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## Student Government's support for tuition increases a mistake

Editorial Staff Updated Apr 22, 2016



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Rowan Reid (left) and Ben Childress (right) speak during a SGA Town Hall at Memorial Hall on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 i  
Photo by Joel Repoley | Staff.

The Student Government Association, particularly the SGA president, is the voice for students on UK's Board of Trustees.

It's a hard job, and it sometimes means making hard decisions — like whether or not to support tuition increases.

As the state's 4.5 percent budget cuts take effect in the upcoming fiscal year, members of the Board of Trustees will likely vote to increase tuition, as they have in recent years, and UK's SGA president will be stuck at a crossroads.

For incoming SGA President Rowan Reid, supporting tuition increases seems like the right call, whether or not students would agree. Current SGA President Austin Mullen said he feels the same way.

Both see tuition increases as a necessary, but unfortunate, way to make sure students get the best academic experience possible.

While Reid will vote with the Board of Trustees to support tuition increases for the right reasons, she will be voting against the best interest of the students she represents.

The budget cuts will be tough on UK, but the university is not going broke. In fact, UK's finances are booming. UK's assets rose about \$1.5 billion between 2013 and June 2015, and previous tuition hikes have more than made up for lost state appropriations.

Between the 2007-08 fiscal year and 2014-15, UK's tuition revenue increased by about \$178 million, while state appropriations fell by about \$57 million.

These numbers show that while UK may take a financial hit, students are already carrying enough of that burden.

UK's impressive finances have given them improved credit ratings from both S&P and Moody, two of the largest credit agencies. Both of those agencies cited UK's revenue diversity with UK HealthCare and increased tuition revenue as positive factors in their decisions.

Reid said that while tuition increases are frustrating, and must be kept under control, it is important for students to understand where their tuition money goes.

She's right. While it looks like UK is spending a lot of money on construction projects throughout campus, much of that does not come from tuition revenue.

To better inform students —and their parents — about how UK is spending their tuition dollars, Reid and other SGA members will work to create a program that shows exactly where tuition revenue goes.

This program would be a remarkable system, and would benefit not just students and parents, but administrators and Board of Trustees members as well.

But if this program works, it will likely show that too much of those tuition dollars are going to administrative payroll and capital projects, and not enough are going to hiring more faculty or increasing need-based scholarships.

Before Reid votes to increase tuition, she should make sure that it really is in the best interest of students. Right now, it looks like that vote would be a mistake.

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