



Soaring tuitions

Lansing politics at fault for MSU, Oakland hikes

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Editorial

Blame for large tuition increases at Michigan State and Oakland universities next fall should be aimed at state lawmakers and the governor.

Those spikes - 9.6 and 13.9 percent, respectively - result from an inability to pass a state budget for next fiscal year that adequately funds higher education. That failure of leadership is a consequence of a persistent partisanship, which stems from a fidelity to ideology and special interests over practical problem-solving.

Little has happened on the budget because a majority of Republicans can't get past their dogmatic opposition to a necessary tax increase to eliminate a \$1.8-billion deficit, and Democrats haven't been willing to slash teachers health care and pension costs, which would anger their union supporters. Neither party has embraced other major reforms to make local and state government more efficient.

At least MSU is keeping the spotlight on the politicians where it belongs. The tuition measure its governing board adopted Wednesday promises to reduce the increase, or give refunds, if the Legislature sufficiently funds universities in fiscal 2008, which starts Oct. 1. Conversely, more cuts would boost tuition even higher. Earlier this week, it was rumored that MSU tuition might rise 17 percent, which made University of Michigan-Flint students believe something similar is in store for them.

This would be an unacceptable burden for a community - and state - that must increase the percentage of people attending college. Tuition rose a total of 19.8 percent at UM-Flint the past two years, with this fall's rate to be set when UM's Board of Regents meets next Thursday.

While anyone with an ounce of sense knows rising college costs for residents runs counter to building a more educated work force and a strong economy, many of Lansing's politicians can't seem to get past their old ways, which makes sound policy-making problematic. Until they get out of their rut, Michigan will be mired, too.

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