
UB 2020 would hike tuition 8% a year

By **Tom Precious**

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ALBANY — University at Buffalo officials Tuesday offered state leaders a revised UB 2020 plan that calls for a new assessment on UB medical students to help finance the medical school's \$375 million move to downtown Buffalo and for an 8 percent annual tuition hike on UB undergrads and graduate students.

Before leaving Albany, the UB team, which included prominent business leaders, heard enough praise to give them confidence their revised plan has a strong chance of winning state legislative approval before the session ends next month.

But they also got a good dose of skepticism from Democratic leaders in the Assembly who said the tuition increase is too high and the plan unworkable because it would set UB tuition at levels different from other state university campuses.

State University of New York Chancellor Nancy Zimpher called the new UB 2020 plan more "realistic" than the university's previous plan, which carried a price tag of at least \$5 billion and called for a major makeover of its three campuses.

The new proposal envisions using \$35 million from a state economic development pot that Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo offered to help fund, along with private-sector money and \$100 million in new assessments on medical school students — about \$1,000 per student each year. Together, that money would allow UB to move from the 60-year-old medical school on the South Campus to a state-of-the-art building linked to other health facilities on the Downtown Medical Campus.

"It's old, and it's six miles in the wrong place," Dr. Michael Cain, dean of the medical school, said of the aging facility. He said a downtown medical school would provide more offerings for students and attract new researchers and physicians to

put Buffalo on a par with several other cities, including Pittsburgh, that have turned to the life sciences to help improve their economies.

Officials estimate the downtown move would create 3,000 jobs by 2018, two years after the projected completion of a new medical school building.

UB officials said the move could be a catalyst for other expansions in the medical corridor — including Kaleida Health moving its Women and Children's Hospital there — that could produce more than \$650 million in development.

Cuomo, who summoned the UB officials to Albany to make their pitch, called the presentation "impressive" and said he would do "everything I can to make this a reality."

UB officials brought along prominent promoters to make the pitch, including Mayor Byron W. Brown as well as Jeremy Jacobs of Delaware North Cos. and Robert Brady of Moog Inc., both UB Council members.

"We believe UB 2020 is not just a long-range vision for UB," Brady said. "It's a long-term economic vision for Western New York. It's our best hope for real economic recovery.

"It's our highest priority and we hope you'll be able to support us in this endeavor," Brady added of the business community's backing of UB 2020.

The session — which did not include any questions from state officials — brought glowing comments from participants. And politicians who famously don't get along — such as Brown and Assemblyman Sam Hoyt — set aside differences to press the UB plan.

But concerns were raised by Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan, who represents a Democratic conference long worried about the tuition hikes in the UB plan. "We're committed to ensuring that our ... schools remain affordable and accessible to any New Yorker who wants to pursue a college degree and has earned the right to do so," he said.

UB, like other SUNY colleges, wants to raise tuition by 5 percent annually over the next five years. But it also wants to add a "differential" increase of 3 percent. Silver said "our membership has difficulty" with differential tuition plans because they "do not want to create a system where earning a degree in certain programs requires the sole province of wealthier students. We want equal access for all students."

Silver urged officials to "buckle down" to ensure that access to UB is not harmed for low-to-middle-income students and that any commitment for higher tuition is accompanied by enhancements of school programs to benefit students.

After the meeting, Assembly Higher Education Committee Chairwoman Deborah Glick, D-Manhattan, said the 8 percent UB tuition hike "is probably more than the average income increase for most families."

"So at the end of five years, you're looking at it being a little over 40 percent more. That's something for people to think about," she said.

Sen. Mark Grisanti, R-Buffalo, sponsor of a UB 2020 bill that passed the Senate earlier this year, said he is troubled by remarks from Silver and Glick, who do not appear to understand Buffalo's economic plight.

"If this was going on in Sheldon Silver's or Deborah Glick's districts, and something would bring jobs there, I would vote for it. I think they should have the same respect for Western New York," Grisanti said.

In an interview, UB President Satish Tripathi said the revised UB 2020 plan recognizes the impact a tuition increase could have on some students. "I think we were able to address some of the concerns that had been raised, especially over affordability," he said.

Tripathi said he left Albany "not as concerned" about some of the past complaints over tuition because of new provisions for low-to-moderate-income students. "We put together a very good plan," he said.

The plan calls for annual tuition hikes that would start out next year averaging about \$400 a year for undergraduates. Over the five-year plan, UB officials said the increase would be worth an additional \$95 million in revenues for the school. They also held out the possibility that out-of-state students would face bigger increases. UB requested an initial tuition hike plan for the next five years.

SUNY tuition is \$4,970 a year. That does not include mandatory fees, housing and meals that can push the price closer to \$15,000.

For families making less than \$40,000 a year, the tuition hike would not apply. The \$400 annual increase would be reduced to \$30 for families making between \$40,000 and \$60,000; \$70 for those with incomes between \$60,000 and \$70,000; and \$100 for incomes between \$70,000 and \$75,000.

UB officials estimate job growth of 1,325 new positions at UB, including 410 faculty members, and 1,740 private-sector jobs, including construction and new biotechnology research growth downtown.

Funding for the \$375 million downtown plan comes from several sources, including the \$35 million grant Cuomo proposed, \$50 million in private gifts raised by the medical school, \$50 million from partnerships with private companies and \$100 million from UB capital accounts and "other sources."

UB's previous growth plans have been too focused on real estate, its critics in the Legislature have claimed. UB sought to allay some of those fears with its revised plan, which officials say will result in more full-time professors and more classes to help more students graduate on time. Also, 25 percent of the tuition hike proceeds will go to fund financial aid for families with incomes under \$75,000.

To make its plans work, a key provision UB wants is to be able to keep all the money for its own purposes raised through an 8 percent annual tuition increase.

That would go against Albany's long tradition of SUNY tuition proceeds being driven back to the state to help with its own spending plans in the general budget.

UB officials sought to portray the annual tuition hikes as better for students and their families. They noted that tuition over the past couple decades has risen at an annual rate of nearly 7 percent, except that the increases have come in major spikes spread out over the years in unpredictable ways.

Tripathi said the 8 percent figure is "an important number" to make the UB 2020 plan work.

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Comments

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No where in the UB 20/20 or SUNY 20/20 plan does it state that the FULL tuition increase stays at SUNY/UB. Past history shows that the state uses SUNY as its personal ATM.... need to close the state budget gap.... raise SUNY tuition.... let SUNY keep 10% of the increase and the rest (90%) goes into the black hole called the state's general fund. In addition, SUNY 's tax based support has been reduced by over \$500 million over the last 3 years...yes that's 1/2 billion.... so parent's and student's are being screwed on both ends..... higher tuition....less state tax support.. an affordable SUNY education is slowly going down the tubes. Let put all the cards on the table and tell it like it is..... the state has all kinds of bonded money for buildings.... which will create temporary constructions jobs.... I see no plan where the money will come from to put "people" (faculty/staff) in these new building except to raise tuition. Take a walk on the South campus....UB can hardly maintain it current 2 campuses... so lets build a 3rd one.... Sounds like a plan to me!!!!

FRED COVELLI, LACKAWANNA, NY on Thu May 26, 2011 at 10:47 AM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

@Jeff PowersI took a different spin on your numbers and looked at out-of-state tuition. According to the Princeton Review, 4% of UB students are out-of-state and 14.86% are international. International students are considered out-of-state for tuition purposes (SUNY Residency Requirements: http://www.suny.edu/student/paying_residence.cfm). Nearly 20% of the student body is out-of-state and their tuition could be raised significantly and still be competitive with other states. The UB 2020 planners should look into this as a way to reduce their proposed in-state tuition increases because their plan is going nowhere without the cooperation of Silver and Glick. Penn State \$26k Ohio State \$23k University of Maryland \$23k Michigan \$37k W Virginia \$17k UB \$13k

JOE BRUNNER, BUFFALO, NY on Wed May 25, 2011 at 06:01 PM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

The University at Buffalo represents the best chance Western New York has for real economic growth. Our representatives, from our university president, to members of the UB Council, and our local elected officials, understand the potential positive impact a growing, thriving, public research institution can have on our region. We are talking about real jobs for real businesses, new and existing. The plan for UB is a terrific one and we need to get behind it for the benefit of multiple generations to come. Let's encourage our university leaders; we (collectively) can make this happen. Tim Lafferty East Aurora, NY President, UB Alumni Association

TIM LAFFERTY, EAST AURORA, NY on Wed May 25, 2011 at 05:31 PM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

If you raised Thruway tolls that amount, you'd clear the roadway.

BOB CATALANO, DERBY, NY on Wed May 25, 2011 at 11:58 AM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

Why doesn't UB just become a paper mill corporation like the University of Phoenix and sell shares on the Stock Exchange.

PHILIP JAMES JAROSZ, BUFFALO, NY on Tue May 24, 2011 at 09:12 PM

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Maybe I misunderstand the math here. "...UB wants to raise tuition by 5 percent annually over the next five years. But UB also wants to add in a "differential" increase of an additional three percent increase." Now lets see...5% annually over five years seems to add up to somewhere around...uhhhh...lets say...uhhhh...25%. Unless of course the second years increase includes the original tuition and also 5% on the first years 5% and so on. Then that increase would be somewhat more than 25%. Then there is that nagging little "differential" increase. Whatever they mean by "differential" increase they seem to set the rate at 3%. So, when I add all this up it comes out to an increase of 28% at the very minimum. You read through this entire article and you never see 28% or anything close to it anywhere. Sometimes I wish people would just come out and say what their plans and intentions are instead of leading you, or misleading you around a word game. Then again my math could be off. I have a SUNY degree.

ROBERT H. MACCALLUM, SLOAN, NY on Tue May 24, 2011 at 06:41 PM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

UB is not \$5k it's more like \$7500 after you tack on the mandatory fees.

TOM BEYER, ORCHARD PARK, NY on Tue May 24, 2011 at 06:10 PM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

Isn't it ironic that Shelly Silver will keep a hand in our pockets by not making having a fixed tax cap, but he's so concerned about a couple of hundred dollar tuition hike (that will create jobs). Let's educate our kids cheaply and make our tax structure uncompetitive, so they can take their degrees and work out of state. By the way re tuition- penn state - 14.2kohio state - 9.4kmaryland - 8.4kmichigan - 6kwest virginia - 5.4 kUB - 5kI think an 8% increase is affordable.

JEFF POWERS, BRIGHTON, NY on Tue May 24, 2011 at 04:23 PM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

Tony, you said it all sir. All those middle-class student loans require parental co-signers, (so if they default), they can come after their parents.

WALTER REEVES, WEST SENECA, NY on Tue May 24, 2011 at 03:15 PM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

NEWS FLASH: A SUNY Education is already no longer affordable for Middle Class families in New York. Unless your family is really poor - in which case financial aid will pay for most of your huge PUBLIC higher education tab, or you are an academically-gifted student so that you qualify for merit -based scholarships, you will need to take on an enormous debt burden to pay for your PUBLIC SUNY Education. As usual, the Middle Class gets hammered. We make too much money to qualify for the financial aid that rightly helps low income families pay for college, but we are not rich enough to be able to afford a SUNY or private college education on our own. So we and our children go deep into debt. My daughter just completed two degrees over six years in the SUNY system - and graduated last week with a whopping \$67,000 in student loan debt!!!! It is really outrageous, folks!! To me, as a struggling middle class parent, the UB medical campus does not mean all that much if a SUNY education is no longer accessible to middle class New Yorkers. The average student loan debt figures in the recent Buffalo News article are way understated, as far as I am concerned. If you ask me, it is time to change the motto on the SUNY seal from "Let Each Become All He Is Capable Of Being" to "Let Each Become All He Is Capable Of BORROWING (AND PAYING BACK)" . Our taxpayer-funded PUBLIC university system is no longer all that accessible to the public that pays for

it. This is just another example of how the Middle Class has become another endangered species, and the American Dream is rapidly becoming a horrible nightmare.

TONY LUPPINO, BUFFALO, NY on Tue May 24, 2011 at 02:22 PM

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