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By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

- Leader & Times

Obamacare: one either despises it or loves it.

However, Seward County Community College is maintaining a level of neutrality.

“Generally speaking, we’re going to have no effect simply because of the way we are set up with our program. At worst case scenario, it could cost us maybe \$13,000 in increased premiums that we would pay,” Director of Finance and Operations Dennis M. Sander said, “but that’s worst case scenario.

“It has a lot to do with how the college set up their program a number of years ago and how we approach paying our premiums for our employees.

“We pay for a single plan as a part of our benefit package for anyone who has 30 hours or more on a 40 hour week basis,” he said.

With businesses choosing to lay off their workers rather than cut back on hours, how would employment levels at SCCC be affected?

“No, it won’t make any changes,” Director of Human Resources Deb Weilert said.

“Absolutley not,” Sander added.

The college is doing its homework, according to Sander.

“Well mostly, the biggest preparation is that we do our homework and our research to understand what it is, because quite frankly, it’s one of these things that’s evolving and we all know that legislation is not complete.

“So for us the biggest challenge is that we keep up with that and make certain that we’re within compliant. And the other part, too, if we’re seeing it will affect us significantly financially, then at that point we determine if we need to make a change or an action to medicate that,” he said.

According to Weilert, Obamacare has a number of positives for SCCC.

“They are not going to have pre-existing so there won’t be a — someone with an existing disease or illness or something will not have a pre-existing. People that come in with asthma won’t have to wait to get coverage,” Weilert said.

“They can get coverage on everything but that pre-existing condition, so if you have asthma you have to wait 90 days, July 1 of next year, because our plan we won’t have to worry about that,” she said.

Sander stated, “The two things that I hear, I think from an employee stand point, that’s a positive for us.

“And the other part is the fact that this is a real thing in today’s society – that the age level has increased from 23 to 26 for coverage.

“It is harder today for independence because of the economy, jobs aren’t really available and people coming out of college do have a hard time getting a job so it’s good that they’re able to have health benefit coverage for a couple years to kind of get that job,” he said.

Weilert added, “Right, but sometimes they even get that first job maybe part-time just to get stepping through the door and they don’t have coverage, at least their parent can cover them. That’s a good thing.”

The college focuses on a good health insurance program, according to Sander.

“For us, I think the big thing about the college, in comparison to some other organizations in town, businesses is that the health insurance the family could be a tough pill to swallow as far as premium.

“We do have a good – what we consider a strong health insurance program that’s benefit rich, if you will, and that’s part of our compensation.

“And so over the years that’s been kind of a focus for us. We had this opportunity to take advantage and to see the positive parts of the Healthcare Act.

“If we weren’t, let’s say we had a different – if our salaries were much higher and better benefits were low, then this would be an issue.

“This would definitely be a cost issue, so given that, and I understand why other organizations have to do what they have to do financially, but it’s one of those things how you approach your benefit package, your whole compensation package.

“It’s kind of luck of the draw as far as how the whole Healthcare Act affects you,” he said.

The college will not see a major change from daily operations, according to Weilert.

“For the college, we will just continue to stay in compliance. I don’t really see too much of a change from daily operations than at what we are already at.

“With healthcare, I can’t even take a guess, because the guidelines aren’t there and the legislature just keeps fighting,” she said.

Sander said, “That’s exactly my point, what we were talking about earlier in what we foresee. Well heck, they don’t know what they foresee. Perhaps, if – well we don’t want to get on bandwagon on it, but at the same time we’re not coming out of this pro or con essentially.”

“No,” Weilert said in agreement.

Sander continued, “We’re kind of neutral simply because of the fact that we’re in good position, but with regard to seeing the future, we are fully aware that something could happen that all of a sudden we do have a financial issue on our hands or in compliance something that would affect us going forward. But that’s simply again because of the fact that legislation is fluid. It’s not there black and white.”

Weilert added, “We’re still waiting on guidelines on certain things.”

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