

Slippery Rock University facing \$10 million deficit, possible layoffs

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Slippery Rock University is in danger of a \$10 million deficit and layoffs for the 2014-15 school year, administrators warned.

"We've always managed to find ways to save \$2 million, \$3 million, \$4 million," said university spokesman Karl Schwab, citing utility reductions and other costs management measures in the past. "But now we've done all that, it's the end of the line. Now it's finding what you have to do to save \$10 million, and that's a big, big chunk of money."

University President Cheryl Norton last week presented the university's financial forecast to the board of trustees and blamed a growing deficit on decreasing enrollment, stagnant state funding and rising costs, including contracted salaries and employee health care.

All university divisions are being asked to cut operating costs by 9 percent, according to the university.

Schwab said that only one professor took a voluntary layoff, which the university is calling "retrenchment." Eight other employees moved into other positions once others retired or left the university.

Norton in September said the university, with nearly 8,700 students, could run up a cumulative deficit of nearly \$29 million by fiscal year 2015-16. She said this year's freshman class is 8 percent smaller than the previous year's. She expects that trend to continue.

Norton asked faculty and staff members and students to submit ideas on how to cut costs.

Some of the ideas have been implemented, Schwab said, including "Fleece Friday," in which those on campus are encouraged to wear sweaters or heavier clothing as heat is turned down in buildings to save on utility costs. Other ideas are still being examined.

Slippery Rock's financial woes aren't unique among the 14 schools in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

Edinboro in October said that it would cut about 40 faculty positions, and Clarion University said it would cut nearly 40 jobs and several bachelor's degree programs.

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