

April 20, 2001

State of Illinois
92nd General Assembly
Illinois State Legislator

Dear Sir or Madam:

We are writing you on behalf of the medical student body at the University of Illinois College of Medicine. This letter concerns recent tuition increases at the medical school in the past few years. While tuition increases per year are understandable, we have contention with the amount of increase and the rate of increase. We are also concerned with how these increases will affect decisions of future applicants. Lastly, it is alarming to discover that different classes within the UICOM system have been affected differently by this increase.

From approximately 1990 to 1993, tuition had remained around \$6,000. Over the past decade, UICOM tuition increased from \$8,998 to \$17,874 – a 197.7% increase. The UICOM administration has been unable to fully explain how the money is being allocated. Additionally, it was felt they did not sufficiently convey their reasons as to why the increases were implemented swiftly, and without adequate notification. The administration claims to have properly notified the students with a single letter sent a few months before the most recent increase took effect.

A meeting with the College Executive Committee revealed surprise amongst its members regarding the amount and rate of increase of tuition. This committee is comprised of deans of the College of Medicine, several faculty members, and the president of the University Medical Student Council that presides over all medical students at the UICOM. The members concluded that while they agree the tuition increases are necessary, \$2000 per year is too much of an increase. There was concern that if this continues, the UICOM might lose its financial advantage over private schools in the area.

A concern of students is that tuition increases will decrease the affordability of the UICOM, which is one of its main strengths. In the Liaison Committee on Medical Education accreditation report of 1994, students stated that “the cost of attending the UICOM [is] ranked as the most important factor in their decision to attend the UICOM.” According to UICOM administration in that same report, they state that “the university is committed to maintaining its solid record of applicant accessibility, regardless of an applicant’s financial resources.” Another concern of the medical students is how the tuition changes will affect UICOM’s diversity – which is probably its greatest strength. If tuition continues to escalate in this manner, the financial appeal of the UICOM will affect a less heterogeneous population of applicants. This will lead to a more

homogeneous composition of students. Several current medical students state that they decided to attend the UICOM directly due to its diversity.

Furthermore, these increases have disproportionately affected one class over another. Whereas one class has not seen an increase in tuition over its four years, another class has experienced a \$4000 increase and other classes experienced a \$2000 increase. While a student has autonomy in which medical school they wish to attend based on financial need, this is relinquished after matriculation. Therefore, if the tuition increases were kept constant across classes, this would be a more judicious policy.

In closing, this is a matter that concerns us greatly. We are approaching you in hopes that you will be able to address these concerns. One manner in which you can help would be to revisit the amount of money allocated to the UICOM per student per year by the State Legislature. The UICOM, in comparison with other public medical schools nationally, currently receives one of the lowest amounts of money per student per year from its state legislature. Increasing these monies would lessen the burden felt by the UICOM and in turn lessen the financial burden of its students. We truly hope you will be able to address and revamp these issues.

Signed,

Tuition Subcommittee
Chicago Medical Student Council