



Rutgers Council of AAUP Chapters

American Association of University Professors - American Federation of Teachers

Greetings,

We've all heard rumors and read press accounts about how the current state budget crisis might affect Rutgers and our working lives. It's important for all of us to keep track of the facts and remember that the state budget, or the Rutgers budget for that matter, is not yet finalized.

Indeed, the budget process has only just begun.

We have legally binding contracts with Rutgers that we will always fight to enforce and we can make our case--and show our strength--to legislators over the next few months for a better budget that invests in higher education and respects the work we do, especially in these difficult times. Here is an overview of the budget situation that "follows the money":

Federal Stimulus Funds for New Jersey

\$1.3 Billion is on its way to New Jersey from the federal government as part of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF). 82% of that money is authorized to support education--elementary, secondary and higher education. The AFT, one of our national union affiliates, was the main advocate for expanding the education funding to include higher education.

The Governor's proposed budget uses only 2.5% of the SFSF for higher education, but we can work with the legislature to help fill most or all of the gaps in state aid. At the time of the Governor's budget address, the federal rules on the SFSF were not available. We can work with our national union to review the rules and track the federal dollars to make sure that their intended destination (including protecting jobs and research in higher education) is indeed their final destination.

In addition to the SFSF, the federal government is increasing federal research funding and Pell grants for students. These are additional sources of revenue for the university. The Administration should also be working with partners in the community to take advantage of other sources of federal stimulus aid.

State Budget

The Governor's proposed budget includes a reduction of \$15.5 million in state aid to Rutgers. Since Rutgers employees are not direct state employees (the University is our employer of record for our contracts), the Governor cannot unilaterally claim the authority to freeze pay or push through furloughs for AAUP-AFT or Union of Rutgers Administrators (URA-AFT) members.

It's important to remember this State budget is still just a proposal--there will not be a final budget in place until July 1, which gives us plenty of time to engage with the Governor and the legislature through budget hearings, legislative visits on campuses, and other ways (see below). We have the time and the strength to make sure our elected officials make the right choice and invest in higher education to enable faculty and staff to provide great research, training and education to help our state in the current economic turmoil.

Rutgers Budget

There has been a lot of discussion about what Rutgers "must" do. The important thing to remember is that there are many, many options for the University to honor its contracts with our unions, protect access to quality education, and move forward as a top-tier research institution. Even in the current budget proposal from the Governor, there is increased support for student aid that will help the University's budget.

Also, 75% of Rutgers funding does not come from direct state aid, so that leaves many ways for Rutgers to honor its commitments and meet the priorities of the institution. This will require much more transparency and disclosure from the University, something that has been sorely lacking. **One option that the University *does not have* is the right to unilaterally alter pay, benefits or work schedules of its unionized employees.** We will work with the administration to find the best route forward, but it will require a much more serious and open approach from them to work toward a fair way to serve students and respect the work we do.

What You Can Do

1. Come to the Board of Governors Meeting on Thursday, April 2 at 9:30 AM. We will send the message that we expect a fair and open process for dealing with the University's budget. The BOG meets at Winants Hall, 7 College Avenue, New Brunswick, on the College Avenue Campus.

2. Save the date to attend a Legislative Breakfast from 8-9:30 AM:

Wednesday, April 8--Rider University
 Tuesday, April 14--Rowan University
 Wednesday, April 15--Newark Campus
 Tuesday, April 21--New Brunswick Campus

3. Sign up to participate in a "Legislative Campus Tour" to show legislators what we do and why it is important for the state to invest in Rutgers by highlighting your own work and the work of your department.

4. Join a delegation of union members who will meet with legislators in district offices and in Trenton

5. Email Governor Corzine to insist on the right choices for New Jersey education. Here's a link to the governor's web form:

<http://www.state.nj.us/governor/about/contact/>

[Note: The original link was discovered to no longer be functional on April 22, 2009. The old link was: <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.html>]

6. Respond to our targeted Action Alert messages as needed during the budget process.

7. Send us a testimonial on the impact of the budget cuts on your department, your research, or your students. We will share it with legislators when we meet them in the different forums listed above.

Your involvement can make a difference. Contact the AAUP-AFT at aaup@rutgersaaup.org or (732) 964-1000 to confirm your participation in each of these activities.

Sincerely,

Lisa C. Klein
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