

Voting With Their Feet Part II

As students prepare for the upcoming fall semester, many will find the cost of a higher education increasingly difficult to afford. Last year, the University of Texas-El Paso (UTEP) had the third highest tuition increase amongst the 33 public higher education institutions in the state. UTEP increased tuition \$510 from 2003-2004 for a total increase of 37 percent.

Institution	Tuition 2003	Tuition 2004	Total Increase	Percentage Increase
1. UT-Austin	\$1,380	\$2,130	\$750	54%
2. UT-Dallas	\$1,380	\$2,040	\$660	48%
3. UTEP	\$1,380	\$1,890	\$510	37%
4. Texas Tech	\$1,380	\$1,860	\$480	35%
5. UT-San Antonio	\$1,380	\$1,860	\$480	35%
6. University of Houston	\$1,380	\$1,845	\$465	34%
7. University of North Texas	\$1,380	\$1,845	\$465	34%
8. Texas A&M	\$1,380	\$1,837	\$457	33%
9. Texas A&M-Galveston	\$1,380	\$1,837	\$457	33%
10. UT-Arlington	\$1,380	\$1,815	\$435	32%

SOURCE: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

This fall, students can expect even higher tuition bills. Tuition at UTEP for 2005 has increased another \$110 to \$2,000. This represents a total increase of \$620 or 45 percent since 2003 when the Legislature passed tuition deregulation during the 78th Session. Senator Shapleigh voted against the tuition deregulation legislation.

Due to the alarming increase in tuition at UTEP, Senator Shapleigh had serious reservations regarding two fee bills UTEP lobbied for during the most recent legislative session, H.B. 2212 and H.B. 1412.

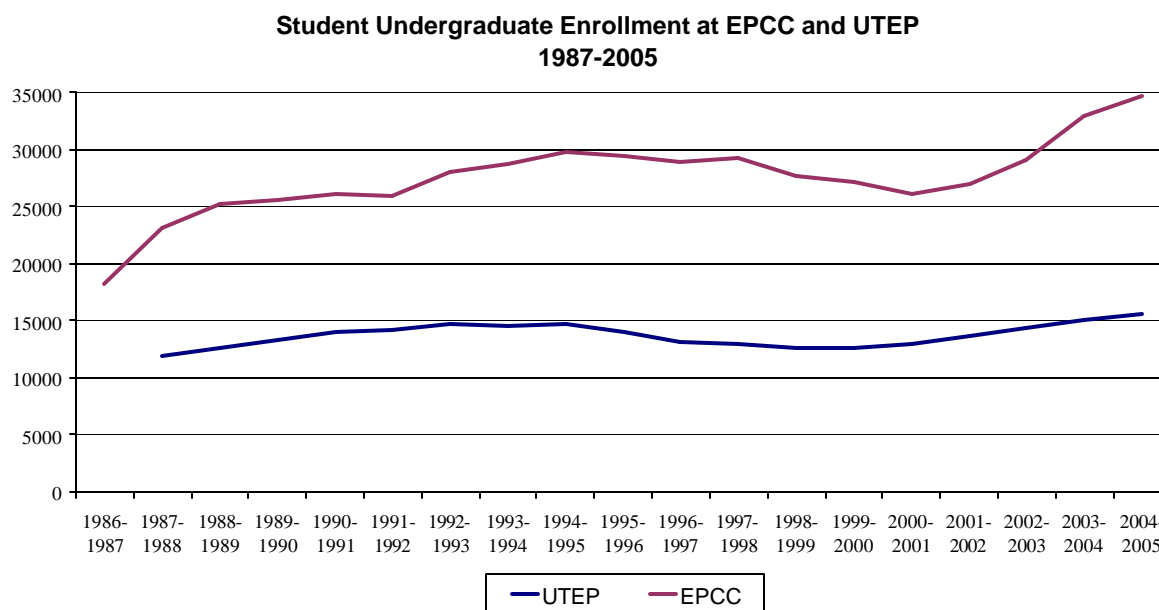
"In January, UTEP's administration got House members to file bills that hiked student fees from \$12 to \$100 for the Recreation Fee and \$30 to \$75 for the Student Union fee. In my view, both the tuition and student fee hikes were quite excessive," Senator Shapleigh stated. For instance, between 2000 and 2005 UTEP's Parking fee increased from \$25 to \$65 and the Student Service fee increased from \$37.50 to \$162.

"UTEP's administration also failed to secure a resolution from the students demonstrating student support for the fee increases as requested by the Chair of the Higher Education Committee, Senator Royce West," Senator Shapleigh continued.

With these concerns in mind, Senator Shapleigh sponsored versions of the bills that only increased the fees from \$12 to \$40 for the Recreation Fee and \$30 to \$50 for the Student Union and required student approval before any increase could take effect.

"After Session, on June 21, 2005, we wrote and asked the Student Government Association for input on what the students wanted. After all, UTEP is about a quality undergraduate education for students, not the ambitions of a few administrators."

While the fee increases failed to pass before the completion of the 79th Regular Session, the increasing cost of an education at UTEP will eventually force student to "choose with their feet." While student enrollment has slowly rebounded at UTEP, as the chart below shows, recent tuition and fee increases will force more students to schools like El Paso Community College.



UTEP must continue to provide access to a quality and affordable higher education for the El Paso community. UTEP's high tuition is placing El Paso in a position to lose it's best and brightest as they will choose to either attend college elsewhere, or worse, fail to obtain a higher education at all. Let's remember that El Paso students have the first choice and ensure that a college education in El Paso is affordable and achievable.