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Proposed \$300 Million Budget Cut to the University System of Georgia

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Proposed \$300 Million Budget Cut to the University System of Georgia

On February 19, Armstrong Atlantic State University received a message from the University System of Georgia (USG) that all state agencies would be called upon again to discuss budgets for fiscal year (FY) 2011. The state of Georgia legislators are projecting a budget shortfall of between \$500 million to \$1 billion for the upcoming year.

Soon thereafter, despite an appeal from USG Chancellor Erroll Davis, Jr. that universities have already taken deep cuts, legislators asked the USG to immediately prepare a plan to address this crisis by trimming an additional \$300 million from FY 2011. This is in addition to the \$265 million reduction already recommended by Governor Perdue for FY 2011. Chancellor Davis, staff from the Board of Regents, and university presidents held a conference call on Thursday, February 24 during which each institution was assigned a proportional share of the \$300 million to be excised.

Armstrong's share is \$5,285,618. The university was asked to submit a plan that would cut that amount from the FY 2011 budget and submit it no later than noon on Saturday, February 27. These additional cuts come in addition to a reduction of \$3.5 million (10 percent of the total appropriated budget) that is already in place for the current fiscal year 2010. These cuts included the elimination of vacant positions – both faculty and staff – slashing operating budgets, cutting energy usage, eliminating one department, and restructuring and consolidating six academic departments into three. In short, we eliminated most of the flex that we had.

In preparing Armstrong's new budget reduction plan, we were asked to work under the assumptions that there would be no new formula dollars from state funding or tuition increases for fiscal year 2011.

Fulfilling the current request would effectively cut Armstrong's already-reduced coffers by 17 percent. Given the fact that 76 percent of our budget is personnel, it is clear that such a reduction will result in further reduction of our workforce. Additionally, to get a 17 percent reduction, we must propose elimination of chunks of what we currently do.

Our proposal, which was submitted to the Board of Regents on Saturday, included the elimination of open staff and faculty positions, a reduction or elimination of outreach programs, the elimination of temporary faculty positions, and the reduction or elimination of academic departments with relatively low enrollments and low graduation rates.

While I understand that managing these budget challenges is a huge task for legislators, I would hope that they also understand the magnitude of the impact that the proposed cuts would have on Armstrong and the rest of the USG institutions.

Faculty, staff, and students who wish to share concerns regarding these proposed reductions to higher education should feel free to contact their state representatives to personally express these. I include below a list of representatives and their contact information. Please use United States mail, personal email, or your personal telephone if you wish to contact legislators. State-

supported means of communication (campus email, campus mail, or University telephones) should not be the media chosen to forward such correspondence.

On a personal note, developing this new reduction plan has been very distressing for all of us. We firmly believe in higher education and its ability to promote economic development, reduce poverty and, most of all, change lives. I know that public higher education changed my life, and I continue to believe that our legislators will see the connection between higher education and the future of Georgia.

I know that tough times lie ahead. Armstrong, however, has survived and ultimately prospered despite tough times in the past. We will again. Thank you for your dedication to our students and to Armstrong Atlantic State University.

Please visit the University System of Georgia Web site for the latest updates from the system and to read a letter from Chancellor Davis:

http://www.usg.edu/news/release/chancellor_provides_budget_reduction_information_to_housesenate_subcommitte/

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President

Savannah/Chatham County Delegation

February 2010

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