



USF To Cut 450 Jobs; Majors Safe In Budget

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TAMPA - With a warning that class sizes will enlarge and course offerings will tighten, the University of South Florida announced plans Wednesday to cut \$50.4 million by eliminating about 450 jobs.

Calling the move "the most severe budget reduction USF has seen," university President Judy Genshaft said USF plans to lay off 70 employees in the coming weeks; the rest of the eliminated jobs are vacant. USF employs about 13,250 workers.

The cuts reflect a current deficit of nearly \$36 million, a result of diminished state aid in a weakened economy. The remaining \$15 million will be set aside in anticipation of another state cut in the middle of the school year.

At the university's Tampa campus - it is USF's largest with 38,000 students - academic operations, health sciences and other departments will be cut by \$42.5 million. Officials will cut some of that by streamlining administration, but they plan to eliminate 170 open faculty positions.

"As a result, the number of students in classes will continue to increase," Genshaft said in several meetings Wednesday with faculty, student leaders and trustees. "The array of classes offered and number of sections will continue to be reduced."

Even so, the university won't lay off tenured faculty, or those who are on track to be tenured, Genshaft said. The university froze all hiring in January to prepare for the cuts, though many faculty members have left since then.

Most of the layoffs will fall on support staff and administrators. Only seven faculty members not on track toward tenure will be laid off.

Keeping Majors; Shrinking Staff

USF also won't eliminate any degree offerings or majors, a prospect many faculty and students had feared in recent weeks. Some smaller departments, however, will lose some of their support staff and will have to share resources with other programs.

Such instability has many academics fearing a loss of faculty to other colleges and universities

that aren't experiencing the same turmoil. Kim Vaz, chairwoman of USF's women's studies program, said one of her instructors is being courted by another college, and another wants to be transferred to another department.

"I don't even know who my faculty will be next year," said Vaz, whose program will begin sharing resources with other departments.

With diminished programs and services, students will find longer lines throughout campus, particularly as they wait for academic advisers. The university didn't fill jobs left open when advisers left.

Students also will find academic buildings closed late at night. The university wants to close the buildings to save energy costs and increase security. As a trade-off, the university will extend the hours and boost security at the library and the Marshall Center student union.

That leaves student leaders worried about student life.

With larger class sizes and fewer course offerings, the university will have to enhance student services, not reduce them, said Greg Morgan, USF's recently elected student body president.

A Trail of Cuts

The cuts are just the first stage of a cost-cutting plan administrators are undertaking before they deliver the 2008-09 budget to their Board of Trustees next month.

USF already has cut nearly \$17 million this fiscal year from the pot of money it gets from the state; it's cutting \$19 million from the fiscal year that starts July 1. State revenue collections have fallen, leaving lawmakers to slash nearly \$4 billion from education, health care, public safety and other areas statewide.

Universities throughout Florida are feeling the pain as well. The University of Florida, the state's flagship university, recently announced it is cutting \$47 million from its budget. It is doing so by cutting nearly 430 jobs.

State revenue projections continue to fall, so USF is planning cautiously by cutting a total \$50.4 million, which amounts to 15 percent of the money it gets from the state.

"We truly hope 15 percent is enough," Genshaft said. "It may not be."

In addition to cuts, USF is searching for ways to save money. Administrators put a stop to all spending on "non-essential services" and are working to reorganize various departments. Officials will reinvest whatever savings they find in academics.

The university also will close its buildings the last full week of December, which will require employees to take three of their annual leave days. That saves the university on energy costs and on annual leave payouts to employees when they leave the school, said Michael Hoad, USF's spokesman.

Many faculty members, however, said there is one source of money at USF's disposal that

can soften the blow of budget cuts.

They point to assets the university classifies as "unrestricted" and argue that administrators can use that money to preserve some jobs and services, or at least afford laid-off employees more time to look for employment.

By the end of the 2006-07 fiscal year, USF had about \$240 million in these assets.

Genshaft said that much of that money was committed to other projects, but said about \$70 million carried over to this fiscal year as cash. But that amounts to an average month of payroll and other expenses, Genshaft said, and the USF board wants at least one month of cash reserved for emergencies.

The problem also comes from using one-time cash to pay salaries that require the recurring dollars that have been cut, USF Provost Ralph Wilcox said.

"Available cash doesn't really help," he said.

Money 'Could Buy Time'

That money, though, could be useful to employees forced to leave, said Susan Greenbaum, a professor of anthropology and a former Faculty Senate president.

"This could buy time," Greenbaum said.

Lay-off notices will be sent out the first week of June, and affected employees will have between 45 and 90 days to leave the university, depending on their status. The university also will help them find other work, Genshaft said.

Not all may permanently lose their jobs, Wilcox said. Some may be hired in another capacity. Others may be needed to fill positions left after people retire.

The university also will use its one-time cash to hire visiting faculty needed to teach courses in the fall, Genshaft said.

While most of the cost-cutting moves will fill the deeper budget hole at the Tampa campus, the university system's regional campuses also will feel the brunt.

A 15 percent budget reduction to USF St. Petersburg adds up to \$4.2 million. For USF Polytechnic, formerly USF Lakeland, the cuts total \$1.5 million.

About \$2.2 million will be cut from USF Sarasota-Manatee. Jobs at these campuses will be cut mostly through attrition.

Genshaft also said that she is cutting nearly \$1 million from her executive offices. She told the board that she and her vice presidents will forgo raises, although the amount of money that would save the university was unclear Wednesday.

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