

LTCC needs more students to balance budget

By Kathryn Reed

When classes start Sept. 23 at Lake Tahoe Community College officials hope to see a lot more students than last year. The budget the board approved Tuesday night is banking on it.

Enrollment dropped dramatically last school compared to the previous year. The 2013-14 budget is calling for 1,750 fulltime equivalent students.



Lake Tahoe Community College's finances are not quite on solid ground. Photo/LTN file

"Until we know the FTES, the budget is only as good as the assumptions it was built on," LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*.

FTES history:

- 2008-09 – 1,935
- 2009-10 – 2,021
- 2010-11 – 1,834

- 2011-12 – 1,819
- 2012-13 – 1,530.

Between 2008 and 2010 the college had a dramatic drop in the number of Lake Tahoe Basin residents attending the college. This is based on a study done by ZIP codes. In 2008-09, 5,925 basin residents took classes at LTCC, while in 2012-13 that number was 3,766.

People keep moving out of the area, fees increased, the number of classes declined, the state changed how it calculates FTES, the good neighbor policy with Nevada went away – those are some of the reasons for the decline in numbers.

Online classes have helped increase the enrollment for people living outside the basin.

While Sept. 10 was the public hearing on the budget, no one showed up.

The board has discussed the budget extensively, with a tentative budget presented at the June 25 board meeting, lots of talk at the Aug. 23 retreat and then again at a study session on Sept. 5.

The college is taking \$403,408 out of reserves to balance its budget.

In Murillo's summary of the budget she wrote, "The major goal of the budget development process has been to create a budget that more accurately reflects the fiscal outlook, knowing that it does not benefit students or the college if the organization does not have a true picture of the budget when making decisions."

Murillo has been working to establish a realistic budget since she came to the college. The previous practice had actual expenses coming at about \$1 million less than projected. She and Jeff DeFranco, vice president of administrative services,

have strived to make the budget more factual.

“There’s no longer fluff,” Murillo said. “It’s as close to real as you can get.”

A potentially fluctuating number is what the college pays out in health and welfare benefits. The agreement with all bargaining units for that segment of their contracts expires Nov. 30.

The college pays for the entire premier health plan for each employee. This comes to \$17,350 annually per employee.

(Murillo and two board members have opted for the school to pay for the standard plan for them.)

It is the college’s desire to have all employees go to the standard plan. A committee has been formed to come up with a proposal that would be presented to Murillo who would in turn bring it before the board.

The board on Tuesday agreed to set aside \$10,000, if need be, to have a consultant compare the current options available to LTCC through the health and welfare joint powers authority it belongs to to others in the state.

In other action:

- The college has tentatively set June 7 as the date to celebrate its 40th anniversary.