

Policy Change Threatens Tuition Waivers



Q.1. How are tuition waivers being threatened?

The College of Fine and Applied Art has changed its tuition waiver policy for all dance, music, and theatre programs plus masters programs in urban planning and landscape architecture. Starting this fall, incoming graduate students will only have their base-rate tuition waived (meaning the lowest in-state tuition). Future students will face the possibility of having to pay a difference of over \$14,000 per year. See the new policy here:

www.grad.illinois.edu/policies/tuitionwaiverFineArtsChart-future .

Q.2 Can't out-of-state students just become in-state students?

No. This university does not allow out-of-state students to become in-state residents if they have come here solely for educational purposes even if they pay taxes or own a home. The university policy can be found here: http://www.usp.uillinois.edu/residency/res_fa.qcfm.

Q.3 I heard that the affected students will be provided with scholarship funds to make up the difference in tuition.

It is likely that “scholarship” funds will be provided to ensure that out-of-state students will not be required to pay the difference in tuition this year. However, these “scholarship” funds are not part of the official tuition waiver policy and there is no guarantee that these funds will be made available to future students. It is our assessment that these “scholarship” funds are merely a way to gain gradual acceptance for a policy that targets arts on this campus as a resource for revenue generation.

Q.4 Won't these departments just pay the out-of-state tuition for the students so their programs remain competitive?

Already cash-strapped departments simply cannot afford to cover the difference. Funding a single out-of-state student in a 3-year MFA program would cost the department almost \$43,000. Multiply that amount by the number of actors and designers involved in a production or musicians in an orchestra. The only alternative is that future students bear the financial burden. However, this policy is being imposed first in departments where the majority of students have 25% or 33% assistantships at the minimum rate. For these students, the cost of out-of-state tuition would be more than their annual salary.

Q.5 What will be the ramification of this change?

1) It will be impossible for these programs to continue to bring in the most talented artists and scholars because students will simply not be able to afford to come to graduate school at Illinois. These programs, which include MAs, MFAs, and PhDs, will shrink dramatically until they are cut entirely and the majority of arts programs disappear from this campus and the community.

2) If we allow this change to stand in these departments it is only a matter of time before this policy is enacted across campus. Base-rate Tuition Waiver is coming to a department near you!

Q.6 Doesn't the new labor contract between the GEO and the University protect us against assaults on our tuition waivers?

The new G.E.O. contract does contain provisions protecting GAs' and TAs' tuition waivers and the union will utilize every tool at its disposal to ensure that the rights and benefits of all graduate employees are secured. However, as past struggles for tuition waiver security have demonstrated, the single best way to ensure that access does not become delimited is to organize collectively and apply pressure to the University through protest and direct action.

Q.7 What can I do?

Join us at the emergency Tuition Waiver Forum, on **Monday, July 19 at 5:30 pm** at the U YMCA.