

**Costs**

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the cost of attending UNL grew slightly slower than the average rate of other public, four-year universities.

From 1980-81 to 1989-90, the cost to attend UNL for a resident undergraduate rose 69.9 percent — going from \$2,495 in 1980-81 to \$4,540 in 1989-90.

The cost to attend for a non-resident student grew at a much faster rate; at 77.8 percent — going from \$3,860 in 1980-81 to \$6,865 in 1989-90.

The cost of attending UNL jumped an average of 31.8 percent from 1989-90 to 1994-95. For residents, costs went from \$4,540 to \$5,560, a 31 percent increase; for non-residents, costs went from \$7,300 to \$9,100, a 32.6 percent increase.

**Costs at UNL**

The average cost of obtaining a degree at UNL has risen 122 percent since 1980 for residents, 136 percent for non-residents.

Year	Resident tuition	Non-resident tuition	Yearly percent increase
80-81	\$2,495	\$3,860	
81-82	\$2,724	\$4,224	9.2, 9.4
83-84	\$3,071	\$4,841	12.7, 14.6
84-85	\$3,256	\$5,206	6, 7.5
85-86	\$3,523	\$5,781	8.2, 11
86-87	\$3,569	\$5,827	1.3, 7
87-88	\$3,735	\$6,037	4.7, 3.6
88-89	\$4,013	\$6,511	7.4, 7.9
89-90	\$4,240	\$6,865	5.7, 5.4
90-91	\$4,540	\$7,300	7.1, 6.3
91-92	\$4,860	\$7,815	7.0, 7.1
92-93	\$5,102	\$8,282	5.0, 4.4
93-94	\$5,278	\$8,623	3.4, 4.1
94-95	\$5,560	\$9,100	5.3, 5.5

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When Regent Chuck Hassebrook of Walthill graduated from high school in 1973, it was possible for him to attend UNL, graduate in four years and take on only \$1,000 in debt.

But not anymore, Hassebrook said. Today, according to Hassebrook's research, students and their families have to work 40 percent harder to pay for tuition.

Hassebrook said tuition and fee increases had been far outpacing inflation, while wages and salaries in Nebraska had remained flat.

Nebraskans now pay 10.84 percent of their income to cover the costs of tuition and fees, he said.

Add room and board to those costs, and that figure jumps to nearly 20 percent of the median family income.

"We just can't keep this up forever," Hassebrook said. "We're going to price normal people out of the university."

When debate began on establishing a land-grant institution in Nebraska, Hassebrook said, the intent was clear: Nebraskans wanted a common person's institution.

"The land-grant system was based on the radical notion that education be accessible to everyone," he said.

The problem has the possibility of

widening the gap between the rich and poor and eliminating the middle class.

In Hassebrook's research, wage-to-cost figures were compared to other Big Eight and peer institutions using 1994-95 tuition and fees numbers.

Among the peer groups, UNL finished in the middle of the pack, with Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio, Purdue and Illinois students and families using a larger percentage of their incomes to pay for school.

"That doesn't mean students are underpaying at this institution," Hassebrook said.

In Big Eight schools, UNL had the second-highest percentage of wages used for school expenses. Kansas had the lowest percentage, using only 8.47 percent of wages.

"We're in the same boat as other higher education institutions, and it's a boat in danger of capsizing," Hassebrook said.

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Aside from rising tuition costs and stagnant wage growth, students face still another problem — shrinking federal aid for education.

Beacon said the interest subsidy on all federal loans would be eliminated

if legislation now on Capitol Hill passed.

With students being forced to pay interest on federal loans, the cost of education would jump substantially — as much as 50 percent in some cases, he said.

And loans aren't the only federal aid in jeopardy. Grants and the federal work study program all face elimination, Beacon said.

In the current work-study system, the federal government pays 80 percent of students' wages, and the university picks up the other 20 percent. Beacon said if the federal government cut off that 80 percent, the university would be forced to make large cuts in the number of work-study jobs.

Also, available grant money is harder to get, Beacon said. Because of changes in who is eligible for the loans, more people are competing for money, he said.

One problem is that the federal government neglected to put more money for grants into the system, Beacon said.

Beacon said Congress was making the cuts because it expected the least resistance from students. Students needed to act to prevent the cuts, he said.

"It's your future, students," Beacon said. "It's not mine."

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