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## Va. colleges slash staffs, programs; gear up for tuition hike

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Get ready for a rough ride, Virginia college students.

In the coming months, tuition will spike, classes could bulge, services will shrink, and entire academic programs will disappear as college officials accommodate the state budget cuts announced Tuesday.

Even private-college students will feel the sting through reductions in financial aid.

Cuts to Virginia colleges and universities range from 7.5 to 14.7 percent this year. Presidents at local universities, where cuts range from 8 to 11.7 percent, spent Wednesday walking employees through the imminence of layoffs and a lean, lean year.

At Christopher Newport University, where the latest cuts total \$1.5 million, nursing and education programs and the recreation, sport and wellness management program will be eliminated next fall. A 9 percent tuition hike will go into effect for the 2003-04 school year, matching this year's increase, and the work force will shrink by 10 percent.

The eliminated departments served about 13 percent of last spring's graduates, and were chosen based on the fit with CNU's liberal-arts mission, whether there were similar programs at nearby schools, program cost and the number of students affected, said Bobbye Bartels, chair of CNU's budget advisory committee and a mathematics professor.

CNU officials vowed to work with nearby colleges to help students complete their degrees. But some students are devastated.

"I don't know what is going to happen, and I'm trying not to lose all hope," said Leigh Trayers, a junior from Springfield majoring in recreation, sport and wellness management. "I was trying to study last night and couldn't concentrate because I think: What is the point of coming back next semester, or even finishing the semester, when my program has been cut?"

The executive committee of Old Dominion University's board, at a special meeting Monday, will consider a midyear tuition increase to help the university cope with \$7.6 million in budget cuts. This fall, tuition and fees rose 6.2 percent.

On Tuesday, layoffs will be announced by ODU.

ODU President Roseann Runte told employees that she couldn't offer more specifics: Administrators are still crafting the proposal for a tuition increase. Its size will determine the extent of layoffs, which she said will be "impossible to avoid."

Runte said her goal was "trying to figure out the way to do the least amount of damage to the academic mission."

Employees whose jobs are eliminated will continue working for two weeks to three months, depending on their status. ODU's quick action, she said, will allow those workers to get a jump on others who may be laid off from colleges and state agencies.

Wayne C. Carruthers, finance director for the Portsmouth public school system, teaches accounting at ODU. Class size is his main concern. He has 28 students, a number which he called "optimal." "You can have 40 or 50, which would be a killer," Carruthers said.

Runte said she hopes classes won't get much larger and course offerings won't be reduced. But she stressed: "Everything can't be exactly as it was."

Norfolk State will halve its budget for part-time faculty and keep vacant 50 full-time positions to meet an 8 percent cut, amounting to \$2.5 million, President Marie V. McDemmond said. It won't need to raise tuition or lay off full-time workers, she said.

But McDemmond questioned whether the cuts violate a desegregation agreement last year between the state and federal governments, which raised funding for public black colleges. The agreement, she said, stipulated no budget reductions for Norfolk State or Virginia State, which would be cut 7.5 percent.

"I know we've taken a downturn, and I want to do my share," McDemmond said. But she said the agreement was no different than a legal settlement whose terms are binding.

University of Virginia officials on Wednesday predicted a midyear tuition increase and another hike in 2003-04. The midyear surcharge will help protect jobs this year, said U.Va. spokeswoman Louise M. Dudley.

Any rise in tuition, however, will be coupled with an increase in financial aid, she added.

About \$1 million in savings at U.Va. will come from cuts in areas such as athletics, the bookstore and housing.

At the College of William and Mary, the Board of Visitors' finance committee will meet Oct. 31 to determine how the latest cut -- 11.7 percent -- should be absorbed. Spokesman William T. Walker Jr. wouldn't speculate on a tuition increase or layoffs.

"We have said that we'll look at all options, and I assure you that will be the case," he said.

Nearly \$2 million in cuts, including \$950,000 from the operating budget, were announced last month in anticipation of the state shortfall.

Among other reductions is \$234,500 for spring adjunct faculty. The cut doesn't affect faculty already under contract, but it eliminates 46 courses across the curriculum, Walker said.

The financial situation at Tidewater Community College isn't great, though President Deborah M. DiCroce said she's relieved that the community college system received "equitable treatment."

All community colleges will see budget cuts of 8 percent this year. For TCC, that amounts to about \$3.3 million, DiCroce said.

How that will affect students and faculty will likely be answered today at a meeting of the State Board for Community Colleges, she said.

"My expectation is that the board will consider a midyear tuition increase to cushion the cut," DiCroce told faculty and staff in an internal memo sent Wednesday.

TCC took some precautionary measures with this year's budget, including adopting a hiring freeze in early August. Vacant positions were also eliminated and other positions have been put on hold, DiCroce said.

"No matter what Tidewater Community College does, it will remain true to its core mission to successfully prepare people for a bachelor's degree and for the work force," DiCroce said. "But the degree to which we are able to deliver on that depends on the amount of resources we have to devote to it."

Eastern Virginia Medical School, which relies on the state for 12 percent of its budget, will lose nearly \$1 million, or 14.7 percent, of its state funds. Earlier this year, facing a multimillion-dollar shortfall, EVMS laid off about 20 people and cut an additional 60 unfilled positions, said its president, Dr. J. Sumner Bell. The new cuts won't trigger layoffs, but EVMS might again have to eliminate positions next year. "It's rough, but I think it's a manageable situation," Bell said.

Before this round of cuts, funding for state colleges had been reduced an average of 9 percent this school year. Tuition increases brought down the reductions to about 3 percent.

Several universities, including Virginia Tech, positioned themselves for a tuition increase next semester. Gov. Mark R. Warner has left open the door to such increases.

The pain will go beyond public colleges. Tuition assistance grants, which go to every Virginian who attends a private college in the state, will be cut 13 percent, or about \$340 -- the third reduction in less than a year.

The grants have now fallen from \$3,000 last year to less than \$2,300. At Virginia Wesleyan College, about 700 undergraduates -- or half of the student body -- receive them.

"They said, 'We'll help you out this much,' and they're turning around and saying, 'We can't do that,'" said Alacia Earley, a senior from Norfolk. "For lack of another word, it's a punishment for not going to state schools."

But John M. Bennett, the state finance secretary, said the cut in the grants would probably be less than the tuition increases facing many students at public colleges.