

Simpson: UB 2020 in serious jeopardy

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (WIVB) - UB President John Simpson says the University's 2020 plan is in serious jeopardy as the state budget battle drags on in Albany.

In order for UB's 2020 plan to move forward, state lawmakers need to change policy to let UB live by the same rules as virtually every other major public university. Right now, it's a good news/bad news situation in Albany.

The University at Buffalo is the largest employer in WNY with an economic impact of \$1.7 billion. UB President John Simpson said continued growth is critical to its future, which could be in jeopardy if UB 2020 fails.

Simpson said, "Make no mistake: the future of Buffalo and UB are at stake right now."

Simpson called on the community to put pressure on state lawmakers to support legislation that would give UB and other SUNY Schools unprecedented power to raise tuition, free of state regulations. The Governor recently included such reforms in his Executive Budget as did the Senate. The Assembly cut them out.

"If it passes, then we're on the road to build UB 2020, and if it doesn't, the road here to that vision is significantly further and further away," said Simpson.

UB 2020 is an ambitious initiative that promises to revitalize the local economy and enable UB to become a world class public research institute. Without the reforms, Simpson claims that thousands of new jobs are gone as is an additional \$2 billion. Assemblyman Sam Hoyt wants UB to move forward. He's now making this pitch to his counterparts in Albany.

"If you're going to reject it outright as a system wide proposal or initiative, then allow Buffalo to experiment as a pilot project," said Hoyt.

Clearly, UB recognizes the state has a huge deficit; money is not available. But, the reforms are policy, not financial.

The tuition component of the legislation would mean that the cost to attend UB will go up. However, Dr. Simpson argued that the cost is going up anyway, policy or not, but at least with these reforms, the tuition roulette is off the table.

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