

LMC tuition to rise in fall

Official site rising health care costs

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — The cost of getting an education at Lake Michigan College is going up by 3.4 to 3.9 percent overall this fall.

LMC trustees adopted the new rates by a 5-1 vote in Tuesday's meeting. Board Chairwoman Mary Jo Tomasini, Treasurer Judy Truesdell, Secretary Debra Johnson and Trustees Paul Bergan and David Maysick voted to support the increases, with Trustee Stephen Small dissenting. Vice Chairman Michael Lindley was absent.

LMC President Bob Harrison said the new rates reflect the rising cost of doing business, including a projected 5-8 percent rise in employee health insurance costs.

"The cost of electricity's gone up, health insurance goes up. The amount of money we get from the state has gone up a little bit, but it stays relatively flat," Harrison said after the meeting.

The new rates take effect with the fall semester, after LMC's new fiscal year begins July 1.

The changes include a \$4.50-per-contact-hour increase for in-district students to \$94; a \$7.10-per-contact-hour increase for out-of-district students to \$145.50; and a \$10.30-per-contact-hour increase for international students to \$213, according to figures provided by the college.

The board didn't raise any fees, which range from \$1 (Student Senate campus fund) to \$13 (facilities, technology) and \$14 (general academic).

By leaving fees where they are, the board effectively reduced the impact of the tuition increase — once both categories are taken into ac-

count, said LMC spokeswoman Candice Elders.

As a result, tuition increases for in-district students effectively dropped from 5 to 3.4 percent, and from 5.1 to 3.9 percent for their in-state peers, she said.

According to a chart released by the college, even after Tuesday's vote, LMC will still remain about 13 percent cheaper than Southwestern Michigan College in Dowagiac.

LMC went without raising tuition from 2006 to 2010, the chart shows.

Small said his reasons for voting no were "almost the same as last year."

As he said last year, Small said it's inappropriate to raise tuition when many local residents are worrying about how to fund an education.

"There's a national movement to ask taxpayers, rather than students, to pay tuition fees — that is, to treat community college as we treat K-12. That adds another dimension to this (issue), that tuition should be kept as low as possible," he said.

Harrison said the college is sensitive to those concerns, which it takes into account in implementing any increase so that students can plan.

"The reason we do it now is that we publish the fall schedule in April, and we want students to understand, as they register for classes, what it will cost," he said.

All budget categories are running on target right now, but the 2015-16 fiscal year picture won't take shape for a couple more months, he said.

"We're still in the negotiation phase with our insurance carriers. The budget will be presented at the June meeting, and by then, we should have all the numbers buttoned down," Harrison said.