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Regents do flip-flop on UA tuition

New vote to approve hike 'skullduggery,' DeConcini claims

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TEMPE - In a bizarre turn of events where rumor and innuendo interrupted the normally staid meeting, the Arizona Board of Regents on Friday raised tuition and fees for resident undergraduates at the University of Arizona by \$545, a day after they had capped those costs at \$206.

The reversal, in a 6-3 vote, means resident undergraduate tuition and fees next year will be \$6,076, compared with this year's \$5,531, a 9.9 percent increase. There was no change to the Thursday vote on nonresident and graduate student tuition and fees, which were increased between 8.9 percent and 13.9 percent.

The issue was brought back for debate by student Regent David Martinez III, who voted Thursday for Regent Dennis DeConcini's proposal to cap UA's tuition and fees increase at 3.7 percent.

Martinez said he'd been in consultation with students Thursday evening and they "overwhelmingly" supported UA President Robert N. Shelton "and his management style, which has worked well in the advancement of the UA."

The vote to reopen the debate was followed by heated discussion about student concerns over predictability in tuition hikes, UA's financial needs, accusations of poor board governance and questions of Shelton's leadership.

DeConcini vehemently objected to bringing the issue back, calling it "skullduggery," and inferred that votes were being stacked "because of overnight conversations."

Regents Anne Mariucci and Ernest Calderon joined DeConcini in decrying reopening the debate.

"We have turned this into a referendum on a board's confidence in a (university's) leadership," Mariucci said. "That's not what this is. . . . Regent (Fred) Boice was appalled by our decision yesterday. I am equally appalled by this attempt at governance."

Calderon said he thought the reconsideration could open a Pandora's box of problems, where regents could recall issues when they don't like the decision.

He also said various regents had told him Shelton was threatening to resign and that Shelton had maligned Mariucci in the press. Shelton said he had done neither.

The Arizona Republic quoted Shelton as saying "We feel the sense of urgency that everyone does. You'd have to be an insensitive rock not to get the fact that we're undergoing change."

Steve MacCarthy, UA's vice president for external relations, said Shelton was speaking in the abstract with

that statement, not about Mariucci.

Martinez also said the predictability proviso limiting tuition increases to 5 percent for all continuing students, beginning in 2010, was important to student leadership, and had been removed from the table during Thursday's vote to cap tuition and fees at UA at 3.7 percent.

Martinez was aided by the absence of Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne, a voting member of the board, who voted for the 3.7 increase Thursday, and by the presence of Regent Fred DuVal, who voted in favor of Friday's proposal. He was not at Thursday's meeting.

Boice, the board's president, said it was important to reopen the UA tuition discussion because Thursday's vote made it look like UA was being punished and the action could be interpreted as not supporting Shelton's leadership.

"The innuendo at least is that you're not doing a good job and therefore we're going to punish you," Boice said.

Deconcini, a former U.S. senator from Arizona, disagreed.

"This is not punishment, this is governance," he said. "But to come back when you've got the votes lined up - I know the game - that's not good public policy."

On Thursday, DeConcini had proposed the same 3.7 percent cap for Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University, but those propositions failed by narrow margins before the vote on UA occurred.

Shelton said Thursday he felt the vote "singled out the UA," and didn't understand it, since UA is undergoing a reorganization to deal with anticipated cuts from the state this year and next that could top \$60 million.

Before the vote, DeConcini called student leaders to testify, and UA Student Body President Tommy Bruce said he was in support of Shelton's original proposal because it had the guaranteed 5 percent "predictability" segment in it.

Although the Associated Students of Arizona have a "fundamental belief that tuition should be as low as possible" Bruce said losing the predictability piece in Thursday's vote was detrimental.

"What was approved yesterday, with all due respect for the board, was the least strategic setting of tuition I've ever seen," Bruce said.

Gan, a 21-year-old junior communications major, said she is on waiting lists for classes she needs to graduate and would support the increase if it means she'll get those classes.

However, she'll have to increase the amount of her student loan to pay the tuition hike.

"This sucks," she said.

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