

California higher ed leaders make pitches to lawmakers

By Jim Miller jmiller@sacbee.com

Higher education leaders made the Capitol rounds this week, getting some decidedly different receptions from lawmakers.

“Thoughtful coffee w/ @calstate Chancellor Tim White this morn. Pleased #tuitionhikes aren't on table for CSU,” Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, D-San Diego, [posted on Twitter](#) on Tuesday after meeting with California State University Chancellor Timothy White.

University of California President Janet Napolitano faced a more skeptical audience during a closed-door Capitol meeting with lawmakers who represent UC campuses. They challenged Napolitano over her [push for tuition increases](#) of up to 5 percent annually. There also were questions about the system's bureaucracy, which some faculty unions call [bloated](#). Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins, D-San Diego, has suggested the lower house will ask UC officials to justify their budgets line by line.

Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, whose district includes UC Riverside, described the session as an “opening conversation” at the start of the months-long budget season. Gov. Jerry Brown, who voted against the UC fee increase and [also blocked lawmakers' efforts](#) last summer to give more money to UC and CSU for deferred maintenance, will release his proposed spending plan Friday. It's unknown how the budget will treat the system.

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The Brown administration and some other lawmakers have said the UC tuition hike violates a budget deal that has traded annual increases in state funding for UC and CSU in return for a tuition freeze. Lawmakers have increased the systems' funding by about 5 percent in each of the past two years. But Napolitano contends that the state's share of UC expenses remains far below past levels of support, requiring more money from students and their parents.

“I think the president realizes that it's going to take a concerted effort – that it's going to be a back and forth between the governor, the Legislature and her,” said Medina, who leads the Assembly Higher Education Committee. “I think she realizes the important role the Legislature plays.”

The University of California, California State University, and California Community Colleges later hosted an evening reception for lawmakers and others at the Citizen Hotel.

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