

I don't how many of you saw or heard this story last night and this morning. But this is from the Digital Missourian this morning. I am sending a message to the Provost to see if he knows anything more. (The Chancellor is away from campus at the moment.) If I hear anything I will pass it on.

--kathleen

Budget woes hit UM hard

- Officials weigh the option of closing one UM system campus if the budget problems continue.

By ASHLEY HAYNES, Missourian staff

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Further cuts to the University of Missouri system could force it to close of one of its four campuses, UM president Manuel Pacheco said Thursday.

The announcement, first made during a meeting of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education, came in response to a 10 percent reduction in the system's budget for the next fiscal year, in addition to \$80 million in withholdings in the current fiscal year.

"We are on the verge of the dismantling of higher education for Missouri in the way that we've understood it in the past," Pacheco said in an interview following the meeting.

Pacheco said no plans have been made, but he has identified closing a campus as "a real and practical solution."

"It's one of the considerations we have to give if the budget withholdings deteriorate in a year or so or if we face additional withholdings," said Pacheco.

Program eliminations and consolidations will be considered before shutting down a campus, he said.

When determining which campus would close, Pacheco said the effect of closure on surrounding communities would be taken into consideration. He said maintaining research and graduate programs would be a priority, while possibilities for consolidation of activities from one campus to another would be explored.

"We need to keep the current levels of our programs but we cannot with more cuts," Pacheco said.

UM Board of Curators President John A. Mathes said he supports Pacheco's efforts to draw attention to the seriousness of the system's financial situation.

"It is never easy to make cuts," Mathes said. "If we don't turn this around, significant changes may happen in the period when existing students will be around to witness these changes."

Pacheco said he has had little response to his letters to Gov. Bob Holden and other state leaders alerting them to the system's problems.

"The state government is self-congratulatory in thinking that they can cut state appropriations and come out of the budget session with minor damage," Pacheco said.

Jerry Nachtigal, Holden's spokesman, said the governor has spoken with Pacheco and the presidents of all other public colleges and universities about the higher education cuts.

"The governor said from day one that elementary and secondary education was his top priority because it's the foundation of the state's entire educational system," Nachtigal said. "If you don't have a solid base for higher education in Missouri, it becomes immaterial."

Nachtigal said the anger expressed by those in the higher education community is because of the most recent withholdings, which Holden attempted to avoid by using the rainy day fund. House Republicans opposed the plan.

Rep. Chuck Graham, D-Columbia, said that legislators understand the situation and are facing the same frustrations as Pacheco.

“We are all in this together and, instead of pointing fingers at each other, I want leaders to sit down and work through this,” Graham said.

-Kathleen