

News

Students see 84 percent tuition increase over past decade

Dylan Gillespie
Research Writer

UTM students see 84 percent increase in tuition over last decade

By Dylan Gillespie
Current UTM students are paying \$1,606 more in tuition per semester, which is an increase of almost 84 percent, than those who attended just 10 years ago. In fact, this year alone tuition increased by 6 percent.

Of this year's increase, Dr. Jerald Ogg points out that there are pros and cons.

"The bad news about the increase is [that] we did not have an opportunity to hire new lines, we replaced faculty that left but weren't able to add new ones; the good news is part of the six percent includes compensation adjustment plan that will help us keep faculty," said Dr. Jerald Ogg.

In 2003, it cost only \$1,915 per semester for a Tennessee resident to attend UTM. Today, it costs \$3,521.

While tuition is increasing, state appropriations are decreasing. For some students, however, Tennessee Lottery Scholarship (TLS) awards, which includes the Hope Scholarship, are there to help fill in some of the monetary gap.

Spencer Bowers, UTM College Democrats President, believes the current trend of tuition increases will play an increasingly negative role in higher education.

"For years now, the General Assembly has balanced the budget in part on the backs of college students. This trend simply cannot continue or Tennesseans seeking a higher education will not be able to consider a higher education. That will make it harder for us as a state to compete in the marketplace both here in the U.S. and abroad," Bowers said.

Beginning in 2004, lottery-funded scholarships became available to Tennessee high school seniors who are eligible. Today, some 100,000 students in

Tennessee receive TLS awards. Those who graduated from high school prior to 2009 are eligible to receive up to \$4,000 per year; those who graduated post-'09 are eligible to receive up to \$6,000 per year. So, a recipient of the TLS actually pays less for tuition than the same student would have paid in 2003.

It is not just the amount of these awards either; more and more high school graduates receive the awards each year. In just the last three years, the number of UTM students who receive TLS awards has increased from 3,095 to 4,825 – about half the student population.

This increase in TLS awards has played a role in the decrease of state appropriations for the UTM budget. In 2004, TN state appropriations accounted for almost 51 percent of the UTM budget; today those appropriations account for a mere 30 percent, while tuition currently makes up 65 percent of the budget.

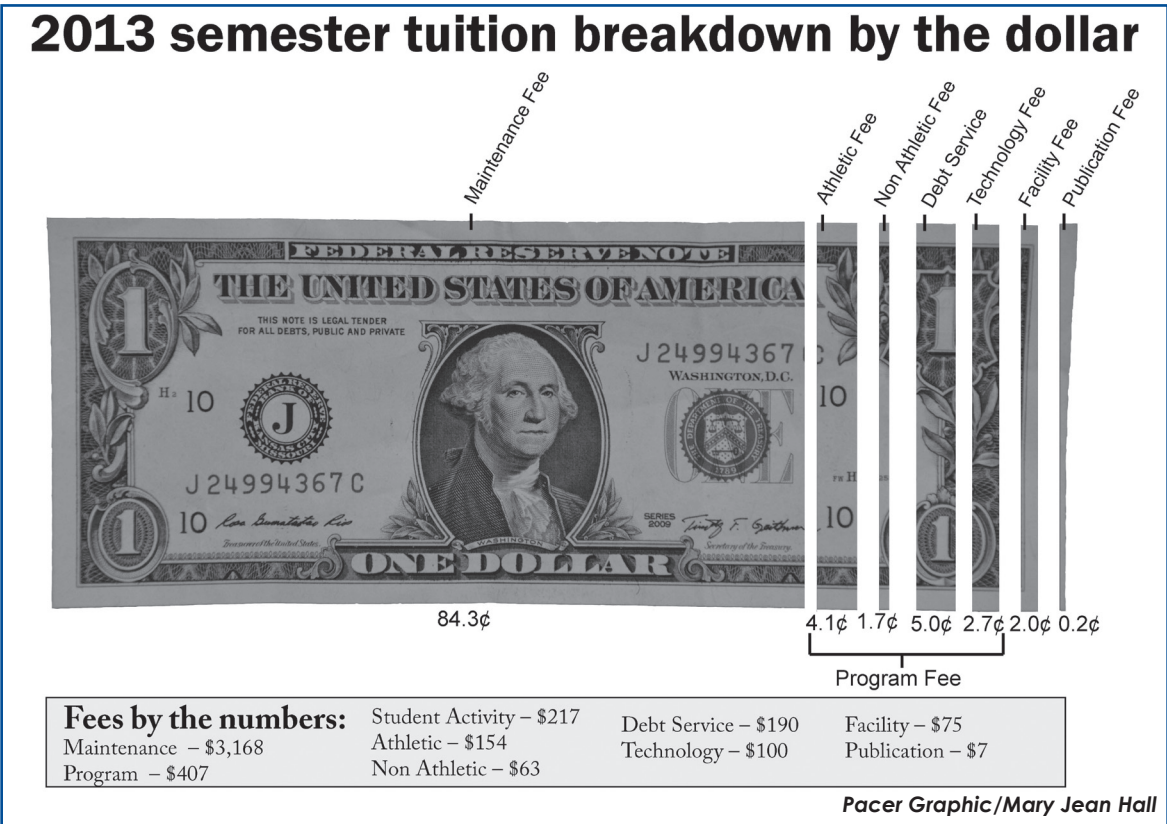
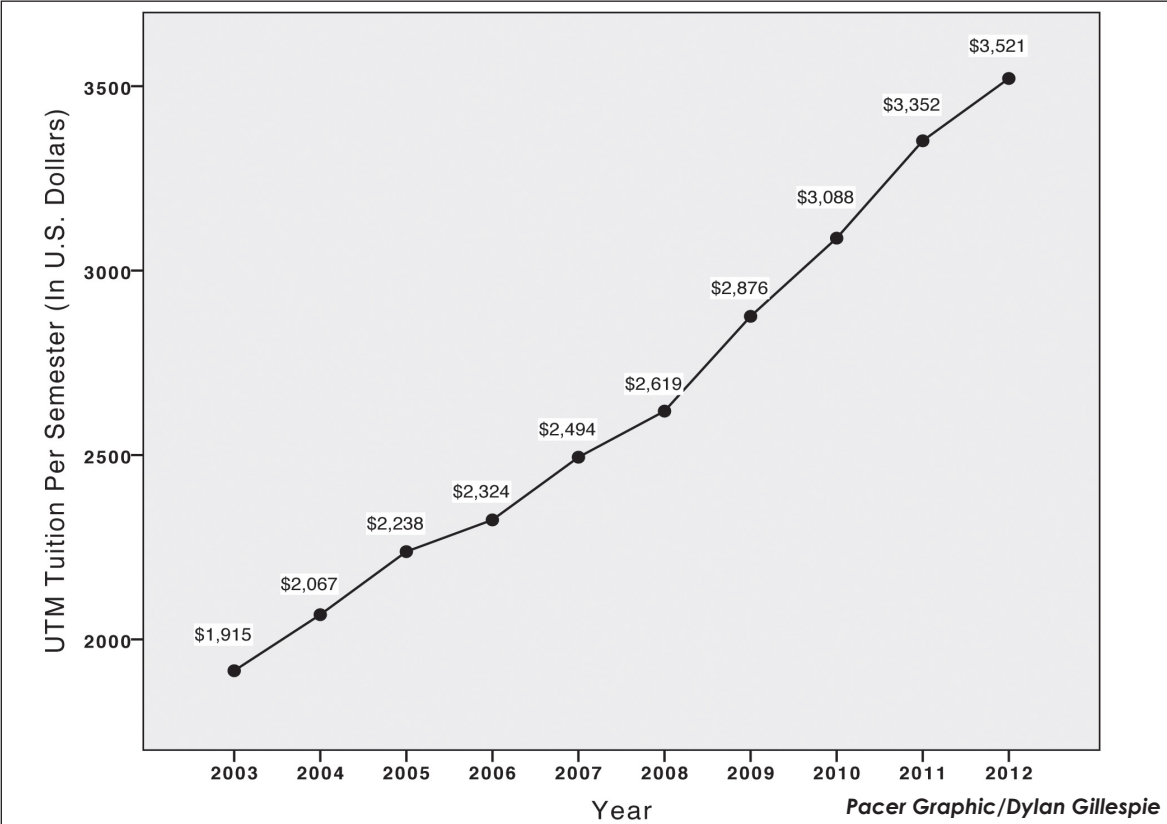
By raising the cost of tuition, the school is able to make up for the funds it used to receive from the state. At UTM, students who receive TLS awards actually pay less than \$1,500 in tuition after their TLS awards are accounted for.

"While the Hope Scholarship may help young students who make the grade, that is only one small piece of a large, expensive puzzle and it does not extend to non-traditional students," Bowers said.

The other half that does not receive TLS awards, including non-traditional students, is often left with no choice but to accumulate enormous debt to pay for an undergraduate degree.

Colleen Perkins, UTM College Republicans President, believes rising tuition costs are a product of recent economic woes in the U.S. and that a college education is an investment in one's future.

"Although tuition has risen over the past several years, a college education is still an



investment in one's future. For one to depend on government appropriations to start and manage your investment is unwise. The rising tuition is merely a reflection of America's current economic struggles. Tuition will continue to rise as our economy fluctuates in response to the economic policies that our government leaders have implemented," Perkins said.

Considering the ever diminishing funding at the state level, universities will have no choice but to continue increasing the cost of tuition.