What were some of the major parameters that went into the decision to increase tuition for in-state students? How was the percentage increase calculated? What were the guidelines followed?

An 18-month process that included faculty and student input led to a set of tuition principles that are summarized below. The process began with chartering a tuition committee that included faculty, student, and staff representation from across the school. The committee generated a set of recommendations for setting tuition that was delivered to the SPH Executive Committee. The Executive Committee made some slight changes prior to approval. The application of those principles led directly to the tuition levels for fall 2015 and fall 2016. One significant factor that figured in the extensive discussions is the shrinking state support for UW.

For the MPH:
- MPH tuition should cover the cost of education; however, individual departments can mitigate the cost with scholarships and waivers
- Higher tuition will lead to increased student aid
- MPH students should have tuition predictability for the duration of their program
- The benchmark tuition rates are the top 10 schools of public health (top 10 in rankings from US News & World Report)

For the MS:
- The MS degree should have a separate rate – beginning fall 2015
- MS rates may differ by department – beginning fall 2017

For the PhD:
- Minimize tuition payment directly from students by having each department set its own rate – beginning fall 2017. (Most PhD students are supported by research and training grants.)

What are the main challenges/concerns/financial issues SPH is trying to address by increasing revenue from tuition?
- The significant decrease in state support of higher education, and in particular graduate level higher education. In the current biennium (FY14-FY15), the state did award new money to UW, but that money was very closely tied to undergraduate (and not graduate) support.
- Tuition revenue is a significant component of the funds required to pay the excellent faculty and staff who support the educational mission of the school.

Why aren’t the current tuition rates covering enough of the costs?
- There was never an increase in tuition to match the reduction in state funding. The hope was to maintain low tuition levels as long as possible. This has been successful for the past two years, but now we need to increase tuition. The MPH and other graduate tuition categories have increased less than other graduate rates at UW over the past few years.
What other policies or decisions were considered to address the issue(s), in addition to an increase in tuition? (e.g., were cost-cutting measures in other areas implemented/considered? What other cost-saving policies have been enacted or proposed leading up to this decision?)

- The previous tuition levels were based on significant subsidies provided by the state through the Provost. As those subsidies were diminished, the cost of tuition has risen. We have implemented an overhaul of the MPH curriculum which will lead to a wide range of teaching efficiencies. Additionally, departments and programs have consolidated staff in order to keep costs low, and SPH continues to evaluate additional ways to keep teaching infrastructure costs low while maintaining quality.

Is anything known about a corresponding increase in student financial aid to offset these increases?

- Increasing financial aid to students is absolutely a top priority. Significant sources of student support are tuition waivers associated with teaching assistant and research assistant positions. These appointments will continue at the same historical levels. The decision to appoint TAs and RAs is made by the relevant department or program. Additionally, we are overhauling the use of donor funds to ensure the maximum possible support of students.

Does the tuition increase have anything to do with the current research funding climate? Is a decrease in the number of grants or grant amounts a significant contributing factor?

- Only indirectly. The overwhelming majority of our research work is insulated from the educational mission of the school. However, the research funding does have two indirect links to the educational mission of the school: facilities and administration (F&A) revenues generated by grant activity, and students directly supported by grants.

Any decrease in research funding leads to lower Facilities and Administrative cost recovery which does lead to less revenue to run the school. In 2014-15, this reduction in revenue was roughly $250,000, or roughly 1% of the funds available to support the educational mission. It has an impact, but a relatively small impact.

We have maintained a high level of success with training grants that directly support students, and consequently have maintained strong support for students.

Have there been or will there be planned faculty reductions to save money?

- No faculty reductions are planned at this point. As with all staffing decisions, all openings are reviewed for financial sustainability prior to hiring. SPH has always been committed to providing faculty instruction for its courses, and graduate teaching assistants play an important but supporting role.

Would increasing the number of students admitted to SPH programs achieve the same goal as the proposed increase in tuition?

- No, simply incrementally enrolling more students would not cover the cost of the educational mission of the School.
Are there planned increases in admissions "slots" in addition to the tuition increases?

- Some departments have already expanded their number of graduate admission “slots” and others are considering this. The challenges include maintaining the high qualifications standard of admitted students and maintaining the quality of the teaching.

Could you provide a simplified breakdown of where/how tuition monies are allocated/distributed?

- Definitions:
  - Gross tuition revenue = Tuition price multiplied by number of students
  - Net tuition revenue = Gross revenue, minus waivers and other uncollected revenue.
- 30% of net revenue is retained by Provost for UW level activities. Little or none of this money reaches the school or department level.
- 9% of net revenue is retained by the Dean’s Office to support school level activities such as student and academic services, and financial management, among many other activities.
- 61% is returned to departments to fund department activities such as paying faculty to teach, TA salaries, advising-staff salaries, and other direct expenses needed to support the teaching activities of the department. The relative amounts returned to each department correspond to their respective levels of teaching.

When, where, and how was student input incorporated into this decision?

- Student input has been collected throughout the process. The first step was the tuition committee which was active for nine months in 2013. This committee included student, faculty, and staff representation. Students are also represented by a student on the SPH Executive Committee (SPHEC), which reviewed the committee’s recommendation. A student representative also attended the two retreats in 2014 where the principles were finalized and the implementation plan was agreed upon.

Will tuition change for MPH non-resident students in the future, i.e. in fall 2017? Currently they are staying the same.

- Any increases would be consistent with the principles outlined, and students and other stakeholders would again be part of the process.

Why does MPH tuition increase differently from other SPH graduate degrees?

- Tuition levels frequently vary by degree program. The MPH is classically defined as a professional degree, and the tuition expectations of professional degrees are different from academic degrees, terminal degrees, or undergraduate degrees. Our policy that professional degrees cover the cost of delivery is consistent with the other professional degrees at UW such as degrees from the College of Engineering, the Foster School of Business, and School of Law.

How can I get additional questions answered?

Please send questions to sphtuitq@uw.edu, and we will address them.