LSU plans to lay off 24

LSU System proposed job reductions
Furloughs set, vacant jobs cut

- By JORDAN BLUM
- Advocate Capitol News Bureau
- Published: Jul 16, 2009 - Page: 1A

The flagship LSU campus is only planning to lay off 24 employees because of state budget cuts to colleges.

Another 176 vacant positions are also being axed, according to revised budget plans released Wednesday.

The campus has almost 3,300 employees. But nearly half could face furloughs — mandatory time off without pay.

The LSU Board of Supervisors meets today to approve or reject the budget plans submitted by the LSU System’s five academic campuses, medical schools, law school, biomedical research center and agricultural center.

Nearly 600 positions would be slashed systemwide, up from last week’s estimate of more than 400. Since then, the main LSU campus and the University of New Orleans submitted additional job vacancy eliminations.

LSU Chancellor Michael Martin had said last week he anticipated about 100 layoffs.
In the revised budget plan, Martin says the budget cut “effectively erases” the funding increase given to LSU two years ago.

The main campus is managing to only lay off 24 employees by implementing furlough plans for 1,700 employees. The move does not affect tenure-track faculty.

The Baton Rouge campus is coping with a nearly $20 million cut, about a 9 percent decrease in state funds. That does not count more than $8 million already slashed in January.

Gov. Bobby Jindal and the Legislature worked out a last-minute compromise that was finalized June 25 to limit the budget cuts so colleges could downsize more slowly, preparing for more budget reductions projected through 2012.

Martin, who proposed the furlough, has not seen eye-to-eye on the policy with LSU System President John Lombardi, who has called furloughs a quick fix that fails to solve long-term financial problems.

Lombardi has not openly rejected the furlough plan though and the Board of Supervisors will have the final say today. The LSU flagship is the only LSU campus opting for a widespread furlough plan.

“I’m studying it now,” said LSU Board Chairman Jim Roy on Wednesday when asked about the budget plans. “I’m doing my homework for tomorrow’s (today’s) test.”

Martin did not respond to a request for additional comment Wednesday.

The LSU Staff Senate supports the furlough plan, according to LSU’s budget plan. Employees making less than $30,000 would not be furloughed. Others, depending on their pay scale, would be furloughed 35 to 69 hours, the equivalent of 2 to 4 percent of annual salaries.

Martin placed an emphasis on the academic core by protecting that 35 percent of the university’s total operating budget.

No tenure-track faculty are losing jobs, but a few instructors and part-time adjuncts would. Also, close to 70 vacant faculty positions on the main campus would be eliminated. The 70 position cuts include several associated with LSU’s Multidisciplinary Hiring Initiative focused on hiring clusters of faculty centered on a handful of nationally prominent faculty.

The biggest single cut at LSU is to the Center for Advanced Microstructures and Devices on Jefferson Highway, which would take a 58 percent or $3 million cut. Half of the 24 layoffs would be at CAMD.

Ancillary units being cut by 20 percent include the LSU Press, LSU Museum of Art, Rural Life Museum and the Southern Review.

Individual academic colleges would be cut from 2 to 5 percent.
The end result would be some larger class sizes and fewer class options and electives offered, according to the budget plan.

Fewer graduate assistant jobs would be available for students, and the LSU Library would shorten some of its weekend hours.

The LSU School of the Coast and Environment reported that fewer resources would be available for critical coastal restoration projects.

LSU’s recruiting office would have to close its Dallas office, hampering student recruiting in Texas, which is a growing LSU market.