the General Assembly. Callaway said officials from the State Board of Community Colleges have solid information that the increases will pass in

next year's budget.

The new tuition rate rose 10 percent, from \$31 to \$34.25 per credit hour for in-state students and from \$173.25 to \$190.75 per credit hour for out-of-state students. This is the fourth consecutive tuition increase for community colleges in the state in the past four years.

Last year, community colleges had to send a second tuition bill to students after the passage of the state's budget that included a tuition increase. Problems arose for college administrators while trying to collect the retroactive increases in tuition.

"The problem we ran into last year was that the state budget did not pass until after fees and tuition rates were collected," Callaway said. "It was very negative. It put our students in a very difficult situation. We have tried to plead our case to the General Assembly about needing to know any kind of changes

in tuition rates as quickly as they occur."

"The State Board of Community Colleges, in an effort in trying not to collect additional money from students at a later date, went ahead and adopted the tuition increase now," Callaway said.

If the General Assembly does not mandate a tuition increase this year, the State Board of Community Colleges will return the extra payment to students.

Callaway said Western Piedmont Community College is anticipating cuts in next year's funding in spite of the increases in tuition.

"I see a lot of students affected by the increases," Callaway said. "In order to balance the budget, lawmakers in Raleigh are going to have to find some additional resources in revenue in the state."