

MIZZOU

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Around the Columns

Budget picture starts to come into focus

At press time, early indications were that MU's budget gap for fiscal 2012 will be considerable.

In January, Gov. Jay Nixon's proposed budget for next fiscal year, which starts July 1, included a 7 percent reduction in state funds for higher education. Also in January, the University of Missouri Board of Curators approved MU's request to raise tuition 6.5 percent, the university's first tuition increase in three years.

The bottom line? A projected shortfall of \$21 million for the 2011–12 school year.

"Cuts will have to be made, expenses will have to be reduced, positions will have to be frozen to balance the budget," says Tim Rooney, MU's budget officer.

The actual budget gap will depend on three variables. First, lawmakers will have to agree not to cut higher education funding by more than what Nixon has proposed. Second, under the provisions of SB 389, the proposed tuition increase will require approval from the Missouri Department of Higher Education. And third, the projected shortfall includes a 2 percent salary increase for faculty and staff; curators won't take that up until they meet in Rolla, Mo., March 21–22.






“Our faculty and staff have continued to work diligently, taking on extra duties and responsibilities during the past two years despite receiving no pay increases,” says MU Chancellor Brady J. Deaton. “A top priority this year as we plan the budget is to ensure that faculty and staff receive pay increases.”

Meanwhile, MU Provost Brian Foster has returned \$4 million from the Mizzou Advantage initiative to the campus’s general operating budget. The money — a one-time transfer — is savings generated largely by delaying new faculty hires that would have been funded by Mizzou Advantage, as well as a delay in funding graduate assistant and professional development awards.

Half of the \$4 million will be used to bolster financial aid, which suffered a funding gap due to increased enrollments last fall. The other \$2 million will be used to offset some of the projected 2012 shortfall.

“We do not see these savings as ultimately damaging Mizzou Advantage,” Foster says. “Nevertheless, more savings will be needed, and all areas of the university are being scrutinized for potential contributions.”

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