

State higher ed leaders meet over budget concerns

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SHREVEPORT

On Tuesday, state lawmakers and higher education leaders met in Shreveport to discuss the drastic effects proposed budget cuts could have on university faculty, staff and students throughout the state.

Thanks to a projected \$1.9 billion budget deficit next year, plus a \$750 million mid-year deficit, Louisiana colleges may face severe cuts. At the Higher Education Summit Tuesday afternoon, a panel of higher education leaders, which included LSU CFO and Vice President for Finance and Administration Dr. Dan Layzell, spoke to state legislators in the area, bringing up how cuts will affect Shreveport-area schools, as well as schools statewide.

If taxes aren't raised, or money is not found elsewhere to fill the budget hole, the LSU system would have to prepare for a 32 percent cut in its budget. This would mean LSUS would lose \$1.2 million dollars in funding, and its health sciences center would lose \$15 million. If this were to happen, LSUS faculty would have to reduce their hours by 5-to-10 percent per week, and the health sciences center would have to reduce its staff of faculty physicians by 53 percent, as well as decrease class sizes.

Southern University is also in danger of cuts. In the same scenario, the Southern University system will suffer a \$4.6 million cut, with the Shreveport campus losing just under \$1 million in funding, on top of seven staff positions being eliminated.

(Senator Robert Adley/LA Dist. 36)

"The layoffs will be massive. That's the biggest issue if we don't go fix this problem," said Senator Robert Adley, who represents the state's 36th district in the Louisiana House of Representatives, and was at the summit.

Governor Edwards has to submit a proposal of the 2017 budget by February 13. Until then, higher education leaders plan to use events like Tuesday's summit to show legislators the drastic impact cuts will have on both its faculty and students.

"It's going to take a very concerted effort on our part to be able to make that case that higher education should not bear the brunt," said Layzell.

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