

## Smaller Budgets, Larger College Fees



For public university students in California, fees for higher education may be rising again. The increased fees are a result of a recent budget proposal by Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger and an extended agreement reached by the governor and California's two university systems, the University of California system and the California State University system.

In keeping with a trend that many states throughout the nation have been experiencing over the past four years, California has seen steady tuition increases. Addressing these increases, Governor Schwarzenegger suggested allocating budget surpluses to "buy out" any potential expense hikes, a proposal that legislators approved. However, the calculated budget for the upcoming 2007-2008 fiscal year does not include the necessary bonuses to counter the escalating fees.

This particular case is just one more example of the rising tuition rates that students have been facing for decades and that have increased the need for financial aid and investment in student loans. Neither University of California nor California State University decision makers have voted to approve the increases, but the issue is anticipated to be addressed in March.

If the tuition increases do take place, an undergraduate at the University of California could expect an estimated 7% increase, which translates to a fee hike of a little more than \$400. Presently, students in the UC system pay around \$6,141 for annual tuition. Add to that an average of another \$700 to compensate for miscellaneous campus fees and a \$60 surcharge that may be assessed to students to make up for losses from a previous lawsuit challenging professional school fee hikes, and annual tuition gets bumped up to about \$7,300 for undergraduates. At the 23 California State University campuses, undergraduate fees could rise by about 10%.

In an Associated Press article, Michelle Locke explains, "University leaders noted the proposal lives up to the terms of their funding agreement with the governor, containing money for enrollment growth-11,000 new students at CSU and 5,000 at UC-as well as faculty and staff salary increases. CSU's budget would go to \$4.3 billion, including \$1.3 billion from student fee revenue. UC's state-funded operating budget would increase 6.2% to nearly \$3.3 billion."

It has been reported that students are disappointed by the potential increases, and UC President Robert C. Dynes released a statement that said the budget "does not include everything we might wish for" but that the university is still appreciative of support on the priorities of enrollment and research.