

THE DAILY TARGUM

Proposed budget will cut \$15.5M in University funding

Ariel Nagi

Correspondent

Published: Wednesday, March 11, 2009

Updated: Wednesday, March 11, 2009

A \$15.5 million cut in University funding was proposed by Gov. Jon S. Corzine Tuesday, leaving students and faculty concerned about their future at the University.

These proposed reductions are far more difficult because they come on top of very significant shortfalls in state funding the University absorbed both this year and in fiscal year of 2006 to 2007, said University President Richard L. McCormick in a letter to the community.

“Given the continuing trend of decreasing state support and the difficulties that our students and their families are confronting in this period of unprecedented fiscal stress, the University faces enormous challenges,” McCormick said. “For his part, the governor has proposed a state budget with spending reductions, tax increases and a wage freeze and furloughs for state workers.”

Marc Holzer, the dean of the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers-Newark, said the large cut may lead to larger class sizes and dwindling numbers in faculty and staff, which may potentially lead to a lower quality of education and less academic support for students.

Corzine had to make hard decisions but he is only thinking in terms of cash flow, rather than considering the benefits of investing in the University, Holzer said.

“Rutgers is probably just the best investment to make,” he said. “It puts people into the workforce — it’s New Jersey’s future.”

But higher education has not been a prioritized investment for New Jersey politicians when it comes to budgets, said Brett Tinder, president of Rutgers University Democrats and Livingston College senior.

“The problem is Republicans and Democrats in New Jersey have not seen higher education as a top priority,” Tinder said.

But student financial assistance increases in the governor’s budget thanks to the federal stimulus funding New Jersey received, McCormick said.

He said Corzine has proposed a 10 percent increase in student aid, including a 13 percent increase in the Tuition Aid Grant program.

The proposal was well thought out in certain cases where Corzine indicated openness to other options by the



Andrew Howard / Photography Editor

In his State of the State Address Tuesday, Gov. Jon S. Corzine outlined the proposed \$29.8 billion budget for the next fiscal year, which may cause \$15.5 million to be cut from the University’s funding.

legislature, said John Weingart, the associate director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics.

“This can lead to good debate in the campaign and the legislature,” he said.

Weingart said he thinks the worst news is the proposed cut in state government across the board, leading to cuts in government services.

“The lives of people who are in need [of government services] are going to get more difficult,” he said.

But the focus of students appears to be on the seemingly perpetual budget cuts and tuition rises.

The cuts in the budget will be a big problem for students because families are already struggling to make ends meet, said Agnes Buda, School of Arts and Sciences sophomore.

“As a student, I am not happy,” she said. “I do not look forward to paying higher tuition fees, especially in these difficult times.”

But Monika Chopra, the vice president of RU Democrats said it is difficult to discuss how the proposed budget will affect the funding for higher education.

“Every student cares about what the budget is,” said Chopra, a Rutgers College junior. “We want to know if more classes are going to be cut and if tuition is going to go up ... but to discuss the budget before it’s voted on is really speculative.”