

NEWS

Board of Regents: Another tuition increase?

By Victor S. Ingram
YELLIN REBEL

When University of Nevada, Las Vegas students return next Fall, they can not only expect fresh, new academic challenges, but they can also expect a \$6 per credit increase in their tuition costs.

This once proposed tuition increase was made law by the University of Nevada System Board of Regents during their last meeting on May 17.

This increase will affect the entire University of Nevada System which includes University of Nevada, Reno, and four community colleges. It will amount to

\$4.9 million dollars in revenue for the University of Nevada System for next fiscal year, beginning July 1.

Of these funds, UNLV will receive \$2.6 million to be used for student support services.

The increase represents a 15 percent hike in undergraduate fees taking the cost from \$40 to \$46 per credit, and for graduate students the fees rose 20 percent taking tuition cost from \$50 to \$60 per credit hour.

With the tuition increase, the University Board of Regents also approved a plan that would integrate Nevada's annual fee increases with those of other Western colleges and universities. This

policy would, in effect, keep Nevada's fees concurrent with these institutions. By enlisting in the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education

future. It is this policy that University of Nevada System student government leaders were most opposed to. UNLV Student Government

just adds insult to injury.

During a May 13 meeting, Bunin and other student government officials met with university officials to propose an alternative to the annual tuition increase policy.

Their proposal involved utilizing the consumer price index in conjunction with the existing policy. Also, a committee would be formed prior to any proposed increase that would consist of students and university officials, allowing for formal hearing.

Bunin said, "While there might be increases based on the average, they will be much more conducive to student needs."

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(WICHE), future tuition increases will be the average of fees charged by the organization.

According to a university official, this was done in an effort to allow for a policy that would let students know early on what fee increases would be coming in the

President Joe Bunin said during an interview that the policy puts the university system at a disproportionate comparison with other western universities. Bunin acknowledged that the actual fee increase was seemingly unavoidable, yet by enlisting WICHE, it

Smoke clearing in legalization of marijuana

By Naima Hana-Kunciw
YELLIN REBEL

Don Fiedler, national director of NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws), is optimistic. He said he foresees the legalization of marijuana within the decade.

NORML has been in existence for twenty years. This organization has been promoting drug education since its inception. NORML does not support nor does it encourage the use of marijuana or any other drug. Its purpose is to inform the public of marijuana and its health effects and to keep the public up to date on the marijuana laws, on the legalization debate, on drug research, on efforts to amend penalties, and other functions directly linked to this issue.

NORML regularly publishes literature on progresses made and is active on the local level through its adherents.

Fiedler, reached by phone in his Washington D.C. office, said one of NORML's main contentions and areas of argument deals with the criminalization of marijuana possession and the harsh penalties imposed on its use. He said he feels the prohibition of marijuana is wrong.

Fiedler said that NORML advocates a system of legal civil regulation and control of marijuana. Since 1970, NORML has been lobbying to this end.

It has manifested an open and unreserved criticism against the misinformation campaign to throw marijuana in with the heap of more potent drugs, and denounced the hypocrisy of the legal status of tobacco and alcohol.

The interdiction on marijuana has been so successful, said Fiedler, that crack and cocaine are actually easier to procure.

By legalizing marijuana, NORML conservatively estimates that the U.S. government would collect \$50 billion in taxes.

"The drug cartel," said Fiedler, "also controls the black market for the purchase of marijuana."

NORML's posture in favor of legalizing marijuana is reinforced by their fervent belief that only federal control and distribution of marijuana is likely to discourage abuse.

Fiedler said, "Medical research on the drug has yielded sufficient evidence to support the fact that marijuana is actually less harmful than smoking or drink-

ing alcoholic beverages."

NORML does not involve itself with the more complex issues dealing with prevention and treatment of drugs. NORML is concerned only with marijuana regulations and penalties as they affect individuals, and in de-emphasizing or demystifying the perceived notion that it is as equal in potency as other powerful drugs and therefore that its possession and use are as deserving in punitive measures.

Fiedler said that lessons have been learned over the years particularly concerning the more potent drugs such as crack and cocaine. He said he believes that cautious steps and corrective measures can be implemented to deal with such drugs as well as the spread of the aids disease.

Fiedler mentioned the case of John Parker who traveled around the country in an attempt to disseminate information on the dangers of needle sharing and who also exchanged clean needles for used ones.

"John Parker," said Fiedler, "was repeatedly arrested for conducting this practice."

NORML has had some success in helping eleven states decriminalize marijuana possession and continues to encourage the upholding of such laws.

In 1972, when medical research on marijuana indicated the drug had potential medical value, NORML participated in convincing 33 states to accept rulings allowing the drug's medical use.

Fiedler talked about the successful results in legitimizing marijuana in such European countries as the Netherlands, Italy and more recently, Spain.

"The incidence of marijuana use in the Netherlands, where it has been a familiar occupation in coffee houses for the past 15 years, and in Italy, has substantially decreased after almost two decades," he said. "The myth purporting that marijuana use inevitably leads to increasingly powerful drugs has largely been disproven, including the fact that marijuana is more potent today than 20 years ago."

Fiedler said, "That has been the red herring in this affair; it is impossible to overdose on marijuana."

"In September of 1989, Drug Czar William Bennett unveiled his drug enforcement act during a press conference in Washington and no mention of marijuana was made," said Fiedler. He added

Pros and cons speak out

By Naima Hana-Kunciw
YELLIN REBEL

The issue of legalizing marijuana elicits starkly opposing views. There are no gray shades in the mindset of those who have formed an opinion on the matter. One is either pro-legalization or against it; it is either right or wrong.

The recent public advocacy of drug legalization by prominent figures in the political arena as well as the judicial and media fields have brought this sensitive issue to the forefront of the socio-political debate.

In as much as the prevalence of drugs in our society affects ethical and moral sensibilities, the controversy generated by this subject can be compared to that surrounding the abortion debate.

Some of the comments gleaned from students around the campus indicate a divergent opinions exist rather than an overwhelming position on either side of the issue:

"I think it's a dangerous drug, a mind-altering substance just like any other drug and should not be legalized," said Marcel Carter who graduated in Spring '90.

"Drug use is wrong," said Jim Clayton, "but penalties for

the possession of marijuana are too strong. Legalize it, control it, and use the funds reaped from this commerce to finance treatment of drug addicts and other drug related ills." Clayton adds, "The curiosity about drugs is basically because drug use is taboo."

"Same effect as having a beer; should be legalized," came from one who preferred to remain anonymous.

"I wouldn't want any one around me smoking it," Marc Eastman said.

"Oh, go ahead, legalize it," said Marc Skidmore.

that this omission may suggest a changing policy on the drug.

On campus, Sociology Professor Dr. Frederic Preston agrees with Fiedler's assessment of marijuana's blown-up image as a dangerous drug. He said a lot of inaccuracy has abounded around this drug.

Preston said that in 1972, the Consumer's Union commissioned an independent investigation of illicit drugs. The upshot of their recommendation was to

move in the direction of legalization of marijuana and heroin.

"There are two factors impeding the decriminalization process," said Preston. "One is a moral issue, the other economic."

"The illicit distributive system is threatened and it is very difficult to assess its structure since this market is carried underground," he said, adding, "It is difficult to estimate how much corruption is involved."

Preston said he believes if

marijuana were to be legalized, the use would initially increase.

"There are those," he said, "who do not use marijuana because it is illegal, and those who do not use it but would if it were made legal."

However, Preston said he feels that had marijuana been legalized in the seventies, it is possible that the abuse of alcohol might have declined whereas cocaine may still be as prevalent.

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