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# State budget cuts to affect Virginia Tech and Radford University

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Posted: Wednesday, September 10, 2014 11:45 pm

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As boards of visitors prepare to meet later this month at Radford University and Virginia Tech, higher education officials once again must find a way to deal with cuts in their state funding.

[The cuts, announced recently by Gov. Terry McAuliffe's office](#), were necessitated by an estimated \$2.4 billion shortfall in the Virginia budget and will have short- and long-term consequences, university officials say.

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This year, Tech will lose \$7.8 million from its education and general fund, rising to a total of \$10.9 million by 2016. That equals about 2 percent of the entire education operation, according to an internal university memo signed by Tech President Timothy Sands.

Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station, which is based at Tech but is technically a separate state agency, will lose a total of \$2.3 million between now and the next fiscal year. That equals 3 percent of extension's total budget, which is mostly funded by the state.

In the short term, few day-to-day effects will be felt at Tech, university spokesman Larry Hincker said.

No layoffs are expected at this point, and students are unlikely to notice any budget-related changes, this year anyway, according to Hincker.

But the cuts required by the state are significant, even to such a large enterprise as Tech, Hincker added.

To offset the reductions this year, the memo stated that administrators would handle the cuts through administrative actions. Hincker clarified that Tech's central office will look at ways to shift revenues and expenses to temporarily cover the loss.

But, according to Sands' memo, administrators will have to look at making judicial, targeted cuts over the next couple of years to balance the lighter ledger.

"I would prefer not to institute across-the-board cuts," Sands wrote. "Thus, sometime later this year, we will provide guidance to senior resource managers about institutional priorities that will guide differential budget reduction targets for the FY 15-16 budget."

"The academic enterprise must receive the highest funding priority," Sands added.

Meanwhile, Radford is expected to lose up to 7 percent of its state funding by 2015-16, according to a statement released by university spokesman Joe Carpenter.

That equals \$2.3 million by 2015 and \$3.2 million in 2016, according to the statement.

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It's unclear right now what that will mean for Radford in the near or long term.

"Details are still to be determined while we are in the process of developing the specifics of those savings plans," according to the statement. "However, we anticipate there may be an impact on some hiring decisions and some travel, all of which will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

"In developing our plans, we will do everything to lessen possible disruptions to our students and impacts to our academic mission," according to the statement.

The state cuts come as federal pressure to maintain affordability bears down on colleges and universities.

The Obama administration has directed the U.S. Department of Education to formulate a national ratings system intended to help students and their families get the best return on their investment, and to pressure institutions to hold down costs and increase value.

While many university officials say they support the overall goals of reform, they fear the ratings scorecard at the center of the plan will do more harm than good.

In July, the presidents of 50 Virginia colleges and universities — both public and private — signed a joint letter protesting the ratings effort and plans to eventually tie the ratings to institutions' federal financial aid eligibility. Both Sands and Radford President Penelope Kyle signed the letter.

"Although I'm a big advocate for return on investment measures, you really have to be careful how you use them," Sands said in a recent interview about the ratings system.

Sands said then that the proposed federal measures could work against the goal of boosting affordability and quality by penalizing community colleges for low graduation rates on their transfer students, and adding to expensive regulations all schools must meet.

"We already have accreditation to be eligible for federal funds, and it's a very costly process," Sands said. "It can cost up to \$1 million, affecting bottom line affordability. The students end up paying."

Continued defunding of higher education by states, including Virginia, is also a big part of the affordability problem.

On a per student basis, Virginia has cut its support for public colleges and universities literally in half since 2000, Sands said.

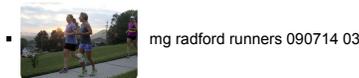
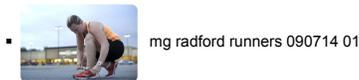
Now Sands must deal with another cut.

Tech's board of visitors, which is appointed by the governor's office to oversee the financial health of public universities, is set to meet in Blacksburg on Sept. 14 and 15.

The Radford board is set to meet Sept. 18 and 19.

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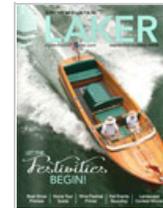
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