

LTCC board to vote on faculty raises

By Kathryn Reed

Faculty and some administrators at Lake Tahoe Community College are expected to see fatter paychecks.

The college board tonight is being asked to approve raises for full-time and adjunct faculty, as well as give one-time bonuses to three interim deans.

“Many employees on this campus work harder than they ever have because we have cut costs, reduced staffs, and combined job duties,” LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “They have done this repeatedly over the budget cuts, loss of (full-time equivalent students), and other issues, and we believe a 2 percent increase is reasonable and fair.”

The last raise for full-time instructors was in 2008. This salary increase is retroactive to July 1, 2014. The contract is for three years.

Scott Lukas, chair of the Faculty Academic Senate, told *Lake Tahoe News*, “We were interested in a raise that would get us to our comparable pay levels with the other schools in our small school list. The 2 percent that we agreed to was not at the level that we wanted, but I think that the district would not go anywhere above this 2 percent. So, in a sense, it was 2 percent or nothing.”

He said the union is not done with seeking salaries that are “fair compared to other schools”.

The salary boosts will cost LTCC about \$100,000 a year. With adjunct instructor numbers not constant, the savings will fluctuate.

"LTCC, as typical of many small districts, has some of the lowest salaries in the state, so we have to be very thoughtful about recruitment of employees overall. While these are very good salaries for our local area, they are not attractive statewide," Murillo said.

What remains to be seen is if this raise will do anything to improve morale at the South Lake Tahoe two-year school.

"I have heard that morale is low, but I would be wrong to comment on others and their perceptions. Probably, if I had to guess, this could relate to pay, increased workload, loss in benefits and the like," Lukas said. "The bottom line is that the faculty at LTCC are really great faculty and they deserve a fair salary."

One thing the faculty brought to the table is an early retirement incentive. For this to occur at least four people have to retire and there has to be a cost savings to the college.

Even though raises have not taken place for six years, negotiations have been ongoing, with changes to the faculty contract along the way.

"We moved our benefitted employees from 100 percent paid premier plan to a 100 percent standard plan that saved the district approximately \$200,000 for FY 2014-15, and will save the district in the future as health benefit costs continue to increase," Murillo said.

Because most employees are not full time they do not receive the health and welfare benefits.

In years past, the classified staff usually received what the faculty negotiated for. But a few years ago those workers formed a union. Negotiations with the Classified Employees Union have yet to begin.

In the next few months LTCC officials will be conducting meet and confer sessions with confidential classified, directors,

and administrators. Those first two groups don't have contracts, while administrator contracts are tailored to the individual.

Also on the Jan. 13 board agenda is an item to give Executive Dean of CTE & Instruction Virginia Boyar, interim Executive Dean of Student & Academic Support Services Suzanne Gochis, and interim Executive Dean of Instruction Michelle Risdon each an annual pay increase of \$10,000 effective Jan. 1.

These are one-time salary spikes to compensate the three for the added workload because the positions of vice president of Academic Affairs and Student Services and executive director of Institutional Research, Planning, and Advancement remain vacant.

The college is saving \$155,000, before bonuses for the deans, by not filling those jobs. But the plan is to eventually fill them.

"I plan on recruiting again (for the vice president job) once we finalize working on some issues around enrollment management, and the timing to recruit in the state system is right," Murillo explained. "There is going to be a lot of movement in administrators this year because of retirements and president openings. This movement will trickle down and it will play into our strategy for recruitment."