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SWOSU President's Newsletter

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SWOSU PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER

November 2019

Budget Request for Higher Education

Each year, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are constitutionally required to send to the Governor and Legislature our needs for the upcoming fiscal year. Late last week, the State Regent's Office released information on the legislative request. Here is an excerpt of the press release:

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education voted Thursday to request \$927.1 million for FY 2021, which reflects an increase of \$125 million or 15.6% over the FY 2020 appropriation of \$802.1 million.

The State Regents are requesting \$50.2 million for STEM workforce development initiatives, including funds to help meet engineering and nursing workforce needs and double the number of physician residency slots in the state.

In addition, the State Regents are requesting \$50 million for operational cost increases, including restoration of the National Guard Waiver and Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program scholarship programs and a 3.5% increase in faculty salaries to continue efforts to preserve quality academic instruction.

Requests to fund deferred maintenance for campus infrastructure (\$5.8 million), for full funding of the concurrent enrollment program for high school juniors (\$7 million), and to provide endowed chair state matching funds bond authorization and debt service (\$12 million) are also priorities.

Another area of focus in the upcoming legislative session will be to maintain the current law regarding weapons on higher education campuses.

The State Regents will also continue efforts to protect the dedicated funding source for the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship. Nearly 90,000 students have earned college tuition scholarships through Oklahoma's Promise since the program's inception in 1992.

The budget request includes another increase in faculty salaries if funded. It is believed that if the \$50 million for operational costs were fully funded, there could be the possibility of a future pay raise for staff and administration.

Remember, that this is the “ask,” the formal request. It is up to the state legislature and governor to make the final determination on how higher education in Oklahoma is funded for the upcoming fiscal year (FY-21). The final disposition of this request will not be known until the end of the legislative session in May 2020.

Keep in mind, we are attempting to restore funding to the higher education that has been significantly cut over the past several years. For example, in FY-08, the state appropriation to higher education in Oklahoma amounted to \$1.05 billion. In FY-17, that amount was \$773 million.

Below is more specific information regarding the budget request:

FY 2021 Budget Need

FY’20 Appropriation	\$802,070,058
FY’21 Budget Need	
1. STEM Workforce Development Initiatives	\$50,200,000
a. Initiatives to meet STEM Workforce Needs - \$30 million	
b. Initiatives to meet Nursing Workforce Needs - \$12 million	
c. Initiatives to double Physician Residency Slots - \$8.2 million	
2. Operational Cost Increases	\$50,000,000
a. 3.5% Faculty Pay Increases, Phase II - \$20.2 million	
b. System-Wide Mandatory Cost Increases - \$25.5 million	
c. Restoration of Scholarship Programs - \$2.2 million	
i. National Guard Tuition Waiver Program	
ii. Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program	
d. Strategic Innovations - \$2.1 million	
3. Deferred Maintenance for Campus Infrastructure Phase II	\$5,800,000
4. Concurrent Enrollment Program	\$7,000,000
5. Endowed Chairs State Matching Funds Bond Debt Service	\$12,000,000
a. Endowed Chairs State Matching Funds Backlog - \$160.9 million	
FY’21 Total Budget Need	\$927,070,058
\$ Difference from FY’20 State Appropriations	\$125,000,000
% Difference from FY’20 State Appropriations	15.6%

Tree Removal

We are always very reluctant to remove trees from our campus. However, from time to time, that becomes a necessity. There are several reasons for the removal of trees on campus, but the most common is the situation when the tree is experiencing a disease that it cannot recover from and removal becomes a necessity due to safety.

With this in mind, I am sad to report that, due to disease, we will need to remove four trees from the south side of the Hays Administration Building. Those specific trees would be the two large evergreen trees in front of the HAB and the two cone-shaped cedars just to the east of the south entrance.

We will replace these with trees that are suitable to the soil and climate of the area.

Randy L. Beutler
President
Southwestern Oklahoma State University