UL set to hike tuition: 20%

The University of Louisiana System has authorized the University of Louisiana at Lafayette to raise its tuition and fees by some 20 percent in the 2015-16 academic year, which may hike undergraduate tuition and fees to a total of $8,244 for the year.

The university system office confirmed that the board approved the increases in a meeting last week in Baton Rouge.

The increases would raise UL's tuition and fees to the second-highest among the nine university system schools. Louisiana Tech tuition and fees would be raised to $8,823, 10 percent up from 2014-15 academic year and the highest among the ULS campuses.

The increases were permitted under Act 741, the GRAD Act, passed in 2010, which gives state campuses more autonomy and flexibility in charging for tuition in exchange for the institutions meeting goals, and House Bill 152, signed into law July 1, the day before the university system board meeting. HB 152 authorizes the state college systems to raise fees within certain limits. Many of the schools did not seek more funding under HB 152.

UL would raise tuition 10 percent under the GRAD Act, formally known as

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the Granting Resources and Autonomy for Diplomas Act, and fees 10 percent under HB 152.

Sandra Woodley, president of the UL System, said in setting the new tuition and fees the system considered the affordability of the campuses with their funding needs. For example, she said, the system reviewed “requests based on the percentage of students on Pell grants, TOPS awards, tuition relative to peer institutions, tuition relative to the SREB average and other factors.”

The university system board moved swiftly to increase tuition and fees after the bill was signed. The increases for the nine campuses, applied for separately to the board, were handled in a subcommittee and approved at the July meeting so that campuses could bill students in time for the start of the 2015-16 academic year.

All campuses will increase tuition to some degree. Nicholls State at 1.6 percent is the smallest.

President E. Joseph Savoie represented UL in making the case for tuition and fees increases.

According to records of the university system board meeting, UL has requested board authority to increase tuition and fees to make its charges equal to other schools categorized as Southern Regional Education Board category 2 in Louisiana within two years. Louisiana Tech, the University of New Orleans and UL are all SREB 2 campuses.

HB 152 requires the campuses to set aside at least 5 percent from the fees raised to be used for financial assistance to students. The ULS office said its schools set aside 10 percent of the fees for student financial assistance.

“The campus proposals were responsible and put in place safeguards to ensure students with financial barriers are not adversely affected,” Woodley said.

The university system office confirmed that all nine of its institutions were below the SREB average for tuition. UL was some $1,889 below the SREB average for 2014-15.