

New York State Budget Cuts Jeopardize University at Buffalo's 2020 Plan

Sarah Hopkins 2 days ago



UB President John Simpson addresses reporters Monday morning

BUFFALO, N.Y. - State budget cuts continue to put the University at Buffalo's 2020 plan in jeopardy, according to university leaders.

UB 2020 would expand UB's three campuses, build a medical campus downtown and add ten thousand students and thousands of faculty and staff positions.

The economic impact has been estimated at more than \$2 billion.

Monday morning, University President John Simpson met with reporters to discuss the cuts and their potential impact on UB 2020.

"We recognize that New York has a huge deficit, and that money is not available," Simpson said. "Yet the changes that we seek are policy, not financial."

Those changes were put forth in a reform plan included in Governor Paterson's Executive Budget--and they were cut by the Assembly last week.

Simpson says the higher education reforms would

give UB more control over tuition dollars and would allow the university to partner with companies in the private sector.

"If WNY and SUNY do not get these reforms, we simply can not do WNY's UB 2020 plan," said Simpson.

The reforms did pass in the Senate. Sen. Bill Stachowski (D) says he's still optimistic the plan will pass the entire legislature.

"It's still financially good for the state," Stachowski said.

He says by allowing individual colleges in the SUNY system to keep tuition, it would make them less dependent on state dollars.

However, under the reforms, lawmakers would not have the ability to make decisions about raising or lowering tuition, Stachowski said.

After six years of development, Simpson says the next few weeks will determine if the plan will be realized.

When asked if UB 2020 will mean higher costs for students, Simpson told reporters, "Costs will go up, yes. Costs will go up whether we have this policy or not. I'd rather do it in a way that benefits and helps our students and their families, rather than in a way that surprises them."

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If the reform measures don't pass this year, Simpson says that doesn't mean UB 2020 will be scrapped completely. However, he says it does mean the plan will become much less ambitious.

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