

# *Cost of college health insurance rising*

*InsuranceTimes*™ Copyright © by M&S Communications, Inc. June 24, 2003, Vol. XXIII, No. 13

BOSTON (AP) —The cost of a college education in Massachusetts may be on the rise as schools across the state plan to increase student health insurance costs this fall by up to 60 percent.

Officials say universities are trying to keep up with rising health care costs due to costlier prescription drugs, medical tests and hospital visits. The state requires every full-time student to be insured.

At Harvard University, health insurance costs will increase to \$1,196 this fall, 59 percent more than the last academic year, according to a memo from Ann Berman, vice president of finance, to student deans. A mandatory health services fee will also rise 12 percent to cover the costs of campus health centers and student prescription drug plans.

Harvard students who opt for the university health plan will pay \$560 dollars more. That includes 45 percent of undergraduates and 75 percent of graduate students.

To ease students' financial burden, Harvard is setting up a "hardship fund," to be distributed on a case-by-case basis next year to students who qualify for assistance, according to Berman's memo.

Similar increases are in store for students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where they will pay \$1,440 for the extended university health plan, 60 percent more than last year.

But graduate students will get higher stipends and financial aid will absorb the increase for undergraduates, MIT spokesman Ken Campbell said.

"Initially when the announcement was made, a lot of people were very concerned," said R. Erich Caulfield, president of MIT's Graduate Student Council, but financial help from the school calmed many of those fears.

About four out of five graduate students and two out of five undergraduates are enrolled this year in MIT's student plan. Graduate students with stipends will get \$30 more each month, meaning the net increase is 20 percent or \$180 a year, Caulfield said.

Suffolk University and Northeastern University in Boston both face 14 percent increases this fall, to \$899 and \$1,238, respectively, school officials said.

In the University of Mass. system, costs will rise 10 to 14 percent, said Bill Wright, a spokesman for UMass. At the Boston campus, students in the optional health insurance plan will pay \$79 more next year. Students at UMass-Lowell will pay \$104 more. □