
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA SYSTEM

Legislative UPDATE

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Current News About Legislative Issues Affecting The University of Alabama System

RECORD CROWDS AT HIGHER ED DAY DELIVER EMPHATIC MESSAGE

Hundreds of students and faculty from the campuses of The University of Alabama System joined counterparts from across the state for a spirited Higher Ed Day rally to protest massive cuts in Gov. Riley's proposed 2008-2009 education budget. Known as House Bill 319, the Riley budget would reduce state funding to UA, UAB and UAHuntsville by a whopping 14 percent. That translates into \$28 million less for UA, a reduction of \$55 million for UAB, and a \$7.5 million cut for UAH.

In calling for equitable cuts across the education spectrum, university leaders emphasize that we are willing to shoulder our fair share of the burden caused by the downturn in the economy. While higher ed's current portion of the proposed cuts is in double digits, K-12 budgets are being reduced just 2 percent. UA System representatives have been working since the legislative session began to emphasize how critically important it is that ALL levels of education be treated fairly.

That message resounded in the halls of the State House when the record crowd of Higher Ed Day participants converged on the Capitol. A number of key legislative leaders commended the campus delegations for a concise, effective, common-sense message.

CALL TO ACTION

Many questions remain before the Legislature finalizes next year's budget. Momentum generated by the boisterous rally last week needs to be sustained until the budget process is completed during the next two months. It is crucial that you contact your legislators – both House and Senate members – as well as the leadership in both chambers. Your personal letters, emails and telephone calls are the most effective strategy to deliver your message!

Please take a few minutes today to make those contacts. To find your legislators, go to <http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/zipsearch.html> and enter your nine-digit zip code. Following is a set of concise talking points you can use in delivering your message.

TALKING POINTS FOR YOUR DISCUSSION WITH LEGISLATORS

- ✓ The proposed Education Budget is not acceptable and Higher Ed must be included in any budget negotiations.
- ✓ Higher Ed is prepared to take our **pro rata share** of the cuts, but we cannot take a step backward and jeopardize the state's economic growth. All segments of education must be treated **EQUITABLY**.
- ✓ **We need each Legislator's firm commitment** to find and vote for a solution to the budget problem that is fair and equitable.
- ✓ 4-year Universities receive only about **20%** of the education budget but are being hit with over **50%** of the cuts!
- ✓ University endowments are restricted **by law** and **cannot** be used to cover the shortfall.

- ✓ Huge tuition increases of **25%** or more would be required, slamming the door to higher education on Alabama families.
- ✓ This is the wrong **time to add new programs** in the education budget; the Governor's plan adds \$50+ million in assorted new programs that our state cannot afford now.
- ✓ While the Governor has declared he will not raise taxes, the fact is this: forcing massive tuition increases creates an impossible financial burden that straps the very same middle-class families he pledges to help!
- ✓ The Governor and industry recruiters know a primary tool to attract and retain new businesses is a well trained workforce. That has become our success, and it is now seriously jeopardized. Alabama cannot afford to lose jobs or momentum.

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