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### AZ college students speak out about fee hikes

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By Ashleigh Barry **CONNECT**

TEMPE, AZ (AP) - Students are voicing their opinions about proposed tuition and [fee](#) increases at Arizona colleges.

Gov. Doug Ducey's decision to cut \$99 million in funding puts the [financial](#) burden on the backs of students. The increase could mean thousands of dollars more per year per.

The tuition proposal is generating mixed reaction on campus.

Dozens of students spoke during a statewide teleconference before the Board of Regents, which will ultimately make the [financial decision](#).

Arizona State University is faced with a \$53 million budget cut, and the university is looking at imminent tuition and fee hikes.

The proposal includes a temporary, one-year \$321 surcharge for in-state residents, nearly \$1,000 for out-of-state residents, and nearly \$2,800 for international students.

"It said every year would be \$33,000, including tuition and living expenses but honestly it's not close to that. It comes to easily \$42,000 a year for us," international student Priyam Verma said.

Alumna Athena Salman said she is now thinking twice about attending graduate school at ASU.

"It's a huge deterrent for myself and I imagine that there are other folks out there where cost is the biggest concern when it comes to attaining an education," she said.

Community colleges in the Valley also took a hit.

The Maricopa County system lost all its state [funding](#), nearly \$9 million.

While there are no plans to raise tuition for the next school year, a Maricopa Community College spokesman said some plans will be put on hold, such as hiring more full-time faculty.

Right now, more adjunct, or part-time professors are used, which students said is OK.

"I don't really see much difference," said Melissa Lynch, a Phoenix College Student.

The California native is taking classes at Phoenix College until she establishes Arizona residency and can then get lower in-state tuition rates at ASU. One credit hour at a community college costs \$84 but at ASU it can be more than \$700.

"Marketing, advertising is the [goal](#)," Lynch said. "And they have a good business school at ASU."

Houzaifa Ahmed, another Phoenix College Student, said he wants to be an engineer and also attend ASU.

"I have to study English," Ahmed said. "I want to learn more English, how to speak, how to write, something like that."

According to a report by economic modeling specialists, one tax dollar spent on community colleges generates \$4 in benefits. That comes in the forms of people getting jobs, paying [taxes](#) and not relying on welfare.

"Community colleges are uniquely situated to work with employers to design classes that prepare students for particular jobs, for unique jobs, unique to certain employers," said Garrick Taylor of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce.

Taylor said employers today want highly skilled workers, especially in the tech sector.

That may mean a future engineer like Ahmed or someone who can build parts for military aircraft.

While the business community wants to make sure politicians hear the calls for an educated workforce, Arizona families also want their voices heard.

The Board of Regents is expected to vote on the tuition increase in early May.

There are no more public comment sessions scheduled but residents can send an email to [tuition@azregents.edu](mailto:tuition@azregents.edu). All comments received prior to April 30 at 5 p.m. will be shared with the regents in advance of the May 4 meeting.

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