



PERFECT FISCAL STORM

Budget cuts at Texas Tech University have raised several questions and concerns amongst faculty and students. Some faculty members at Texas Tech are concerned with keeping their jobs, and students are worried about the cost of tuition going up.

In February 2011, Guy Bailey, president of Texas Tech, held a town meeting on Texas Tech campus to discuss the budget cuts with the Lubbock and Texas Tech communities. There were some concerns as to how it would affect the students graduation track, and if the Texas Tech administration was going to consider how it would affect students and not just the budget.

“I have taken out student loans, and if tuition goes up, I’ll have to take out more loans, which would mean it would take me longer to pay them back,” said Chad Pesek, a junior majoring in chemical engineering at. “I work full-time and go to school full-time, but I still find time to enjoy myself. I know I’ll be paying back student loans even when I graduate, but, it will be worth it in the end to have a college degree.”

According to Conrad Lyrford, an associate professor in agricultural and applied economics at Texas Tech, one faculty member in the department resigned to take another position outside Texas Tech.

“At the current moment, the position will not be filled in by someone else,” Lyrford said.

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) at Texas Tech has many contracts with the Texas Department of Agriculture for research, and the future of those contracts is unknown.

“Some of our contracts expire at the end of the year and some of them will probably not be renewed,” said Lyrford.

Governor Rick Perry made the proposal of putting a \$10,000 cap on Bachelor degrees, and put a four-year freeze

on tuition for freshmen. “To me, that’s not a well thought out policy,” said Lyrford. “A portion of tuition goes toward faculty salary, and it would not make things better. It would be nice if it could be that simple, to make college more affordable for the students.”

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Recruiting new students, however, is not expected to be an issue with the budget cuts.

“Ever since we have been in this recession, more students are going back to school to get a higher paying job,” Lyrford said. “Gaining more students isn’t something that is a concern.”

Kent Hance, Chancellor of Texas Tech, addressed the issue recruiting students in *The Daily Toreador* in February 2011.

“Efforts are still underway to reach 40,000 students at Texas Tech by 2020, and provide high-quality education and innovative research,” said Hance. “However, doing so without adequate state funding will not be possible. Reductions need to be applied across all state agencies and higher education in Texas needs to remain accessible and affordable, in order to produce graduates who pay taxes and create jobs.”

Hance also addressed the issue of student enrollment and faculty and staff positions.

“Faculty and staff positions will be closely evaluated, and less state funding could result in limiting overall student enrollment,” said Hance. “Class sizes will increase, and the proposed reductions in student financial aid are also unsettling.”

“If some faculty members are cut, then the classes they taught would either be split amongst the remaining faculty, or the classes would no longer be taught,” said Lyrford. “It all comes down to either spending more time in the classroom and less research, or spend more time doing research with less classes available and less student involvement. It’s a position we hope not to be in.”

According to the Baylor Lariat, Bailey said Texas Tech was not notified of the budget cuts until the middle of the biennium in the spring, and the cuts for the next biennium are still undetermined. He also said cuts are being taken out of education and general revenue, which makes up 32 percent of Texas Tech’s budget. Faculty also has more work since the student-teacher ratio has risen from 20:1 to 23:1.

Bailey said there is not a hiring freeze, but, every position is closely evaluated to make sure there is not a hire then fire. Various faculty and administration members at Texas Tech were put into a budget-working group to evaluate proposed recommendations as to how Texas Tech can balance its budget. More than 41 recommendations are under review and Bailey does not believe all of them will be put into effect.

There are projects that Texas Tech is involved in, that still bring money to the school. According to the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal* in February 2011, a state health task force will award

Texas Tech nearly \$600,000 for two cancer prevention projects. Texas Tech also partnered with United Supermarkets to promote healthy eating habits, and will get their first grant of \$295,000. A second, \$299,000 grant will train physicians to counsel patients who want to quit smoking about successful programs.

“That is a project that lets faculty continue high quality research,” said Lyrford. “Once the budget has been adjusted, the faculty and staff members will have a better idea on how to plan, while still providing a high quality education.”

Efforts continue as Texas Tech tries to lessen the blow to the budget and keep on track towards Tier 1 status. Bailey said Texas Tech has done current-year fiscal reductions of 5 percent and an additional 3 percent to accommodate Texas Tech’s budget. The budget cuts have not taken into affect at the time of this article. **T**

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