

College costs increase slightly

NEW YORK - A year at college will cost an average of 5 percent to 8 percent more this fall, a slight lessening in the decade-long spell of higher education inflation, according to an annual survey released Wednesday.

But some officials fear the encouraging trend may end soon, especially at colleges in oil-sensitive northern states, if the overall inflation rate worsens and a recession occurs.

The survey by the College Board found that Massachusetts Institute of Technology is the nation's priciest college this fall: an estimated \$22,945, counting tuition, fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other expenses.

According to the survey, fixed charges at four-year private institutions -- including tuitions, fees and room and board -- average \$13,544, an 8-percent increase from last year's \$12,557. A year ago, such charges rose 9 percent.

At four-year public universities, fixed costs average \$4,970, up 7 percent from \$4,715 the previous year. Those rates rose an average 8 percent over the 1988-89 school year.

At two-year private colleges, fixed costs average \$8,484, an 8-percent increase from \$7,912 last year. Tuition and fees at two-year public institutions average \$884, up 5 percent from last year's \$841. Few such insti-

tutions provide room and board.

"That's progress, though not dramatic," said Richard Rosser, president of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C.

The survey's national averages are weighted to take enrollment into account. Colleges with large enrollments count more heavily than smaller schools.

At their worst, costs at public and private institutions rose in double digits from 1981 through 1984. Rates at four-year public colleges shot up 20 percent in 1983-84. They settled into the 5- to 9-percent range the last six years.

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Tax compromise possible

WASHINGTON - President Bush may be willing to drop his insistence for a cut in the capital gains tax, Republican congressmen said Wednesday, a demand that has been the major obstacle to a budget deal.

But the apparent softening of Bush's position was revealed on a day when Bush and congressional Democrats had their most withering public flareup over the talks in weeks.

The two sides accused each other of endangering their stalled bargaining, just five days before disruptive cuts in government services will be imposed if the negotiations fail.

Bush said nothing about his reported change in his capital gains stance as he campaigned for Republican candidates in Ohio.

"The hangup is with the Democrats," he said, accusing them of refusing to do their part to cut the deficit.

"If and when the ax falls, the Democratic Congress knows that it will be held accountable," he said. "And I will take that message to every state in the union. It is their fault."

He also said Democrats "have not come forward with a package" at the talks, a remark that touched off a Democratic uproar.

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, and House Speaker Thomas S. Foley, D-Wash., said Democrats have made several offers in recent bargaining sessions.

"To begin a series of charges or countercharges... at this stage is not helpful," Foley said. "It is damaging to the talks, though we're determined it not be critically damaging."

Mitchell said the president must have been "badly misinformed" to have made the comment, and called it "highly misleading and damaging."

Hundreds of unionized federal workers rallied outside the Capitol at noon to demand a quick solution to the budget crisis. They carried signs reading, "Your furlough begins Nov. 6, Election Day," and "Congress, you do your jobs so we can do ours."

The rally was organized by the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 700,000 federal workers.

Inside the building, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to apply the spending cuts to the salaries of members of Congress and top executive branch officials, including Vice President Quayle and members of the Cabinet -- items now exempt under the Gramm-Rudman budget-cutting law.

After a morning meeting at the White House, GOP lawmakers said Bush was signalling compromise. Instead of lowered capital gains tax rates, Bush might accept other items he believes would spur the economy.

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Soviet legislature votes in favor of religious freedom

MOSCOW - The Soviet legislature formally ended decades of religious repression on Wednesday, passing a law on freedom of conscience at a time when Soviets are flocking to churches in record numbers.

"Our people suffered to get this law," said Mikhail Kulakov, a leader of the Soviet Union's Seventh Day Adventists, who have been persecuted for evangelical activities.

The law forbids the government from interfering with religious activities, improves the legal status of religious organizations and gives Soviet citizens the right to study religion in homes and in private schools.

The Soviet constitution has long guaranteed freedom of worship, but in the past the Communist Party's ideological opposition to religion as the "opiate of the masses" made that guarantee hollow.

In practice, the government discouraged religious services, closed churches and synagogues, imprisoned religious leaders and preached atheism.

"The most important thing for us is not only that the law is passed, but that it begins to work," said Adolph Shayevech, Moscow's chief rabbi.

Peter Reddaway, an expert on Soviet religion at George Washington University in Washington, said in a telephone interview "there is reason for optimism the law will be respected."

UPDATE

Run-up of oil prices means Bush will open oil reserve

CHICAGO - The White House, claiming there was "no justification" for the recent run-up in oil and gasoline prices, announced Wednesday that President Bush had decided to sell 5 million barrels of crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

The decision to tap the nation's oil reserve was announced by White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

Fitzwater said the decision to put 5 million barrels on the market was a "test" and the president would take "additional steps to stabilize energy prices."

The reserve contains 590 million barrels of crude oil.

Fitzwater said Bush was taking the action to head off "those who might seek profit by subverting the sanctions" against Iraq.

"There is sufficient oil to meet current needs," Fitzwater said. "Oil markets have simply not taken into account additional production coming on stream."

Industry experts have estimated that production in other countries has restored about two-thirds of the 4.8 million daily barrels of oil production removed from world markets by Iraq's takeover of Kuwait on Aug. 2 and the world embargo against Iraqi-Kuwaiti oil.

Fitzwater quoted Bush as saying there was "no justification for the intensive and unwarranted speculation in oil futures" that has driven the price about \$39 a barrel in the United States.

Fitzwater said this was the first time that the oil reserves, which have been held in salt domes along the Texas and Louisiana coasts, have been tapped for usage since they were established in 1975.

Jordan allows Iraqi planes to land despite air embargo

Three Iraqi passenger planes touched down Wednesday in Jordan, but Jordan later said it would halt all flights to and from Iraq to comply with a U.N. air embargo. Iraq accused Washington of bribing Moscow to back the U.N. sanctions.

In a sign that the sanctions are hurting Iraqis, Baghdad also announced it would extend rationing to rice, flour and cooking oil.

The United States reportedly planned "a show of force" by sending its first American aircraft carrier into the Persian Gulf in 16 years, and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney warned that an Iraqi military strike was increasingly likely.

U.S. officials encountered reservations Wednesday by allies on a fund-raising campaign to collect the billions of dollars needed in the gulf crisis.

The passengers aboard the regularly scheduled Iraqi Airways planes landing in Amman included nine expelled French diplomats and 11 Britons stranded during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2. It was not known what their cargo holds contained. The planes all returned to Baghdad.

Earlier, Jordanian officials said the passenger aircraft were not included in embargo resolution passed Tuesday by the U.N. Security Council.

However, Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Kasim said Jordan would comply fully with the embargo and halt passenger flights to and from Iraq, including freedom flights for Westerners stranded in Iraq and Kuwait.

"Jordan has continued to allow a minimum number of flights by the Iraqi Airways, due to humanitarian considerations, facilitating the movement of foreign nationals from Iraq and Kuwait," he said in a statement at U.N. headquarters in New York.

"However, those flights will now be terminated in accordance with (the air embargo)," said Kasim, who is also the deputy prime minister.

The U.N. resolution does not mention passenger planes but says all planes traveling to and from Iraq should be checked to make sure they are not carrying cargo prohibited by the U.N. trade sanctions. The resolution prohibits the use of force to stop planes, but allows for the detention of aircraft.

Baghdad's official news agency accused Moscow of being bribed by the United States and gulf sheiks to oppose Iraq. It said the tone of a tough U.N. speech Tuesday by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze "clearly shows the bribe given by American and its allies the oil sheiks."

Iraqi officials announced the new food rationing will begin this weekend. Trade and Finance Minister Mohammed Mahdi Saleh said sugar and tea also will be affected by the new restrictions. The government already closed fast food restaurants and many pastry shops because they use large amounts of sugar.

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