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Senate passes UB tuition bill

Business First - by Allissa Kline

Date: Wednesday, March 2, 2011, 5:27pm EST

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The New York State Senate today passed a bill that would give the **University at Buffalo** the ability to raise both undergraduate and graduate tuition upon the approval of the State University of New York Board of Trustees.

The UB 2020 Flexibility and Economic Growth Act, which passed 53-1, will allow UB to increase undergraduate tuition no more than \$375 per semester. Tuition for graduate and professional programs could not increase by more than 15 percent a year.

The bill now faces the state Assembly, which includes lawmakers who have long voiced concerns about allowing public institutions to set their own tuition.

Supporters of the bill say it will help UB move along with its UB 2020 strategic plan to grow the university into a top-level research institution and elevate its role as a regional economic engine. The university plans to use the revenue generated from tuition increases to support its UB 2020 initiatives.

The bill mandates that UB spend 15 percent to 20 percent of revenue generated by tuition hikes to fund scholarships for financially-strapped students.

Additionally, the bill proposes giving UB more freedom in procurement and the ability to establish public-private partnerships. Gov. Andrew Cuomo included both of those items in his proposed executive budget released last month.

Tuition at UB, and all public four-year colleges in New York state, is currently \$4,970 per year. That does not include on-campus room and board, books, transportation and other fees that add another \$15,000 or so in higher education expenses.

The bill passed today, which applies to UB only and no other SUNY school in the state, is similar to the original UB 2020 bill proposed two years ago. It was approved by the Senate, but did not get the final OK of the Assembly. Some of the same proposals were made in last year's Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act, but that too did not succeed in garnering support from both houses.

The bill was introduced by local senators **Mark Grisanti**, **George Maziarz**, **Patrick Gallivan**, **Michael Ranzenhofer** and **Timothy Kennedy**.