

March 3, 2020

Board of Visitors Tuition Hearing Comments

Since 2000, tuition has tripled at Tech. The family incomes and the student employee wages used to pay that tuition have not. I have trouble understanding how or why the cost of education ⁱⁿ ~~at~~ ^{state} ~~school~~ has been allowed to run so wildly amuck in just two decades. Regardless of the reasons for the staggering gap that has opened up, it is clear now that we need to- at a bare minimum- stem the rising tide of the cost of education in this country. That starts at our school.

It would be one thing if the value of education provided here had tripled along with the cost. If we were able to go into the work force and find jobs that paid three times as much as the jobs the class of 2000 found. It is obvious this is not the case. It is equally obvious that the money in this tuition hike, just like the past nineteen hikes, will not increase the monetary value of the education provided by our school.

This is especially insulting to students who have to work to afford their education here. During my time working at Owens, I met several students who would work twelve hour shifts and well over twenty hours a week in addition to full class loads in order to pay tuition. While I could get into the questionable and anti-meritocratic ethics surrounding a system where poorer students are forced to sell their study time back to the school, in the interest of keeping to the subject of the proposed tuition increase, I'll simply say that I think the effects of a tuition hike on these students are clear.

If somehow it is still not clear- the fallout from the coronavirus has aggravated all of these problems. Both my roommates lost their jobs with dining services due to the virus, and will be unlikely to find new employment until the epidemic has passed. The same is true for working families, being cut down on hours or from their positions entirely- often without paid sick leave. In the wake of such a public health and economic crisis, it would be unconscionable to ask those students and families to scrape together a couple hundred more dollars so you can "support the university's strategic plan within the context of various budget implications". I ask you, above all, to consider the impact any tuition increase will have on these students and families- already paying triple what was paid twenty years ago with barely any rise in wages or household incomes to compensate for it.

Respectfully,
Steven Warren