

Clemson University may cut top salaries by 10 percent

By John Staed, February 24, 2009

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY — Clemson may cut salaries of its Administrative Council by 10 percent next year, according to a source and a Clemson official.

Administrative Council members represent some of the highest-paid officials with the university and a 10 percent cut would be significant. Administrative Council members include, for example, the provost and the executive director of governmental affairs.

According to information obtained by the Anderson Independent-Mail, Clemson President James Barker was to tell faculty and staff Tuesday about budget changes, including a 10 percent cut.

But Robin Denny, a spokeswoman, said no letter was going out Tuesday, but a separate message was sent about a retirement incentive program for employees in University Facilities.

Earlier Tuesday, Angie Leidinger, executive director of governmental affairs, confirmed that a 10 percent cut had been discussed, but said today "I'm not sure where that is in the process."

"I'm not sure that decision has been made officially," she said.

She referred further questions to Cathy Sams, chief public information officer for the university. Sams was out of the office and not available, according to her office.

Brett Dalton, Clemson chief financial officer, said no decisions had been made.

"I'm not aware of any firm decisions being made in terms of administrative costs," he said.

Asked specifically about the 10 percent cut, he said he has heard "hundreds of different ideas and suggestions" but would not comment further. He said Barker has been very open about the process and has not completed his final plan.

Barker and Provost Doris Helms, asked earlier about the cuts, declined to comment.

Barker created 11 task forces to examine the budget issues and those reported to him on Feb. 15. He has said he would have recommendations from those reports soon.

The notice of a retirement incentive for Clemson facilities employees was approved by the state Office of Human Resources and "was introduced to facilities employees as they arrived for work today(Tuesday)," according to the statement.

Because of state budget cuts, Clemson officials have required a mandatory five-day unpaid furlough for all employees, frozen most hiring, offered early retirement packages to its Public Service Activities employees, stopped building programs, cut travel and more. Barker has said the school has received \$38 million less in revenues since the budget cutting started.

The work stoppage on new building projects has hit facilities employees “particularly hard,” according to the statement. Chief Facilities Officer Bob Wells said his goal is to prevent employees from losing jobs from a reduction-in-force plan.

“The option is available only to employees in the facilities department, which is funding the upfront costs through lapsed salary accumulated this fiscal year by holding a significant number of vacant positions open,” according to the statement.

“No one can predict how much longer this crisis will last, or how far we will be asked to reduce our budget, but protecting our staff will remain our focus as we deal with whatever may come,” Wells said.

In January, Clemson offered a retirement buyout program for employees of the Public Service Activities departments, which includes agricultural and extension departments.

The university, however, may receive \$17.5 million through the federal stimulus package, according to earlier reports, but Barker has said details of how much and how it would be earmarked have not been confirmed.

Recently, a Clemson professor criticized what he claimed was big increases in salaries and administration budgets, a claim Barker responded to in a campus-wide email. Barker said the information was “incomplete and misleading.”

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