

## University of Oklahoma's flat-rate tuition and fee proposal receives board approval

University of Oklahoma officials got approval Monday to move forward with a flat-rate plan for undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees.

By Silas Allen Published: June 25, 2013

ARDMORE — University of Oklahoma officials got approval Monday to move forward with a flat-rate plan for undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees.

Under the plan, any full-time undergraduate student who takes between 12 and 21 credits per semester will pay a flat rate for tuition and fees that is based on the cost for 15 hours per semester during the 2012-13 academic year.

The OU Board of Regents approved the plan at a meeting Monday at the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation in Ardmore. The plan will go before the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education on Wednesday.

OU officials also don't plan to raise undergraduate in-state tuition for the upcoming academic year. Nonresident undergraduates will see a 2.9 percent tuition increase.

During Monday's meeting, OU President David Boren said the plan could save OU students and their families thousands of dollars by encouraging them to graduate earlier.

Most degree programs at the university require 120 credit hours to graduate, he said, meaning a student who takes 30 hours per year would be on track to graduate in four years. A student who takes five years to graduate would spend about \$13,000 more in tuition, fees and living expenses, Boren said.

The plan also includes a scholarship component to help students who work outside jobs to pay for school. Many OU students work full-time jobs while they go to college, making it difficult for them to take 15 hours a semester, Boren said. The university will offer scholarships to allow those students to work fewer hours, he said.

The university will pay for those scholarships from extra revenue the university receives through tuition and fees, Boren said. Although the plan is intended to encourage students to take at least 30 hours per year, Boren said, some students will still choose to take fewer classes, meaning they'll pay more for those classes than they would have in the past, generating extra revenue for the university.

The program will also offer flexible options for students who can't take a full load of classes. If students can't take 15 hours per semester, Boren said, the university will offer tuition and fee waivers to allow them to take courses during the summer, during intersession periods or online to allow them to meet the 30 credit hours per year threshold.

Students will also be able to apply for exemptions to the flat-rate policy if extenuating circumstances arise, Boren said. Students whose applications for exemption are denied will be able to appeal to a committee that includes student representatives, he said.

"There will always be some unique individual, some unique circumstance, that we haven't thought of," he said.

Similar flat-rate tuition policies are in effect at a number of other universities in the region, including the University of Texas, Texas A&M University and Baylor University.

Boren said he has been examining the possibility of a flat-rate tuition and fee policy for several years. He has consulted with lawmakers and officials at other universities, including former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who implemented a similar policy during his time as president at Texas A&M.

"It just seemed to me that it was the right time for us to move forward," he said. "Why put it off?"