

Tuition increases: A six-month saga

■ Board of trustees cuts tuition increase in half after Gov. Hodges vetoes budget cuts to education

BY CRISTY INFINGER
THE GAMECOCK

USC students are sighing with relief after the board of trustees voted June 29 to cut a planned tuition increase in half.

Under the revised plan, tuition for in-state students this year will go up by 5.2 percent, instead of the 10.4 percent trustees approved before Gov. Jim Hodges' veto pen restored \$24.5 million in funds to the university. Tuition for out-of-state students will increase by 8.5 percent.

That means in-state undergraduates will pay a total of \$3,964 in tuition for the school year. Out-of-state students will pay \$10,904 for the year.

In addition, departmental budget cuts, originally slated for 10 percent across the university, were reduced to 5 percent.

Hodges' funding restoration to state colleges and universities was partially in response to a planned 42 percent in-state tuition increase at Clemson University.

USC President John Palms immediately responded to the school's increased budget by recommending that the board of trustees cut back the 10.4 percent tuition increase.

"I believe the governor and the General Assembly took this bold action trusting that the colleges and universities would respond in a manner which would impact South Carolina families — through a re-

duction in the previously approved tuition increases," Palms said.

The lowered tuition hikes met with positive reaction from the university community.

"We had just finished orientation (when we found out about the new increases), and several parents were very pleased to see that the amount of the increase was rolled back," Associate Director of Financial Aid Bob Godfrey said. "Most people (at orientation) were really just looking for the bottom line."

Senior Curtis Hutto didn't think the increase would affect his financial well-being.

"I'm on an academic scholarship, so I don't really care how much tuition goes up," Hutto said. "Maybe this will give some people more incentive to do better in school."

For other students who do have to worry about tuition, the increase still came as a blow to their wallets and pocketbooks.

"I think it sucks that they are still raising tuition," said senior Kevin Summer. "It is better than the 10.4 percent increase, though."

In mid-June, when the university faced severe budget cuts, trustees finalized short-lived plans for a 10.4 percent increase in tuition for all students.

With this first announcement of an increase in tuition, some students thought that prospective students might look for another school to attend.

"I could see how this proposed tuition increase might cause someone to look at other schools," junior Ellen Jones said.

With more than 36,500 students at USC's eight campuses around the state, many students and families said they would have been affected by the large increase.

"Coming from a family of four children, who will all be in college out of state at the same time as of fall, any raise in tuition will be hard on us," said junior Erin Morrison.

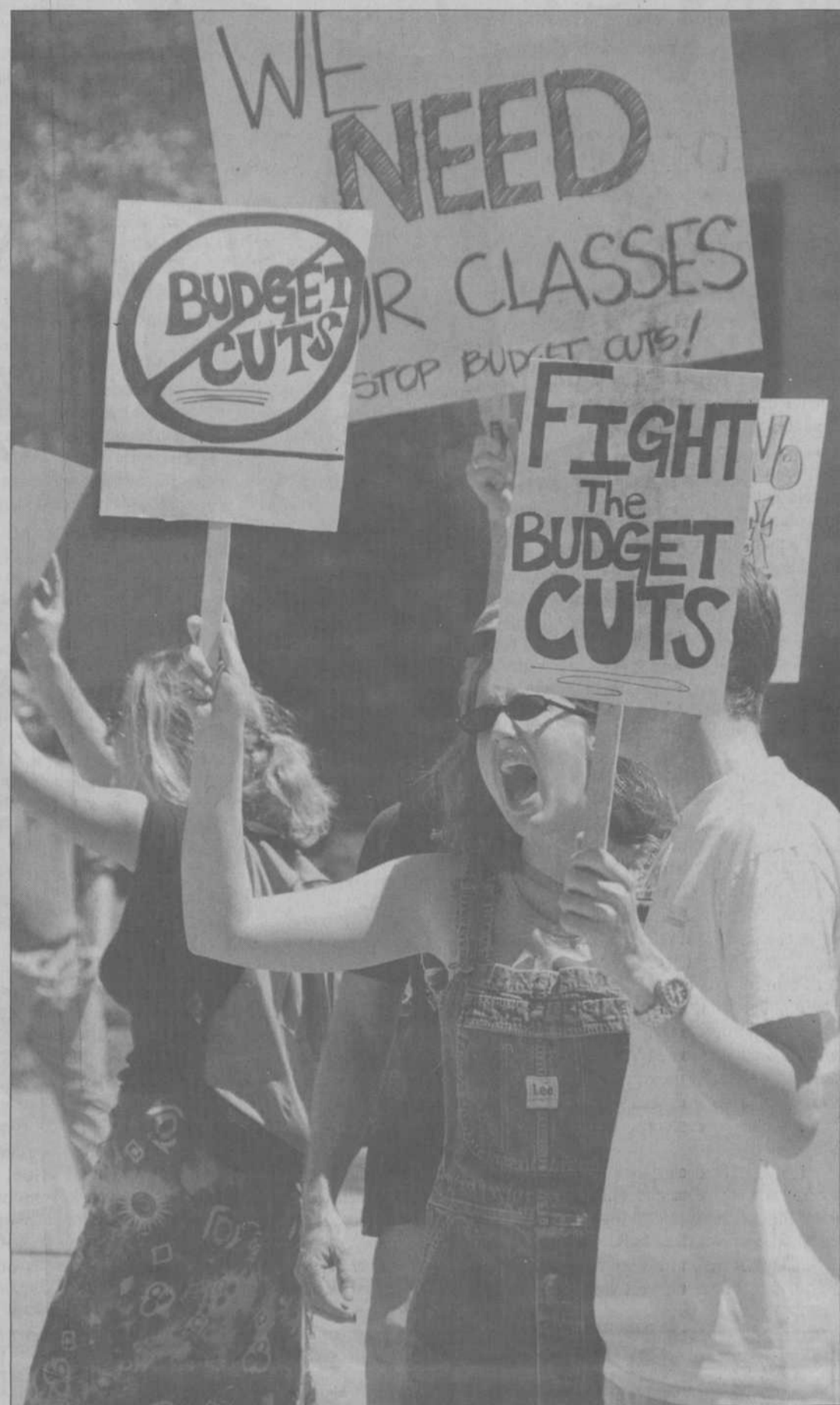
After Clemson's original tuition increase was announced, USC students began thinking less negatively about tuition increases here.

"I definitely don't think that the students are going to be happy with the tuition increase, but given the circumstances that we had in the budget, we were pretty lucky," said Student Body President Corey Ford. "We are lucky that it is not higher, like Clemson's."

Mack Whittle, chairman of USC's Board of Trustees, said USC's reaction to the original budget cuts was both courageous and knowledgeable.

"The budget that we adopted is extremely responsible, showing courage to cut where necessary and the wisdom to support key items that are critical to maintaining the type of quality education that is expected of our state's flagship university," Whittle said.

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Aaron Hark/The Gamecock

Students and other demonstrators gather in front of the State House in May to protest cuts in state funding to colleges and universities. Because of Gov. Hodges' vetoes, tuition increases and departmental budget cuts at USC weren't as bad as these protestors expected — tuition was only raised 5.2 percent for in-state students.

USC TUITION INCREASES

OVER 2001-2002 ACADEMIC YEAR

STUDENT CLASSIFICATION	TUITION	% INCREASE	ORIG. INCREASE	2000-2001 TUITION
Resident undergraduates	\$3,964	5.2 percent	10.4 percent	\$1,884
Non-resident undergraduates	\$10,904	8.5 percent	10.4 percent	\$5,027
Resident graduate students	\$4,434	5.2 percent	10.4 percent	\$2,107
Non-resident graduate students	\$9,854	8.5 percent	10.4 percent	\$4,541
Resident medical students	\$9,900	10 percent	20 percent	\$4,500
Non-resident medical students	\$28,686	10 percent	20 percent	\$13,039

Clemson lowers 42-percent tuition increase after governor's vetoes

BY CRISTY INFINGER
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When faced with a budget cut by the state to higher education, which left the university with a nearly \$20 million deficit, Clemson raised tuition on June 20 by an unprecedented 42 percent for in-state students and 15 percent for out-of-state students.

The tuition increase was credited to unfunded state mandates and a lack of resources needed to fund the university's goals of enhancing the quality of an education received at Clemson.

Clemson's board of trustees responded to Gov. Jim Hodge's veto of state cuts to funds to higher education by reducing the approved tuition of \$2,545 per semester to \$1,945

for the fall semester, creating about \$20 million of needed funding.

Clemson has agreed to give back students the net effect of the governor's veto, according to Clemson President James Barker.

On July 13, the board of trustees voted to give back to in-state students a \$600 refund because of the veto, allowing students and their families more time to plan for the increase in financing.

The remainder of the tuition increase will go toward achieving the university's goal of becoming one of the nation's top public universities and toward making up for other budget deficiencies.

The previously agreed increase of 42 percent will go into effect for

in-state students for the spring 2002 semester.

Original tuition increases for out-of-state students weren't affected by the governor's vetoes. They will

pay 15 percent more in tuition beginning this fall.

Trustees decided to keep the previously agreed upon increase due to research and predicted budget cuts

next year.

"Our goals are not negotiable. We are committed to being a Top 20 public university," said Barker. "We are trying to shape the university for its long-

term future."

The Associated Press contributed to this report. The news desk can be reached at gamecockudesk@hotmail.com

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