Stopped in its tracks:
Keck Graduate Institute freezes tuition increases for next 2 years

First-year students who are entering Keck Graduate Institute this fall will enjoy a bit of relief in regards to tuition compared to their older peers.

For the first time in its existence, in conjunction with the growing difficulties in attaining student loans, KGI will freeze its tuition for the next 2 years at $37,900 in order to make tuition costs more affordable for its students.

"We’re always concerned about how we can make our program available to as many students as possible," said KGI President Sheldon Schuster. "We try to help absolutely in every way we can and we try to give as much scholarship assistance as we can. We really have to remove all the obstacles we can."

KGI’s Greg Dewey agrees.

"We’re trying to help students in whatever way we can and every little bit helps," said the KGI Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Students. "In a way, it’s a symbolic way of saying ‘hey we’re on your side.’"

Historically, the cost of tuition has increased by an average of 4 percent each year with the 2007-08 cost totaling approximately $36,400. Students who are part of this year’s incoming class will save more than $1500 in tuition in their 2nd year within the KGI program as a result of the recent freeze.

Since the graduate institution began, KGI has offered its students scholarships annually in order to help with tuition. In its first year, the school awarded fellowships that covered the entire cost of the program. KGI expects to award more than $2 million in fellowships to its students in 2008-09 with the average award totaling $18,700—nearly 50 percent of the total tuition.

According to Daniel Chatham, KGI Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, meeting student needs in a financial sense has always been an important focus of the KGI administration and a focus that will continue to have significance on the campus.

"The amount that we will lose could be $100,000 or more in tuition revenues," Mr. Chatham pointed out. "But we think it is more important to be sensitive to student needs and understanding of the challenges that they face financially. We’re responding to loan programs being discontinued for students and this is happening nationally. The next program we found had higher interest rates. So by eliminating tuition increase, students will save."

Mr. Chatham also believes that the tuition freeze has long-term appeal due to KGI graduates being prime candidates for the workplace in the growing biotech industry. A high percentage of KGI’s graduates go directly into the workforce and go on to have stable careers.

"The career prospects of KGI students are really strong and we believe that our degree program is very strong," Mr. Chatham said. "The industry connections that our school has also really supports placements for our students."

While the tuition freeze will be in effect for the 2008-09 and the 2009-10 academic years, a decision has not yet been made as to whether the freeze will continue beyond the 2 school years. A re-evaluation is scheduled to take place in the future and the topic is also one that will be discussed by the KGI Board of Trustees in the fall.

"This will definitely be a topic of interest for the board as we move forward," Dr. Schuster said.

—Landus Rigsby