Legislators restore university budget

TYLER DIXON
Daily Egyptian

State officials decided to keep the university’s funding equal to the last fiscal year after a legislative session Friday.

The session, between Illinois Congress and House representatives, allowed the university to regain their original budget for the fiscal year, despite Governor Pat Quinn’s plans to cut funding to higher education budget by 5 percent. The cut would have decreased the SIU budget by $11 million, from last year’s $203 million to around $192 million.

Since the state agreed to keep the university’s budget at $203 million, individual schools of study were able to have their funding restored. SIU President Glenn Poshard said he said the School of Pharmacy and the Simmons Cancer Institute in the School of Medicine received about $1.2 million each.

The university was also able to re-allocate about $78 million for renovations and repair projects at SIU’s Carbondale and Edwardsville campuses.

The Carbondale campus re-allocated $15.5 million to Moriss Library, $4.2 million to the Communications Building, $4.3 million to the Transportation Education Center and $7.4 million to the maintenance department, Poshard said in an email.

He said the restored budget will help keep tuition and fees low and allow the university to remain affordable.

“The university is moving in the right direction and I see hundreds of positive things on campus everyday,” Poshard said. While the university’s budget was determined at Friday’s session, the governor and legislators have yet to resolve the pension reform problem.

Gov. Quinn said Tuesday he may call a special session to discuss pension reform, but legislators would have to set aside a special session could be a bad idea if a resolution can’t be found.

Chris Mooney, a political science professor at the University of Illinois Springfield, said in an Associated Press article that calling a special session could be a bad idea if a resolution can’t be found.

"If the governor calls a special session without a deal being made, it’s just going to be more embarrassment," Mooney said.

While the governor’s call for a special session was not met with much enthusiasm, the restored budget will help the university for an extended period.

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According to the same article, Illinois’ five public employee retirement systems are less than $100 billion short of what is needed to pay benefits.

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New policy limits semester course drops

MATT DARAY
Daily Egyptian

Students will now have to be careful about the number of courses they drop in a semester.

A new policy, effective this summer, allows undergraduate students to drop a maximum of six credit hours or 50 percent of total semester enrollment, whichever is greater, in any given semester with a three-hour limit for summer semesters. The policy, which will be implemented Monday, limits students to a maximum of 12 dropped credit hours over 60 hours of enrollment.

Any course dropped after the official date to receive a full refund is defined as a dropped course. Courses dropped as a full withdrawal for a term are not affected and are not counted in the total allowed withdrawals.

Jim Allen, associate provost for academic programs, said the purpose of this policy is to retain the number of students enrolled in classes at the university and discourage them from dropping all their classes.

"It’s primary focus was on what we’ve learned what happens to students who drop all their courses from a semester," he said. "We find out people who do, don’t come back."

While the reasons for departure may vary, students who drop all their courses usually don’t return to the university for an extended period of time, Allen said.

He said the policy was also put in place to allow students who are giving up on a semester to retain their passing grades and provide less schoolwork to receive their degrees should they return.

Allen said while the policy may seem strict, it is meant to help students succeed in their academic efforts.

"It’s our commitment to student success and it may seem odd by imposing a restriction like this on how many hours a student can drop," he said. "But we find in the long-term interest, they improve, they give (classes) a good shot."

Rod Severs, university spokesman, said one of the main reasons for the policy is because when students drop classes, it could affect their financial aid.

"Many students were dropping classes without regard or without thinking about the impact of their financial aid," he said. "A lot of financial aid requirements say you have to take so many hours, you got to have a certain grade and grade point average."

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The DAILY EGYPTIAN is published by the students of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. It is committed to being a trusted source of news, information, commentary and public discourse, while helping readers understand the issues affecting their lives.

Mission Statement

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Illinois must adopt ‘fracking’ rules, hire experts

TAMMY WEBBER

Associated Press

CHICAGO — High-volume oil and gas extraction probably won’t begin in earnest in Illinois until next year because the state first must adopt rules to hire dozens of new employees to help regulate an industry eagerly pushing into new territory.

Gov. Pat Quinn promised a quick signature on a measure the legislature approved last week that would impose the nation’s strictest regulations on hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” which he says would create thousands of sorely needed jobs in southern Illinois.

But it will take three to six months for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to adopt rules to mirror the legislature’s regulations. The agency must hire more than 50 engineers, inspectors, lawyers and other experts for its regulatory program. And companies that want to drill first must register and qualify to frack in the state before applying for a permit. All that will take many months and perhaps as long as a year, industry and environmental groups said.

“I think that fracking should not move forward in Illinois until the whole process ... is completed,” said Henry Henderson, director of the Natural Resource Defense Council’s Midwest office. His group helped negotiate the regulations, which stemmed from an unusual collaboration between lawmakers, regulators, industry and environmental groups. “There is a significantly serious process before us to ensure the technology to enforce the rules is in place,” he said.

DNR Director Marc Miller said the agency must spend about $5 million to get the program off the ground. The legislature included $6.1 million in the state budget for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, but Miller said the agency has enough financial flexibility to begin hiring right away.

Drillers will pay an $11,000 fee to the DNR for each permit, but it will even have to say what method they use to crack and hold open thick rock formations, releasing trapped oil and gas. Combined with horizontal drilling, it allows access to formerly out-of-reach deposits.

Until now, Illinois had no regulations specifically aimed at high-volume fracking. Companies didn’t even have to say what method they used to extract oil and gas, so the DNR had no way of knowing whether it had begun or how extensively. State records indicate that at least one company has begun high-volume fracking.

The regulatory bill creates a template for the DNR’s rules. Among its provisions: Oil and gas companies must test water before, during and after drilling, and are held liable if contamination is found after drilling begins. It also requires companies to tell the DNR what chemicals they use and control air pollution, provides for public hearings and allows residents to sue if they believed they had been harmed.
Farmers face tough decisions from delays

DAVID PITT
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — It’s decision time for many Midwest corn farmers stuck in one of the wettest springs ever: Plant late in ground that’s been too wet, replant corn in muddy fields or collect crop insurance.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture said 91 percent of the nation’s corn crop is in the ground but just 74 percent of the plants have emerged. But some states — leading corn producer Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and North Dakota — are much further behind.

“We’ve had as much rain in the last month and a half as we did last whole growing season,” said Kevin Rempp, 55, who farms in central Iowa near Montezuma.

Only 88 percent of Iowa’s corn crop has been sowed. Normally, it’d be finished by now. Rempp is fortunate to have higher ground, and all 1,200 acres of corn and soybeans are planted.

“It’s just one of those deals where you start something and you finish it,” he said.

If the skies clear and the growing season is favorable, it’s still possible to have an abundant corn harvest, he said. “We’re trying to make the best of it,” Rempp said.

“Mother Nature has given us a special hand to play this year and we’re trying to make the best of it,” Rempp said.

“It should be a top priority before we do anything else. Everyone’s losing out,” Daffy said.

“It’s not a good thing for the farmer,” he said.

“My concern is that if we do anything else. Everyone’s losing out,” Daffy said.

“I think it’s half and half,” she said.

Some students have varied opinions about the drop policy but don’t think it would affect them much.

“Trey Brown, a junior from Carbondale studying science, said he thinks the policy is fair for all students.

“It’s a class,” she said.

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“If a student starts something and doesn’t want to, I guess you could put a limit on how many times a student can take a class.

“This shouldn’t be a more stringent indictment of your failure of leadership than this right here,” Murphy said.

“The pension reform problems have caused concern for some state officials, like Sen. Dan Duffy.

M Murph said leadership was an issue.

“About the time it dries up, we get another shot of rain,” he said.

Corn farmers who choose to plant unfinished fields or go back and replant this late will see a sizable reduction in the grain crop.

Sieves said the policy only affects undergraduate students because graduate students do not drop as many classes since they are already in their fields of interest.

The idea for the policy came from the academic policies task force; a group formed by Chancellor Rita Cheng to investigate what policies could be used to promote academic success, Sievers said. He said the group is also working on other policies to be implemented in the future, including the number of times a student can take a class.

Some students have varied opinions about the drop policy but don’t think it would affect them much.

“Trey Brown, a junior from Carbondale studying science, said he thinks the policy is fair for all students.

“If a student starts something and doesn’t want to, I guess you could put a limit on how many times they can start something and finish it,” he said.

Janelle Johnson, an undecided sophomore from Chicago, said the policy is fair but does put a restraint on students.

“I think it’s half and half,” she said.

“I understand why they put a limit because some people do go overboard with how many classes they drop and not taking as many classes as they should, but I also feel that it should be up to the student because it’s their money.”

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JOSEPH ISSANGYA | DAILY EGYPTIAN
Salukis streaming with pride

Graduates look on as streamers are shot through the air at the close of the 2013 Graduation Ceremony May 11 at SIU Arena. The ceremony was the last of three held that day. Frank Abagnale Jr., a security and fraud expert affiliated with the FBI whose life was depicted in in the film “Catch Me If You Can,” was the keynote speaker for all three ceremonies.
ST. LOUIS — Mississippi River communities scrambling Tuesday to fend off the rain-engorged waterway got discouraging news: More rains looming across much of the nation’s midsection threatened to slow the potential retreat of the renegade river.

Such an outlook may not be welcomed in the northeast Missouri town of West Alton, where a makeshift levee’s breach Monday fanned worries that the 570-resident town — which was mostly swept away by a flood in 1993 — would be inundated again. A voluntary evacuation advisory before the breach was fixed was heeded by just 15 percent of the town’s residents, but “everyone else is ready to go at a moment’s notice” if the hastily shored-up barrier shows signs of giving way, Fire Chief Rick Pender said Tuesday.

For now, he said, “everything is stable,” with much of the flooding contained in a railroad bed acting as a town-protecting channel.

“There are some spots not looking pretty (as defenses), but they’re still holding the water back,” Pender told The Associated Press by telephone. “Everyone is just monitoring the sandbags and barriers, waiting for this water to come down.”

The latest National Weather Service forecasts suggest that was to happen later Tuesday. But more rains expected in coming days, from St. Louis north to Minnesota and westward across some of the Great Plains, stood to drop another inch of precipitation here and there, adding more water to the Missouri River and the Mississippi River into which it feeds, National Weather Service hydrologist Mark Fuchs said.

“We’re not talking about huge amounts, but any amount when the soil already is wet is going to slow the river’s retreat,” Fuchs said from his St. Louis-area office. “If you take that into account, there’s not going to be a big drop in the river levels any time soon.”

Across the river in Illinois, in the 28,000-resident city of Alton north of St. Louis, floodwaters already forced the closure of the local casino and the scenic “Great River Road” leading out of it to the north. By late Monday, floodwaters had swamped some of the Clark Bridge linking the city to West Alton, halting traffic from making it into Missouri.

Yet there was reason for optimism: The National Weather Service as of Tuesday afternoon said the river at Alton was expected to crest that evening, some 13 feet above flood stage.

The worst was yet to come south of St. Louis near Cape Girardeau, Mo., where the river was continued to swell higher until reaching a peak Thursday night, again some 13 feet above flood stage.

That rapid rise has produced a feverish sandbagging effort in nearby Dutchtown, where the river threatened to send water into about a third of the homes in the tiny town of about 100 people. It also was threatening to make another nearby community — Allenville, population 117 — an island. In Dutchtown, dozens of prison inmates bussed in were working shoulder to shoulder with other volunteers Tuesday, working to bolster the makeshift barrier.

“So far, the levees are doing fine,” Dutchtown Alderwoman Shirley Moss said. “We still have a lot of water coming this way, and we’re still all out here working. It’s very treacherous, and you just don’t know how much you need to do to prevent this water from coming into town.”
Salukis end on sour note, look forward to next year

TREY BRAUNECKER Daily Egyptian

After fading out near the season’s end, the Salukis men’s baseball team has turned its attention toward the next season.

The SIU men’s baseball team finished the 2013 season with a three-game series loss to Illinois State May 16-18 and an elimination in the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament, ending the season with a 25-33 record.

The Salukis beat Wichita State University 9-1 in the first MVC tournament game May 21, but lost 5-0 to Illinois State in the second game May 22. The team faced Wichita State again May 23 and was eliminated after a 15-0 loss.

Head coach Ken Henderson said the SIU men’s baseball team finished the season on a sour note, but he did not lose sight of the team’s performance.

“I hope the team can be there for each other. I want to be there for the team on and off the field, in the fall, in the spring and in the summer,” Duschinsky said. “I know we are all excited to get back out there, improve ourselves as a team and get ready for next year.”

Senior outfielder Donny Duschinsky said the Salukis have plenty of talented players on the team, but the team itself needs to try and work together more if they want to win.

Senior pitcher Cody Forsythe said. “Overall, I think it was a disappointing season for everyone. It seemed like we could never get enough wins to boost our confidence and play out best this year.”

Forsythe dominated the Shockers in the first MVC game allowing only one run during the ninth inning.

Senior pitcher Cody Forsythe said his team showed plenty of promise throughout the year, but ultimately the team’s performance at the end of the season was just average.

Henderson said his players trained hard this season, but the team had trouble putting their best effort together as a team.

“We lost a lot of close games,” he said. “Something like thirty games were decided by two or less runs, but we just could not close the game.”

Henderson said the team gave everything they had, but the pressure of closing the game may have affected their performance.

He said his focus for next season is to help his players work together and improve team performance.

Senior outfielder Donny Duschinsky said the Salukis have plenty of talented players on the team, but the team itself needs to try and work together more if they want to win.

He said after such a disappointing season, it is important to not dwell on past seasons, but look forward to how the team can improve next year.

“I hope the team can be there for each other. I want to be there for the team on and off the field, in the fall, in the spring and in the summer,” Duschinsky said. “I know we are all excited to get back out there, improve ourselves as a team and get ready for next year.”

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