

From the *Tallahassee Democrat*

Unpaid furloughs a possibility for Florida State University workers

BY DOUG BLACKBURN • DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER • APRIL 11, 2009

Florida State administrators for the first time are talking publicly about the possibility of furloughs as the university braces for massive reductions in state revenue.

FSU is already planning to begin the 2009-10 school year with a \$35 million cut in state revenue, but Provost Larry Abele believes the actual reduction will be far greater — with grave ramifications for faculty and staff.

"Because we are a public entity, we are legally allowed to do furloughs one day per pay period," Abele said. "We're talking about one day a week for some people, all the way down to no days a week."

Music professor Jayne Standley is president of FSU's Faculty Senate and is also a member of the university's budget crisis committee, established in November. She and her colleagues much prefer furloughs to layoffs, she said, noting that the 30-1 faculty-student ratio at FSU is already much higher than the 18-1 average at their competition.

"Furloughs have been discussed along with many, many options," Standley said. "Consistently the faculty are saying they would rather have furloughs than have layoffs."

"We've already cut \$25 million from the budget, which is the entire size of the general revenue for Tallahassee Community College," she added. "There's nothing to be cut but the absolute meat and bone of the university, so this is a very critical time."

When the Legislature reconvenes next week the House and Senate higher education appropriations committees will begin meeting in conference. According to the House figures, FSU would receive a 25.5-percent reduction in general revenue compared to 2008-09, while the Senate budget calls for a 9.9-percent reduction.

Abele believes neither budget is realistic, and doesn't know if the university will learn what the actual figure will be much before the May 1 end of the session.

As a result, FSU President T.K. Wetherell has scheduled a town hall meeting for April 21 to tell students and staff what the university knows at that point, and what it is planning for the future.