



The Community Standard

NEWS FROM THE ALABAMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Tough times for education budget

Last week, presidents and other system leaders attended the Education Trust Fund budget hearing at the Alabama Statehouse as Chancellor Byrne presented the ACCS 2009-2010 budget request.

After implementing system-wide cost-cutting measures and carrying over funds from the previous year's allocations, the ACCS budget request came in at a very modest 1.9 percent

over the previous year's allocation. This increase was due entirely to mandated costs – primarily salary and benefit increases – that could not be cut without a reduction in force.

Unfortunately, this budget was submitted before the Governor was forced to declare 9 percent proration for the current year and to dip into the education "Rainy Day Fund" to make ends meet this year.

Moreover, on the day before the budget hearings, Joyce Bigbee, executive director of the Legislative Fiscal Office, said that the state would have about 5.3 percent — \$316 million — less available for education in 2009-10.

Translation: More belt-tightening ahead for ACCS institutions and the Department of Postsecondary Education.

A message from the Chancellor ...

In tough times, families pull together. They look at their budgets with an eye on trimming fat while making sure everyone has enough to live on.

I am asking the ACCS family to do the same thing over the next year or so. Every dollar we save by becoming more efficient, eliminating waste, foregoing non-critical expenditures, and sharing resources will help us keep more employees on the payroll as we weather this financial storm.

I am so proud of how we have pulled together to become a system, a family. Let's keep up the good work and we will emerge from this stronger than ever.

Bradley Byrne

Maintaining the mission; managing proration

Solid fiscal management has allowed ACCS to absorb financial cuts so far without a widespread reduction in force, increasing tuition, cutting any core programs, or eroding our primary mission of providing academics, adult education and workforce training to the widest possible array of Alabama citizens.

Starting last spring, our institutional leaders began the difficult task of curtailing expenditures even as we expanded programming and enacted dramatic new accountability measures. Here are some of the ways we have reduced spending by 9 percent while avoiding layoffs:

- Reducing reserve fund from three months to two months
- Less travel
- Fewer purchases of supplies and equipment
- Class sizes increased
- Vacant positions unfilled
- Administrative positions eliminated through attrition; jobs shared among remaining administrators at colleges and at DPE
- Fewer summer classes offered
- Fewer contractors used
- Less advertising
- Reduced utility use and fees
- Maintenance and capital projects postponed