

# Other state colleges join USC in budget fight

## MUSC, Winthrop among other institutions presenting budget plans

BY CHARLES PRASHAW  
THE GAMECOCK

USC wasn't the only school to give a budget presentation to the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Monday.

USC and its eight regional campuses, MUSC, Winthrop, Francis Marion University, Coastal Carolina University and Lander University gave budget presentations.

The first half of the colleges and universities, including Clemson and the College of Charleston, gave their presentation, March 26.

The Senate Finance Subcommittee sent letters

to the 33 publicly funded state colleges and universities asking them for their input on possible cuts in state allocations to higher education.

The subcommittee will recommend the size of the cuts for each school to a full finance committee. From there, the finance committee will draft provisions in the state budget, cutting the schools' funding by those amounts.

Schools were asked about how they could spend less money, how a cut in state allocations would affect them, the importance of their particular institution and whether there was any outside revenue the institution could find to handle the cuts.

FMU President Luther Carter said a cut in his state allocations above 5 percent "would be unthinkable."

FMU was pondering an 18 percent tuition increase next year, Carter said.

If state allocations are cut at FMU next year, Carter said, the school would have to eliminate

adjunct positions and temporary employees, and each program at the university would see an 11 percent cut.

Carter asked the subcommittee not to cut the university's budget by a sizable amount because the school teaches mostly South Carolinians who wouldn't be able to go to college anywhere else.

"Nearly 91 percent of our students are from right here in South Carolina. We serve the common people," Carter said. "FMU is not a last resort for higher education, but unfortunately, (it's) sometimes an only resort for higher education in our sector."

Lander University President Daniel Ball said he was told the school was facing a cut of about \$2 million dollars from its \$12 million state allocation.

Ball said a cut that high would cause the university to lose 20 to 30 professors.

The school already has a hiring freeze, and classes this fall at Lander are expected to be larger because fewer sections will be offered.

Ball asked the subcommittee to consider doing away with the Higher Education Price Cap that doesn't allow him to raise tuition at Lander because it's already above the state's average.

Following Ball, Coastal Carolina University President Ron Engle said a budget cut would stop the momentum his school had been working so hard on.

Engle said he was looking for ways to pay for new positions, including a marine science chair and a business dean.

State officials have proposed a \$1.59 million cut in allocations to Coastal, but Engle said such a large cut would greatly harm the university's budget.

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## BUDGET

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Journalism and Mass Communications. Though not mentioning him by name, Palms discussed candidate William Norton of Nebraska, who cited budget troubles as one reason he was reluctant to accept the position.

"A budget cut would further threaten our financial and academic stability, interrupt our current momentum and immediately impair our ability to serve the state and our students," Palms said.

Palms said the state's financial position could be negatively affected by the cuts to USC.

"While we certainly understand the economic downturn and the fiscal situation for the state of South Carolina, we also know that our ability to help the state weather and prevent such economic slumps depends upon the state's support of our joint endeavor," he said.

After the presentation, Palms answered questions

about the university's budget. That led to a tense exchange between Palms and Sen. Arthur Ravenel, R-Charleston.

Ravenel, proposing that "maybe Chicken Little was hatched over there at the university," asked Palms why the university had more administrative employees per student than other state institutions.

Palms said the number Ravenel had, which was supplied by the Commission on Higher Education, was the number of non-faculty employees. He said that was different from the number of administrative staff. USC actually had a lower number of administrative staff members per student, Palms said.

Ravenel continued to ask why the number of non-faculty employees was higher.

"Why is there such a great disparity there?" Ravenel asked.

Palms offered to supply the committee with the figures USC had.

"Our numbers are different than those," Palms said. "I want to be sure we're compared right."

Ravenel also asked Palms how the Legislature could shield the university from the cuts.

"You know the financial situation of the state," Ravenel said. "How do you expect the General Assembly, the Senate in particular, to protect you from any significant, any reasonable cuts," though other services that brought in federal money were cut.

Palms said he understood that senators had to weigh the values of different programs.

"I'm not sitting in your chair," Palms responded. "We'll cooperate after you make those decisions."

After the meeting, Palms said the Senate would "start from scratch" with its own budget plan.

"In the past, the Senate has been very supportive of higher education," Palms said.

But he also recognized the reality of the shrinking revenue that is the cause of an estimated \$500 million shortfall in next year's budget.

"There's less flexibility this year," he said.

After the meeting, committee members said their positions hadn't changed much.

Sen. Robert Hayes, R-Rock Hill, said his support of higher education was backed up by the presentations of Palms and other college and university presidents.

Hayes said he was committed to finding more funds for higher education. But, like Palms, Hayes remained realistic.

"We may not be able to find the money," he said. Ravenel said Palms' presentation was about what he had expected.

"I was disappointed," Ravenel said.

He also said USC had a lot of what he labeled "fat" in its budget.

"A great deal of it is in administration," Ravenel said. He said the state couldn't afford to cut programs, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, which bring in federal funds and "are just absolutely vital and critical to the life of a great many South Carolinians."

According to Ravenel, all state agencies would have to share in the cuts. "Everyone has to realize that good times do not last forever," Ravenel said. "When the lean times come, you have to accept your responsibility to help fund the state services."

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## BURROUGHS

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present. She asked whether the soil quality had been considered by Burroughs & Chapin in its planning and about the levee's viability if it was built using the marshy soil.

"How can you counteract the fact that the existing soil is already at poor-to-moderate level?" Brady said.

Wiseman said several other projects, such as the construction of I-77, have been made from the same dirt as in the questioned area. He said Burroughs & Chapin has taken more than 150 soil samples and is confident in the soil quality.

"It is a concern; I think we've addressed that concern," Wiseman said.

"We felt comfortable enough to go forward."

According to Wiseman, 98 percent of levees are constructed from soil rather than concrete, so the soil would be a useful and safe building material.

Council member Buddy Meetze defended the levees, saying they've been FEMA certified and that no certified levee has ever breached over the amount of time they are designed to last for. The Green Diamond levees would last 500 years, and Meetze asserted they would be constructed in a safe manner.

"You don't go out there with a bulldozer and just mound up dirt," Meetze said.

Columbia Mayor Bob Coble asked Wiseman about possible flooding, environmental consequences and who would be liable for damages. He asked Wiseman to present an economic impact study in three weeks.

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