

From the *Tallahassee Democrat*

Testimony continues in arbitration hearing over FSU faculty layoffs

By Angeline J. Taylor • DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER • May 15, 2010

Elizabeth Peters, an associate anthropology professor at Florida State University, questioned during the second day of an arbitration hearing between FSU's faculty and administrators why she and her colleagues were laid off.

On Friday, Peters said they were told they were laid off because of budget cuts. The anthropology department is being abolished, according to testimony.

"We produce a lot of credit hours, and we're a low-budget department," said Peters, the 14th person to testify over the two days. "We're the second most cost-effective department in the college."

More than a dozen tenured faculty members at FSU are fighting for their jobs.

They say administrators violated as many as 12 articles of a collective-bargaining agreement between FSU's Board of Trustees and the United Faculty of Florida union. Faculty members filed a grievance, which led to the two-day hearing.

FSU general counsel Betty Steffens said layoffs were "regrettable" but necessary because of budget cuts. She maintained that the bargaining agreement was followed.

During cross-examination of Peters, Carolyn Egan, FSU's associate general counsel, asserted that Peters hadn't done any research since 2000. Peters agreed.

Egan was expected to call her first witness Friday. But arbitrator Stanley Sergent said FSU's attorneys will likely need one to two days to present their case, so he postponed the remainder of the hearing. A date has not been set.

"This is a complex case with a lot of evidence," he said.

Sergent said it usually takes him about 30 days to make a decision after a case closes.