



February 8, 2012

## **GET and SSB 6399**

There is much discussion about differential tuition and its possible effect on GET. SSB 6399 is a bill that was introduced to address whether these additional costs would apply to resident undergraduates, and to ensure that as course-specific charges, they would not be included in the operating fees covered by GET. This bill is currently “dead,” although it may surface in another form as the legislative session proceeds. We are following the issue closely, and will be posting information on our Web site, noting legislative action as we have the information available.

At this time, no institution has established differential fees. We don’t know if, or when, an institution will implement these charges, or how much these fees would be. It’s important to continue to save as much as you can. Double digit increases in tuition are still expected over the next several years, so account holders will continue to benefit as they always have. GET accounts seldom cover all college expenses because room and board, books, etc. add to the cost. Most accounts have less than 200 units, but adding to your account regularly over the years will add substantially to the savings you’ll have when your child goes to college.

### **What is Differential Tuition?**

Differential tuition is when a college or university charges some students a higher rate than others, depending on their major or course of study. For example, if it costs more to educate an engineering major compared to a history major, a university might charge additional tuition or fees for engineering students.

Last year, HB 1795 was passed authorizing institutions to set their own tuition rates. It also authorized them to make changes in how they charge students for specific course fees, costs that are not required of all students. Universities may or may not decide to charge students different amounts according to their course of study.

### **Why wouldn’t these additional fees be included in GET’s payout value?**

The language of SSB 6399 is in line with the current GET statute ([RCW 28B.95](#)), and what is in GET’s [Master Agreement](#). The original GET guarantee is honored for all participants. GET’s payout value has always been based on resident undergraduate tuition and state-mandated fees at Washington State’s highest priced public university. State-mandated fees that are covered by GET include those charged to all students, not those such as specific lab or course fees that are charged to students in certain majors. Increasing the amount GET is responsible for, beyond the double-digit tuition increases that are currently the norm, would increase GET’s unit price significantly and make saving for college even more difficult for Washington families.

### **Where can I get more information?**

The Legislature is responsible for working with our universities to meet the challenge of adequately funding higher education in our state, while ensuring the financial solvency of the GET Program. Customers are encouraged to contact their legislators for discussion and comments.

### **Bill information**

**SSB 6399** – Customers can monitor the progress of this bill at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6399>