

LTCC tuition for some Nevadans to decrease

By Kathryn Reed

Tuition is going down at Lake Tahoe Community College for people who live on the Nevada side of the basin.

Known as the “good neighbor policy”, the legislation was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown this week. A few issues still need to be ironed out, but the hope is the new fees will be in place by winter quarter.

A similar law was signed by Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval in which California basin students may attend Western Nevada College in Carson City at a discounted rate.

Until 2011, there had been a policy in place that allowed Nevada basin residents to attend LTCC at California rates plus a small fee. Nevada did away with that law. Much of it had to do with politics, which is also the reason the two states took so long to come to another agreement.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo has been fighting to get the legislation back in place ever since arriving four years ago. She has had to contend with politicians believing Tahoe is full of rich kids, not realizing so many work multiple jobs and don't have the transportation to take higher education courses elsewhere.

“Another misconception out there is they think people just come to Lake Tahoe Community College to take PE classes,” Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. “When we ran the numbers of the students from Nevada they were truly students trying to get job skills, go to the fire academy, get bookkeeping skills or transfer to a four-year school. They were serious students.”

The new law is not as good as the old one. This one provides for a 45 percent discount to Nevada residents. The current California resident tuition is \$31 per unit, or \$1,395 for a full-time student per year. The current non-resident tuition is \$170 per unit, or \$7,650 for full time. That will be reduced to \$93 per unit, or \$4,185 to attend full time. That is a savings of \$77 per unit, or \$3,465 for full-time, year-round attendance.

The California Legislature had no appetite to go back to the original deal that would have made rates closer to what residents pay. State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-El Dorado, carried the legislation. Without the compromise of the higher tuition, it's likely there would have been no deal.

"The Tahoe basin is a single economy that is divided by a political boundary that is of little meaning to the people in the area, who may live in one state and work in the other, and who eat, shop and use amenities in both states. I'm pleased the governor signed the bill," Gaines told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It is a chance for California to improve the lives of the students and families of the Lake Tahoe Basin by making sure that all students get the best, most affordable education and work force training possible."

Each year since the good neighbor policy went away LTCC lost between 65 and 85 full-time equivalent students. This equates to more than 200 students per year because not everyone takes a full load.

How many students will take advantage of the new policy remains to be seen. LTCC will track those who enroll from Nevada to gauge the effectiveness of the legislation.