

FITCHBURG STATE ANNOUNCES COST SAVING MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO STATE BUDGET CUTS

(FITCHBURG, MASS. JUNE 17) Fitchburg State College has taken a number of steps to deal with an expected state budget shortfall of up to \$5 million for the coming fiscal year.

Among the cost saving measures are a \$500 per year fee increase for full time students, a \$65 per credit fee increase for students in the college's graduate and continuing education program, the elimination of five positions due to restructuring, a modified hiring freeze, a voluntary work reduction policy, 15 percent across-the-board cuts in non-personnel budgets, elimination of faculty course reductions for research and special assignments, and a 4-day summer work week aimed at saving up to \$50,000 in energy costs. With a 4-day work week, employees compress a full 5-day work schedule into four days.

The personnel cuts are estimated to save about \$260,000, with the modified hiring freeze adding an additional \$300,000 in savings over two years and a projected total of more than \$1 million over five years. The voluntary work reduction policy is expected to save about \$100,000.

In addition, the college has suspended varsity athletic competition in four sports: men's soccer, women's volleyball, and men and women's indoor track. Those sports may be reinstated if the budget situation improves and there is sufficient student interest. Other sports will face reduced schedules and cuts in equipment funding. The overall savings from Athletic Department cuts is about \$70,000.

The college had previously announced the elimination of funding for the AmeriCulture Arts Festival, a savings of \$40,000.

"These are difficult decisions," said Interim President Michael T. Rivard. "And our first concern is always for the people who are directly affected—the students,

the employees, the student-athletes and coaches. But the magnitude of the cuts we're anticipating demands that we take strong, decisive actions."

Rivard noted that additional financial aid funds have been set aside to help students deal with the fee increases.

"Every segment of campus will feel the effects of these cuts," said Rivard, "but the core mission of this institution—providing a high quality, affordable education—will remain unchanged."

"Combined tuition and fees at the college actually decreased between 1992 and 2002," Rivard noted, "and public college costs in Massachusetts remain the lowest in New England."

Annual in-state tuition and fees for next year will be \$4,200 for full time Massachusetts residents.

Despite the budget cuts and the fee increases, Rivard added that the college is anticipating an increase in new student enrollment for the third consecutive year fall. "We're expecting about 950 new freshmen and transfer students this fall—a 13 percent increase over last September."