

OCC approves 4.3% increase for 2012-13

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Board OKs \$60.13 million budget

TOMS RIVER — For the first time in four years, students at Ocean County College will see an increase in tuition.

The college's board of trustees approved the school's \$60.13 million budget for the 2012-13 school year during a meeting Monday afternoon.

According to the spending plan, tuition will increase \$4 per credit to \$98, while

college fees and technology fees will each increase by \$1 per credit, to \$18 and \$12, respectively.

The college last had a tuition increase in 2008, school officials said.

The board voted 8-1 in favor of the budget, with board member Harvey York casting the only vote against. Board vice chairwoman Linda Novak was not

present.

"I appreciate all of the work that everyone did, and you have done a great job," York said. "I would suggest raising the cost \$2 per credit and then see what our enrollments are in September and then go higher if needed."

NEXT STEP

Ocean County College's 2012-13 budget will be presented in March to the Ocean County College Board of School Estimates, which is comprised of three county freeholders and two members of the college's board of trustees. A meeting date has not been scheduled.

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The increase is tied to a projected slight decline in student enrollment for 2012-13, an increase of \$481,061 in payments to pension funds and the anticipation of state and county aid staying flat, said Sara Winchester, the college's vice president for finance and administration.

Last year, the college received \$22.27 million in state and county funding combined.

"We were able to reduce spending by a million

dollars through position reductions and vacancy freezes," Winchester said. "Enrollment for next year is expected to be flat."

Board treasurer Jerry Dasti defended the budget.

"We have not had an increase in four years," Dasti said. "This year, we are taking the prudent steps that need to be taken."

The board agreed to revisit the budget in September after enrollment figures are finalized.

"At some point in the fall, we will come back and look at our enrollment projections and take a look

at the budget," said college President Jon H. Larson. "I don't like the idea of raising tuition."

Board secretary Stephan R. Leone said that increases can be tied to the stagnant economy.

"We would not be having this discussion if it were not for the economy," Leone said. "The administration has done a great job cutting costs, but at some point you have to have an increase. We are playing catch-up."

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