

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
NOVEMBER 15, 2007**

A. FISCAL YEAR 2009 TUITION AND FEE RATES

The Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University is required by its enabling Act to adopt tuition and fee rates for students attending the University. Each year, the Board reviews and adjusts those rates to recognize the budgetary needs of the University and the appropriate contributions students should make to meet those needs. Historically, given the University's ongoing commitments to access and to providing a high quality affordable education, the Board has adopted tuition and fee rates that are among the most affordable of the Illinois public universities. Equally important, the Board adopts tuition rates that reflect a fair and appropriate contribution from students to the costs of their education. It is with those continuing commitments and parameters that this report presents fiscal year 2009 tuition and fee recommendations to the Board.

At the November 2007 meeting, the proposed fiscal year 2009 tuition and fee rates (beginning fall 2008) are presented to the Board and to the University community for discussion. At the February 2008 meeting, the fiscal year 2009 tuition and fee rates will be presented to the Board for action. Clearly, students are the campus constituents most affected by changes in student tuition and fees. As a result, and as in previous years, the Provost and the Vice Presidents for Student Affairs and Finance and Administration will meet with the Student Government Association (SGA) between the November and February meetings to present the proposed tuition and fee rates and to discuss student concerns. It has been past practice that this forum to be open to all students to provide the broadest student input.

On October 26th, the three University Vice Presidents met with the president and finance committee chair of the Student Government Association and the student trustee to discuss tuition and fees. Discussed at that meeting were tuition and fee rates and recent increases and the availability of high demand course sections. Also discussed was the importance of the U-Pass for Northeastern students. All present agreed on the importance of the U-Pass and the lack of support to the University from the CTA, and all agreed to focus efforts on this issue and work towards a solution.

Overview of Current Tuition and Fee Rates

In fall 2004, a state law took effect requiring all Illinois public universities to guarantee new undergraduate students level tuition for four consecutive academic years. This fall, the fourth cohort of undergraduate students attending Northeastern entered the University under the tuition guarantee.

One result of the tuition guarantee is the effect on tuition comparisons among institutions. Prior to fall 2004, most universities had one basic tuition rate for undergraduate in-state, resident students and it was much easier to compare and assess tuition rates among public universities. Now, because of this legislation, all Illinois public universities have at least five different tuition rates for in-state undergraduate students. This complicates tuition

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comparisons. Further, there has been no standard statewide methodology to facilitate tuition rate comparisons.

Tuition comparisons are important because they provide a means to assess affordability among somewhat similarly financed institutions. For discussion purposes, Table 1 presents tuition rates at Illinois public universities for the four general classes of undergraduate students: freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors—and uses what would be the typical tuition cost for full-time enrollment for each of those classes. An average is then computed to determine a common measure for all Illinois public universities. Based on this analysis, the average tuition cost for students attending Northeastern in the current fiscal year is among the lowest rates for in-state undergraduate students attending Illinois public universities; only Governors State University and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville have lower average rates. The average full-time undergraduate tuition at Northeastern is \$4,905, or 89 percent of the statewide average of \$5,489.

Another assessment of affordability is the rate of undergraduate tuition increases. Table 2 provides a comparison of the current year undergraduate tuition increases adopted by the NEIU Board of Trustees with the tuition rate increases adopted by the other Illinois public universities. The tuition rate for undergraduates new to Northeastern starting in fall 2007 was 11.4 percent higher than the fall 2006 cohort. This compared to a state average of 10.6 percent. For continuing undergraduates, the tuition rate increase at Northeastern was 14.7 percent compared to a state average increase of 12.0 percent. The tuition increases at Northeastern were slightly more than the state average for both cohorts of undergraduate students.

Table 3 summarizes graduate tuition rates at Illinois public universities and the most recent rate increases. This table shows that, in fiscal year 2007, graduate tuition at Northeastern was \$3,840 for a full-time graduate student, 75 percent of the state average, and the lowest among the Illinois public universities. In addition, graduate students at Northeastern were paying less for their education than most undergraduate students. As a result, the Board approved an adjustment in graduate tuition of 25 percent, which is reflected in this table. Even with this increase, graduate tuition at Northeastern is 86 percent of the statewide average.

Table 4 provides a comparison of the tuition costs for undergraduate and graduate students at Illinois public universities. Because graduate education is more costly than undergraduate education, it follows that graduate students should pay more for their education than undergraduates. Last year's report showed that graduate students at Northeastern paid 8.6 percent less for their education than new undergraduates. This year's data indicate that the adjustment made last year to graduate tuition at Northeastern had the desired effect of bringing graduate tuition in line with undergraduate tuition rates.

Based on IBHE data and using IBHE's fee classifications, Table 5 provides a summary of fiscal year 2008 mandatory fees at Illinois public universities. The annual mandatory

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fees at Northeastern total \$2,149 compared to a state average of \$2,250. It should be noted that the parking fee at Northeastern is mandatory (although waivable) while parking at some universities is optional and not included in the reported fees. It also should be noted that Governors State University and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville do not provide mandatory student health insurance. Therefore, the state average excludes those two institutions. Based on this date, fees at Northeastern rank in the lower half of the 10 remaining Illinois public universities and total 4 percent, or \$101, below the state average.

The table shows that student activities fees at Northeastern (student activity and campus recreation fees) are about at the statewide average. Northeastern has no fee for intercollegiate athletics, a fee that averages \$272 for those universities with that fee. Our student services fee (technology and parking) is nearly 90 percent higher than the state average for student services. Again, our parking fee is a mandatory fee at Northeastern, which is one of the major factors in this comparison, and the University has made a significant investment in our computer labs and the NEIU*works* student services modules, both paid from the technology fee. Our combined health services and health insurance are similar to the two other Chicago universities – Chicago State and the University of Illinois at Chicago, reflecting the local health care market and the level of services offered through our health insurance. And finally, the statewide data show that students at Northeastern are contributing to the University's facility needs at less than half the rate of students at other Illinois public universities. In fact, six public universities have implemented new fees for facilities maintenance and/or improvement in the past three years.

Setting Tuition and Fees in a Challenging State Fiscal Climate

The fiscal climate in the state of Illinois has had a direct impact on tuition and fee rates at Northeastern and all other Illinois public universities. The following chart summarizes changes in state appropriations and undergraduate tuition rates over the past 10 years. Between fiscal year 1998 and 2003, state funding increased 18.2 percent while tuition increased 22.2 percent. Other than the 6.4 percent increase in fiscal year 2003, tuition increases at Northeastern during this period did not exceed 3.6 percent.

However, in the second five-year period, when state funding decreased 4.3 percent, tuition increased 45.1 percent. The University maintained modest tuition increases until fiscal year 2006, and then increased tuition at a higher rate only in response to several years of state funding shortfalls. State funding levels will continue to challenge the ability of public universities to hold down tuition costs.

Not reflected in these state appropriations are additional funding requirements that the University is required by the state to make that must be funded with available resources. In fiscal year 2002, the University incurred a new requirement to contribute \$1.1 million annually to the Illinois state group health insurance plan. This was a new requirement for

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all public universities, in addition to the employee and employer contributions already required.

Public Act 94-4 requires Northeastern and all other public universities, for the first time, to make a contribution to the State Universities Retirement System for increases in employees' salaries above 6 percent in any of the four years used to determine average earnings for retirement purposes.

Figure 1

Fiscal Year	State Funding (in thousands)	% Change	Undergrad Tuition per Credit Hour	% Change
1998	36,024.1	----	88.00	----
1999	38,189.0	6.0%	91.00	3.4%
2000	40,330.4	5.6	94.25	3.6
2001	42,610.1	5.7	97.50	3.4
2002	45,396.8	6.5	101.00	3.6
<u>2003</u>	<u>42,585.4</u>	<u>(6.2)</u>	<u>107.50</u>	<u>6.4</u>
1998-2003	6,561.3	18.2	19.50	22.2
2003	42,585.4	----	107.50	----
2004	39,077.7	(8.2)%	110.00	2.3%
2005	39,227.7	0.4	115.00	4.5
2006	39,247.7	0.1	126.00	9.6
2007	40,026.3	2.0	136.00	7.9
<u>2008</u>	<u>40,770.7</u>	<u>1.9</u>	<u>156.00</u>	<u>14.7</u>
2003-2008	(5,370.5)	(4.3)	48.50	45.1

What this means for tuition in the State of Illinois is that not only is public higher education impaired by decreasing state appropriations, but it is experiencing a pattern of being required to pay additional state expenses out of these decreasing state resources. Because the University operating budget has two primary funding sources – state appropriations and student tuition revenue – any reduction in available state funding results in either greater pressure on student tuition revenue to fund University operating expenses or to reduce University services and programs.

Addressing University Priorities

Northeastern has a long history of reallocation and will continue to support priorities through internal reallocation. However, as mentioned above, we continue to be challenged in supporting these priorities because of decreases in state funding. In the current fiscal year 2008, the University implemented a two percent across-the-board reduction to keep budgeted expenditures within projected revenues. Even with this climate of state funding shortfalls, we continue to negotiate multi-year contracts with the five campus unions and implement modest salary increases for our non-negotiated employees.

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Operating Budget Priorities. For fiscal year 2009, the University identified our highest priorities and we will continue to invest available resources in these areas. These priorities are providing fair and competitive salaries to our faculty and staff, meeting student instructional demands by increasing course sections and developing and implementing new academic programs, increasing our complement of tenure-track faculty, improving and expanding student advising, and being good stewards of our campus by maintaining and improving our physical plant. These are the priorities approved by the Board in September 2007 and included in the University's 2009 operating and capital requests also approved by the Board in September.

As the University community discusses and considers fiscal year 2009 tuition rates, the appropriate balance between affordability, access and educational quality improvements must be found, all within the state funding climate outlined above.

In addition to operating budget issues affected by state funding, the University also must consider the operations and quality improvements that are supported by student fees. Student fees support such areas as technology, student activities, the Student Union, campus recreation, and student health services. The student demand for services in these areas continues to increase. For example, requests continue to grow for new fee-supported student clubs, expansion of health services, additional computer labs and faster and more robust internet connections.

A major new initiative is underway that will be partially supported by student fees, the new University integrated information system – *NEIUworks*, and the new University portal - *NEIUport*. A major component of this system will be the expansion and improvement of student services, including a significant expansion of web-based student services (e.g., on-line registration, bill payment, degree audit that provides specific information on course/major requirements on a case-by-case basis, financial aid services).

In addition to the program requirements, student fees also support the various offices that administer the specific fee programs, such as the offices of student activities, health services and campus recreation. A portion of the increase in student fees for those three areas is the result of increases in health and retirement benefits for employees within those offices.

Capital Priorities. Similar concerns are also evident with facility needs. There have been no new capital appropriations from the state of Illinois since fiscal year 2004. Northeastern received no state capital funding for the renovation of our aging facilities, and several of our major campus buildings were built in the early 1970's. Two significant buildings on campus, the Science Building and the Classroom Building, have had no significant remodeling since construction. These capital needs were discussed with the Board in September and included in our fiscal year 2009 capital request.

With this lack of state support for renovation, it falls on the University to make difficult choices - either maintain education programs in facilities that minimally meet educational

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needs, continue to seek external funding through grants or gifts, or fund renovation projects internally. While we continue to try to secure external funding at the state, federal and private levels, we are in the same position as most other colleges, universities, and non-profit entities in trying to secure external funding. And since state funding has not been available for facility needs, student fees are the only likely source of funding for facilities maintenance and renovation.

Initial Tuition and Fee Proposal

Table 6 provides proposed tuition and fee rates for fiscal year 2009. The proposed tuition rates attempt to balance the needs of the University, the continuing commitment to keep the costs of attending the University affordable, and the ongoing fiscal challenges resulting from the lack of new state funding.

In fiscal year 2009, there will be six different tuition rates for in-state undergraduate students, depending on the date of first enrollment at Northeastern. For three of these rates there will be no increase; that is for those students entering in fall 2005, fall 2006 or fall 2007 cohorts. This level tuition will be in place for approximately one-half of our undergraduate students. For students entering prior to fall 2004, referred to in Table 6 as continuing students, the tuition rate will be \$170 per credit hour, an increase of 9.0 percent. The in-state, undergraduate tuition rate for new students would be \$220 per credit hour. For in-state graduate students, the proposed tuition rate is \$220 per credit hour, an increase of \$20 per credit hour, or 10.0 percent. For each in-state tuition rate, there is a corresponding non-Illinois resident tuition rate that is twice the in-state rate.

An additional challenge for this year that is addressed in these recommendations is student tuition charges for students who first enrolled at Northeastern in fall 2004 and, by state law, have had their tuition held constant for four consecutive academic years. At the end of summer 2008, the tuition guarantee will expire for this first cohort of students, those that enrolled at Northeastern under this program in fall 2004. Several pricing options for these students were examined and modeled, including extending the tuition lock, adding this cohort to another cohort (e.g., fall 2005 or fall 2006), or moving these students into the continuing undergraduate tuition rate category. Each of these options was examined to determine whether the students would be making an appropriate contribution to their education relative to other undergraduate students and whether their tuition increase would result in an unrealistic burden for those students. Another complication is the tuition rate for this first cohort was established at a very low rate. These students have been paying \$124 per credit hour for four years, compared to the current rate of \$156 per credit hour for continuing students and \$195 per credit hour for new students.

These recommendations propose that this first cohort, those first enrolled between fall 2004 and summer 2005, will move to the continuing rate over the next two years. In fiscal year 2009, it is recommended that the rate for these students be \$155 per credit hour. While this represents a 25.0 percent increase, this rate is still \$5 per credit hour

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below the next lowest rate (fall 2005 cohort) and \$65 per credit hour below the rate for new students. If this plan is approved, it is anticipated that in fiscal year 2010, both the fall 2004 and fall 2005 cohorts will move to the continuing student rate.

The recommended fee rates will support student-requested program expansion in student activities, funding for student computer labs and costs for the new information system (technology fee), facility maintenance and renovation (academic enhancement/facilities fee), and fringe benefit increases for employee health insurance and retirement in other student support services.