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Funding Cuts Postpone Setting Fall Tuition Rate for Winthrop

Winthrop University

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Funding Cuts Postpone Setting Fall Tuition Rate for Winthrop

Quick Facts

- Board of Trustees will decide tuition in mid-June.
- Bills will go out no later than July 15.

ROCK HILL, S.C. - As if recent **General Assembly cuts** to its own state appropriation weren't problem enough, **Winthrop University** is now trying to deal with the impact of a virtual death-blow to the budget of an electronic library shared by all S.C. colleges and universities.

The **Winthrop Board of Trustees** Friday decided to postpone until later in the month the adoption of tuition and fees for the academic year that begins in August, upon recommendation of **President Anthony DiGiorgio**. DiGiorgio said the extra time would give university administrators time to deal with the impact of several economic factors still in flux, in addition to the cuts in state funding support recently finalized by state legislators. But it is the potential loss of services from the **statewide electronic library** that concerns DiGiorgio most.

"We recognize the situation legislators found themselves in this year, as tax cuts passed last year took effect at the same time as a major national economic downturn," DiGiorgio said. "We've been preparing for some time to deal with cuts to our own budget. What caught everyone by surprise was the fact that the General Assembly virtually flat-lined the PASCAL [electronic library] budget, which will impact every public and private higher education institution in the state."

PASCAL stands for **Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries**. Last year, it received \$2 million in state funding. Next year, its state appropriation will be just \$200,000. PASCAL was created in 2004 so that collegiate libraries could purchase bulk electronic access to a far wider range of resources -- academic journals, research materials and other special publications -- than institutions could afford to purchase individually. At Winthrop, students and faculty in every program use the specialized on-line resources to supplement the library's print collection. Subscribing to key electronic resources as an individual institution would cost Winthrop about \$200,000 -- an expense unanticipated until the General Assembly finalized its budget a few days ago.

DiGiorgio said he is concerned the loss of **PASCAL** is a step backward for the state, which was one of the last ones to create such an electronic partnership among academic institutions.

"Killing funding for this program is counter to everything state leaders set out as goals for higher education," DiGiorgio said, adding that PASCAL helps encourage students into research areas, encourages collaboration among institutions to achieve efficiencies and cost savings, and helps develop a global perspective within students. "The academic librarians are trying to come up with a rescue plan, but that's going to take some time, and that's one reason we want to postpone board consideration of Winthrop's budget."

Other unknowns that should be clearer over the next 30 days or so are the **costs of contract bids for some needed maintenance work on the library roof and elsewhere**, the **impact of recent spiraling inflation in food prices on meal plan contracts**, and the **impact of fluctuating interest rates**.

"We are asking all our administrators to look once again for cost-savings and creative solutions to

meet these challenges,” DiGiorgio said, adding that Winthrop already is recognized by the state for its administrative efficiency and energy management savings programs.

“It’s really the same thing every family is doing these days in responding to increases in fuel prices, food prices and an unpredictable economy. We know students and families expect us to do the same thing as we prepare tuition and fee recommendations, and we will meet that expectation.”

Over the past two years’ legislative sessions, **Winthrop has lost a total of \$1.6 million in state funding support** – including almost \$600,000 in recurring funds this year, on top of \$900,000 in other funds that were not renewed over the past two years.

Budget data shared with trustees during Friday’s meeting indicates that reductions in state support for public higher education continue to be a driver in tuition increases. **In 1990, the state provided 44 percent of Winthrop’s operating revenues; that level had declined to 20 percent in 2007, and is expected to be only 18 percent in the academic year ahead.**

Winthrop officials said they plan to update students and families on the situation with Web site postings, and anticipate being able to mail formal tuition notices no later than **July 15**.

For more information, contact Rebecca Masters, assistant to the president for public affairs, at 803/323-2225.

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