No tuition boost at Daytona State

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DAYTONA BEACH — Daytona State College students will not see an increase in their tuition for the fall.

The college’s board of trustees on Thursday approved an $86.6 million operating budget for the 2013-2014 fiscal year, down from the current $93.4 million because of reductions in state funding and an anticipated 9 percent enrollment drop.

Tuition will remain the same for both associate and bachelor’s degrees.

“We are holding down costs for our students because we feel this is our main obligation on the board right now,” said board Vice Chairwoman Mary Ann Haas.

While the colleges roughly 1,000 employees will not receive raises this coming year, Haas said she hopes employees understand the intent is not to “make things tighter for those working at the college” but to make the college more accessible for the community.

“IT’s a tough decision to make,” Haas said. “The state did not release additional funds this year, and we got caught in that compression crunch as well. Things could be worse, but they could also be better.”

The Daytona State board last year approved a 5 percent tuition increase for baccalaureate programs as required by the Legislature. Associate-degree tuition stayed the same last year after 8 percent tuition increases in 2011-2012 and the two previous years.

As far as this year’s budget, President Carol Eaton previously said the college was able to partly make up for the reduction from the state by putting a hiring freeze into place for 18 faculty and 19 staff positions, and departments cutting back in other areas. The positions, she said, were vacant through retirement and people leaving the college.

Trustee Forough Hosseini

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thanked staff for reducing expenses so the college could handle the reduction in funds and still provide the same level of service.

“To lose that much money and have a balanced budget and not lay off people, that is truly amazing and to keep the same level of service for our students is amazing,” Hosseini said.

Students, though, will see some changes to lab fees. About 40 will increase, but another 40 will decrease while nine others will be deleted. The college analyzes its fees every year, and costs can change based on materials, lab kits and other needs.

The college also late Thursday released information showing it ranks among the most-affordable in the nation for public four-year institutions based on data released by the U.S. Department of Education.

Daytona State’s annual tuition for full-time students is among the top 50 most-affordable out of nearly 700 public four-year institutions and well above thousands of additional private for-profit and nonprofit four-year institutions, according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education.

Daytona State’s average 2012 annual tuition of $3,134 placed it at 56 percent less than the $7,135 national average for public four-year colleges and universities, school officials said.

In a statement after the meeting, Eaton said that the ranking "reflects our ongoing commitment to making a college education accessible to our students, despite budget challenges.”

Gabriel Hannans, 23, of Daytona Beach, president of the Student Government Association, who is in his third year at the college, is glad to see the tuition remain the same for the fall.

“I think it’s great. If they lowered it, that would have been even better. But one step at a time,” Hannans said.

Despite no raises, Andrea Reese, acting president of the Faculty Senate, said the faculty is pleased the college was able to have a balanced budget considering the state cuts and drops in enrollment.

“Faculty is understanding, and faculty also understands that when the situation is reversed that raises will be considered in the future,” said Reese, chair of the Honors College.

Eaton also updated the board Thursday that she has been in discussions with the Volusia County and Flagler County school districts about a new law that goes into effect July 1 that requires school districts to pay the state colleges and universities standard tuition for dually enrolled students. Previously, the districts did not have to pay Daytona State for students in high school who also take college courses.

Eaton said the mandate has “created a financial burden” for the districts. The program is “vital” for students, Eaton said, and the college and districts are looking at what type of partnership can be done. Eaton said she expects a solution this summer before fall classes begin.