

SUFFOLK COUNTY

SCCC plans to freeze tuition for next year

Suffolk County Community College plans to freeze full-time student tuition at \$5,470 for county residents and reduce spending by \$7 million in response to the financial hardship the coronavirus shutdown has created for Long Islanders, college officials said.

The college's board of trustees on Thursday approved a \$213.3 million operating budget for 2020-2021, records show. This year's budget is \$221.5 million.

Officials are cutting expenses, leaving positions open and dipping into the reserve fund, said trustee chairman Chris Murray. Fees also will be frozen, board records show.

There are no plans for layoffs or furloughs for full-time employees, although there may be reductions in adjunct teaching positions, officials said.

"It's a hard time for every-

body," Murray said. "We wanted to be part of the solution in helping out our students in a difficult time."

Officials said they hope the tuition freeze will boost enrollment as students look for more affordable education options. But the budget projects a 7% enrollment decrease, based on trends in recent years and the shutdown's expected impact on student finances, said Mark Harris, vice president for business and financial affairs.

Revenues are projected to fall by \$11.4 million next year because of enrollment declines and lower state aid, Harris said. Reserves will cover a likely \$7 million deficit, he said.

Faculty and staff still are expected to get contractual raises, college officials said.

The Legislature is expected to vote on the college budget next month. — RACHELLE BLIDNER

