

No state aid to private schools

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But by 1986, the state college proportion for non-resident undergraduates cost about one-fourth of one UNL credit hour: \$31.50, compared to \$119 at UNL.

As of this fall, a resident student taking 30 credit hours at UNL pays \$1,342.50, excluding fees. A similar state college student pays \$990. A Creighton student pays \$2,550.

UNL's tuition rates can't be compared with tuition rates at the state colleges, UNL officials say.

UNL has higher tuition because it offers a wider variety of courses, said Harry Allen, director of UNL Institutional Research.

"We would expect them to be less expensive because they have a simpler program," Allen said. "We don't view ourselves in competition with state colleges, and they don't with us."

Anne Scheerer, Creighton's dean of summer sessions and director of institutional research, agreed.

"While we try to be competitive, we still have to control costs," she said. "We'd like to see the gap close very much, but that's really just pie in the sky."

Creighton enrollment has declined from a recent high in 1983 of 6,300 students to 5,900 students last fall.

"There's been no bloodbath," Scheerer said. But she said she thought faculty numbers have declined slightly. She did not have figures on faculty numbers.

This fall's enrollment at UNL is expected to decline slightly from last year's 23,899, which was down from the 1985 fall enrollment of 24,020.

"The economy of the state has been poor," Allen said. "A number of students who otherwise may have gone to UNL maybe can't afford to, so they may stay closer to home and attend a state college."

According to statistics from the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, three independent colleges in 1985 had smaller budgets than the previous year: Bellevue College, Clarkson College of Nursing in

Omaha and Concordia Teachers College in Seward.

Last year, Oberg said, four did, including York College, Union College in Lincoln and, for a second year, Concordia. The commission did not have 1986-87 statistics.

Meanwhile, budgets for the state colleges and the NU system steadily increased.

NU receives \$176,241,296 in state allocations this year — about five times the allocations of the state college system, which receives \$28,448,844. However, in the last 10 years, the state colleges' share has risen 79.8 percent, compared with NU's, which has risen 74.8 percent, said Kathy Tenopir of the Legislature's fiscal office.

"On the whole," Tenopir said, "The state colleges have gotten some more percentage-wise each year than the university."

But the private colleges receive no state general-fund allocations. Nebraska is one of two states that does not allow state aid to tuition grants for students attending private colleges, Scheerer said.

These factors contribute to the enrollment shift from private colleges, Oberg said. He said Nebraska taxpayers are paying more simply to hire more teachers at the state colleges to cope with more students.

All state colleges showed an increase in full-time faculty positions from 1985 to 1986, said Ardis Burkholder, information resource specialist for the Nebraska State College Office.

Kearney State added about 12 faculty positions. This year, Oberg said, Kearney State will add 20-30 positions. From the fall of 1985 to the fall of 1986, Burkholder said, the state college system's enrollment increased from 14,875 to 15,290. At Kearney State, which Oberg calls a student's "strong second choice" to UNL and the private colleges, enrollment increased from 8,725 to 8,816.

Enrollment at the state colleges will increase this year also, Oberg said.

The student base in Nebraska has not changed much, Oberg said. More

students just are opting for the cheaper state colleges, he said. Although high-school enrollments are down, more women and non-traditional students are making up the difference.

"Tuition gaps between institutions are very serious things," Oberg said.

Taxpayers are paying for the students who choose state colleges over private colleges for tuition reasons, he said. Private colleges receive no state allocations, he said, and in some colleges faculty positions have had to be cut.

"This hurts taxpayers," Oberg said. "One of the big, new state spending expenses has been to finance increased enrollment. If we had stable enrollment, the money could go for other things."

However, Oberg said, Gov. Kay Orr and the Legislature have made steps this year to correct the tuition gap.

Based on Orr's recommendations this year for closing the gap, the Legislature made similar recommendations in the appropriations bill for 1987-89.

Phil Hovis, budget analyst for the Legislature's fiscal office, said the bill took into account a recommended 2 percent tuition increase for UNL and a 4 percent tuition increase for the state colleges.

Tuition rates ultimately are decided by the NU Board of Regents for UNL, the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the NU Medical Center and by the Board of Trustees for the state college system.

The Regents approved a 2 percent tuition increase for UNL at their June meeting. The Board of Trustees approved an increase close to 4 percent at its June meeting.

Gordon-Gessner said Nebraska taxpayers aren't paying too much for state college faculty positions now, but that eventually they could. UNL has not been affected as much by the enrollment shifts as the private colleges, she said.

"For the private colleges," she said, "if tuition becomes so great, we're going to lose the private-college alternative, and that would be unfortunate."

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