

# University of South Florida students speak out on proposed budget cuts

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3 March 2012

The Florida legislature is pushing to finalize a proposed budget that calls for a \$400 million reduction to Florida universities, with \$103 million coming from University of South Florida's (USF) 2012-13 budget. On February 13, students at USF, in Tampa, received email notification of potential budget cuts coming down from the state. The email highlighted an address made by USF System President Judy Genshaft concerning the cuts.

After the finalization of the budget by the Senate, the House, which has already passed its budget, is to work together with the Senate to finalize a joint budget that will go back to both chambers for approval. The deadline for this work is March 9, after which Florida Governor Rick Scott can either approve or veto it.

According to USF administration, while large universities like University of Florida (UF) and Florida State University (FSU) will be experiencing 25.8 percent and 22.3 percent decreases in state funding respectively, USF shows the largest decrease, a staggering 44.3 percent.

In her February 13 address to students, Genshaft appealed to students stating, "These cuts would injure our students immediately, and they will strike a blow against economic recovery in the Tampa Bay region and the state." She then urged: "Please contact your elected legislators, and the governor, and let them know USF needs their help: 'Don't enact these massive cuts to higher education. The cost to our students and our economy is too great.' 'Don't single out USF for extraordinary cuts.'"

Members of the student organization International Students for Social Equality, who recently established a chapter at USF, asked students on campus about the effects that these proposed budget cuts would have both upon the school and in their personal lives, and whether

they felt that contacting representatives as suggested by Genshaft would make a difference.

Third year history major Justin Norris said that he "would imagine classes would be limited and the student to instructor ratio would increase." When questioned about the effects of tuition increases, he continued, "I already have difficulty affording tuition and fitting in actually going to class around a fifty hour work week, and that is with student loans and grants. Living in Tampa is expensive and USF must have realized that. USF already wants downtown skyline condo prices for subsidized housing quality." Concerning contacting his representative, he told members of ISSE, "I did contact my representative. I did not hear back from any of the three I wrote to. I don't feel that it made a difference at all."

Third year engineering major Ethan Plail stated, "I think that the budget cuts will really hurt the humanities departments. Engineering, for example, has grants from different departments, but departments in the sciences and in physics don't get many grants anymore." When asked how tuition increases would affect him personally, he said, "I have Bright Futures, which pays for about half of my tuition. I don't think I will receive more. If anything, Bright Futures will go down." Ethan said that he would not try to contact his representative, and continued, "I don't think contacting representatives will help, because they really don't care. They will do what they want."

Third year history major Nicholas Stonecypher told the ISSE, "These budget cuts can only have a negative impact on a university that values topiary-bulls and well-salaried presidents and administrators to empowered and effective teachers and deans." Responding to personal repercussions, Nicholas said, "Personally, I have \$10 to \$12 thousand in student loan

debt already. These budget cuts will put even more pressure on the board to raise tuition, which it already had said it planned on doing every year by 15 percent until it was flush with the national average.” Finally, concerning state representatives, Nicholas told ISSE members, “Their suggestion that I contact ‘my representative’ is like a slap to the face. [Contact] my representatives who have all lined up in support of things like this?”

Undoubtedly such large cuts to the budget of University of South Florida and other state funded schools will have the worst impact on working class youth who must work full time hours to pay for an education that does not promise them an adequate job or wage at its completion. Tuition rates will continue their sharp increase while special programs and opportunities for student involvement will diminish.

At a research university like USF, faculty will also suffer layoffs and cuts to their programs, especially in the departments of arts and sciences. Florida Governor Rick Scott’s attacks on many academic programs in 2011 could be fully realized as a result of these huge cuts.

*The ISSE and the Socialist Equality Party are holding a public meeting at University of South Florida in Tampa on Tuesday, April 10, to advance and elaborate a socialist program to defend all the social rights of the working class and to rally support for the SEP’s 2012 election campaign.*



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