

University of California plans to limit resident enrollment

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The standoff between state officials and the University of California over its finances and admissions policy grew tense Tuesday as the university threatened to limit enrollment of California students next year unless it receives more money from the state.

UC President Janet Napolitano told an Assembly budget subcommittee that the university will cap in-state enrollment at current levels while continuing to increase the number of nonresident students, pending the outcome of budget negotiations with Gov. Jerry Brown.

“We will not not be admitting students that we don’t know that we actually have funding for,” Napolitano said.

Democratic Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins slammed the plan, expressing frustration over “UC’s latest attempt to use students as bargaining chips.”

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“I am concerned that UC has lost sight of its mission to provide a high-quality education for the California students whose families built and pay for the university,” she said in a statement. “UC’s job is to educate California students, not wait-list them.”

In November, UC’s governing board approved a five-year tuition plan of 5 percent annual hikes that was meant in part to allow for enrollment growth of 1,000 California students a year. The move jeopardized a promised 4 percent budget increase from Brown that was contingent upon an extended tuition freeze.

University officials said Tuesday they could not be sure how much money UC would receive from the state next year. With so much uncertainty ahead of the March 31 admissions deadline, they said they decided to temporarily limit in-state enrollment and potentially admit more California students from the wait list later.

Atkins, who has pushed a budget plan to increase UC funding and avert a tuition hike, further criticized the university’s spending priorities and called their explanations “lackluster, at best.”

“California students and their families deserved to hear from President Napolitano what specifically among UC’s \$7 billion in existing resources, including overhead, executive compensation, housing and other perks, UC prioritizes over admitting California students and keeping their tuition at current levels,” she said.

UC will still increase the number of out-of-state and international students by up to 2,000 next year, a step that the university argues is financially necessary to support slots for in-state students.

“Even to maintain the current level of enrollment that we have of California students,” Napolitano said, “we either need to have additional money from the state or we need to have a certain number of out-of-state students.”

Driven by state budget cuts during the recession, UC has stepped up [recruiting outside California](#) in recent years, pulling in hundreds of millions of dollars annually from a \$23,000 supplemental fee paid by nonresident students.

The university says expanding out-of-state enrollment has supported about 7,500 slots for California students that the state never funded. But as nonresident enrollment has reached about 15 percent systemwide, and more than 20 percent at the flagship campuses in Berkeley and Los Angeles, UC has come under increasing criticism from those who believe the approach is squeezing out Californians.

Earlier Tuesday, Napolitano told The Sacramento Bee's editorial board that UC would cap out-of-state enrollment at its Berkeley and Los Angeles campuses next year. She did not mention the limit on California students or that overall nonresident enrollment would rise.

"It's good to have a mix of international and out-of-state students on the campuses. That's the world these students are going to graduate into," she said. "The question is how much of a good thing is it, and how much is an appropriate number?"

Napolitano said the university will impose a cap at Berkeley and UCLA because "that's really where the tension is greatest." Both campuses have become extremely competitive. Acceptance rates [dropped below 20 percent](#) for the first time last year as application numbers rose to another record.

"If we wanted to, we could make Berkeley and UCLA 50/50 (resident and nonresident), easily, just by snapping our fingers. The demand is that high," Napolitano said. "We don't want to do that."

In January, Brown added an [out-of-state enrollment cap](#) to his budget proposal. Since then, Napolitano and Brown have met several times as a "[committee of two](#)" to discuss the university's finances and the proposed tuition increase.

The meetings, which have also covered three-year degrees, a more robust summer session and an expansion of post-graduate online education, are going "well," Napolitano said.

Brown is "an interesting guy," she said. "He asks interesting questions. I ask interesting questions."

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