

# Tuition Costs Rise With Tech Fee Hike

*Inflation catches up with fee for the first time*

*Students cite a lack of representation*

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CUNY's Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees voted unanimously in a July meeting to raise student technology fees, thereby increasing tuitions. Although no voting member turned down the measure, it didn't pass without opposition.

Effective this semester, full-time students will pay \$100 per semester, a \$25.00 increase, for computer and Internet access, and wireless connection. Dues for part-time students will climb to \$50, up from \$37.50. It is the first time that CUNY raised this particular fee since its inception almost 7 years ago.

"We are never interested in extending fee structures or tuition levels," said CUNY Chancellor, Matthew Goldstein to the Board. "But, I would say this is a compelling and necessary case."

Chancellor Goldstein attributed the need for the tech-fee increase to the spike in student populations, a rapidly changing digital atmosphere, and the demand for more complex machinery. This has caused the costs to exceed by 20%, Goldstein said.

Despite instituting what Chancellor Goldstein called a "modest" bump in fees, the resolution met resistance both before and during the meeting. Students gathered on a hot Manhattan sidewalk outside CUNY headquarters to denounce the referendum, in which, many said, students were vastly unformed.

Little over an hour later, University Student Senate Chairperson, Robert Ramos, a student representative to the board, argued that a vote in the summer months largely hid the issue from students. Although he did not have a vote on the board, he voiced many of the dissatisfaction uttered by other students.

"The process did not involve stu-

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## Tech Fee Hike (from front)

dents at all," said Ramos. "They were not consulted on whether we should have an increase. They were not consulted on how much it should be. They were not consulted on what it should be used for. Student Life officials may have been notified. But, they did not do their job of notifying the students."

CUNY had told each individual college president of the potential tech-fee increase, said Chancellor Goldstein. Each president should have contacted Student Affairs, whom would publicize the information.

"Vice Chancellor Ernesto Mulave wrote to each president to alert them that we were thinking about bringing this to the board this summer," said Chancellor Goldstein, "to alert their chief student affairs officers, and to do what they could to educate the students about what they planned."

In a letter dated July 31, ten days after the trustees meeting, CSI addressed the increase. "We apologize for the late notice," wrote Bursar Michael Baybusky in the letter. "But, as mentioned, this resolution was just recently passed." The "late notice" came within days of when students would have to

make their final payments for fall classes. Students who already paid would have to pay a balance before class resumed.

Chancellor Goldstein made the point that individual institutions could omit the add-on from the bill of a student in need of financial assistance. He mentioned that students could find fiscal solace in the recently boosted Pell Grant, a federally financed grant program. The maximum grant will increase by \$421, according to the July minutes of the Student Government meeting.

The Technology Fee has been a contentious issue among students at points its 6-year history. Formerly, the tech fee was intended for students only. Gradually, the fee funds has expanded to meet the technological needs of faculty and staff. Critics of this practice claim that encompassing teachers, clerical staff, and administration into the fund diverts money from a reserve that should serve student benefit.

Ramos took issue with the expansion of this fee include faculty and personnel use at the meeting and expressed concern that the fee would inevitably go to fund faculty research projects alone, a traditional argument against this type of expansion.

But, Vice Chancellor Mulave challenged that argument and cited the need to build up CUNY's network. This means that administrators could access

wireless connection and the CUNY-based net

"Certainly, it is not for a teacher or administrator to have a larger LCD screen in their office," VC Mulave retorted to an earlier accusation by Rep. Ramos. "There is a system of checks and balances built in. Each of the technology plans are approved by me to make sure that they're not those type of things."

At one point, Ramos suggested that the committee delay the vote until an August session. He said that he hoped to give students the opportunity to understand the issue and "raise the cloud of suspicion" that hovered over the vote.

"I would take issue with the respect to suspiciousness," said Chancellor Goldstein. "There is nothing untoward here."

Members of the board argued that pushing the vote back would prohibit CUNY from investing in \$5 million worth of upgrades, less than half of the expected \$11 million take from the fee increase. Chancellor Goldstein pointed out that it would make more sense to have the resolution in place before the academic year starts.

"I will assure everyone in this room," said the Chancellor. "No money will be spent unless a legitimate plan is conceived and has the open participation of all students."