

From the *Tallahassee Democrat*

FSU, FAMU feel sting of cutbacks

BY DOUG BLACKBURN • DEMOCRAT SENIOR WRITER • MAY 10, 2009

While the budget for Florida's State University System increased by \$22 million for the coming fiscal year, officials at the individual institutions are feeling bruised and battered.

Florida State will get \$43 million less in general revenue for the coming school year, while Florida A&M is looking at a \$16.2 million cut. These reductions come on the heels of two consecutive years of cutbacks from the Legislature.

Each school is scheduled to receive federal stimulus money — \$21 million for FSU, \$7.5 million for FAMU — provided the state's waiver is granted, but this leaves both universities preparing for major changes.

At FSU, 332 administrative, faculty and staff members are likely to be laid off during the next two years, according to Provost Larry Abele, while some departments or majors may be eliminated.

FSU President T.K. Wetherell has been holding one-on-one discussions with trustees, who are expected to review and approve a three-year budget when they meet June 17.

FSU is planning to use stimulus money to cover salaries of employees who have been given one year's notice.

"We're going to use it to spread the cuts over three years," Abele said. "It will be used to keep people employed in the hope that things turn around."

Stimulus money will also be used to give programs such as the Ringling Museum in Sarasota and FSU's campus in Panama City time to develop independent funding sources to prevent their closure.

"We need them to be self-supporting," Wetherell said. "We're going to go to Panama City and Sarasota and tell them we can get you three years down the road, but in three years it isn't going to be the same way it used to be."

The Board of Governors' budget increased because it includes money for two new medical schools and a new campus in Lakeland, among other items.

"When you add them in it looks like the universities got a lot of money, but there's no money there," Wetherell said. "The BOG is looking at the system, and they're adding in tuition numbers that aren't accurate, and they know it."

BOG spokesman Bill Edmonds said the numbers the board uses are those provided by the Legislature. The Legislature's budget shows FSU bringing in \$21.4 million in tuition for the 2009-10 school year, while FSU's own tuition numbers total less than \$5 million.

This year's massive reductions in general revenue put FSU's cumulative cutback at \$81.5 million since the start of the 2007-08 school year.

"What's happening is, it's not one day 10,000 people are going to jump in a car and drive away," Abele said. "We're going to bleed little by little.

"It's not just us — it's the entire state."

At FAMU, President Ammons is preparing for an emergency session with the university's board of trustees later this month where options such as furloughs and layoffs will be discussed.

"We're going to be a a little different university than we are today because of these cuts," he said.

There are already fewer course selections at FAMU, Ammons noted, with more students than planned in individual classes. Summer school, which begins on Monday, will operate on a four-day school week instead of the traditional five days.

"Our campus community is in ongoing discussions. We're all engaged in dialogue," Ammons said. "How we are going to realign our university to meet the demands we're going to have in the coming year weighs heavily on all of us."

Ammons also noted that, similar to FSU, the Legislature's tuition figures for FAMU are far more generous than the university's numbers.

"They have projected full payment from every student," he said. "But as you know, when you do projections, sometimes they're different from reality."

Meanwhile, Tallahassee Community College was essentially spared in the budget the Legislature passed Friday. Its \$29.8 million budget was cut by less than \$200,000.

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