
A Different Kind of Tuition Freeze in Texas

State Senator's plan would set tuition rates for four years—once a student enrolls.

By KTRH's Bill O'Neal

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Call it another way of holding the line on tuitions at state schools in Texas.

"One of the solutions is to freeze tuition when a student enters a Texas college of university. Tuition would be frozen for four years, or the length of a student's program—if it is longer than four years," said State Senator Florence Shapiro who is pushing the plan in the Legislature.

Shapiro said such a plan will not punish a student who starts at one school—but decides to finish at another.

"If a student attends a community college for two years—then transfers to a four year university—the university will charge the student the tuition rate it charged its incoming freshmen two years ago," Shapiro said. She also said her plan will give a student plenty of incentive to graduate on time.

"If a student doesn't graduate within the four years—or the length of the time for their program—then the student's tuition will rise to the level the institution is charging incoming freshmen. Hopefully, this increase in tuition rate will be enough of a deterrent so students graduate on time," Shapiro said.

But not everyone sees tuition freezes as the best to make a secondary education more affordable in Texas. Some will tell you state colleges and universities need to take a hard look at themselves—and how they're spending their cash.

"We've done research that more than 20-percent of full-time tenured faculty don't teach a single class. The average course load of a full time tenured faculty member is one-point-nine courses per semester—which means they have about five hours per week in the classroom" said David Guenther with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, adding "I've had cases where interns have come through our office and they're two years in to the undergraduate experience at U-T (University of Texas) and they've not had a class with a tenured professor yet."

If the schools don't want to look at their cash and spending, Guenther has another, very simple solution to the problem.

"What the state would be better off doing with higher education is take all of the money that they currently are appropriating to institutions—zero that out—and instead create a system where their funds are put in to student scholarships" Guenther said. That would allow schools to set their tuition rates wherever they want—but would make them compete with each other for students—which Guenther said would certainly impact tuition costs.

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