



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A Briefing for Faculty & Staff of the University System of Georgia No. 1, January 12, 2009

“Creating a More Educated Georgia”

The Dawn of a New Biennium: 2009 Session is Off and Running

Today, being the second Monday in January of an odd-numbered year, is not only the first day of the Georgia General Assembly’s 2009 Legislative Session but also the start of a new biennium, the two-year term of office that all Georgia legislators are elected to serve.

All 236 state senators and state representatives are fresh off of November’s General Election. We welcome five new members of the Senate and 19 new House members this winter. New and veteran Georgia state lawmakers gathered in Athens in December for the 28th Biennial Institute for Georgia Legislators, which provides an orientation for new lawmakers and intensive session preparation for both new and returning legislators.

A Look at What the Regents are Seeking From the General Assembly This Session

The Board of Regents’ budget request for the overall Fiscal Year 2010 operating budget totals \$2.45 billion (prior to mandatory budget reductions). This represents an increase of \$148.7 million or 6.5 percent over the University System of Georgia’s (USG) adjusted base budget for FY 2009.

The System’s FY 2010 capital budget request totals \$321 million and includes \$245 million in prioritized projects, a \$6 million special initiative project and \$70 million in Major Repair and Rehabilitation (MRR) funds. MRR funds are used for critical institutional infrastructure and renovation needs.


In early December, with state revenues continuing to fall short of previous levels, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget directed state agencies to increase their mandatory budget reductions for FY 2009 and FY 2010 from 6 percent (\$136 million) to 8 percent (\$182 million). This is a permanent reduction to the base budget. In accordance with a budget-reduction plan approved along with the budget request, the regents in August capped the employer share of the indemnity health care plan premium at the same level as the Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan, a move that offset \$20 million in budget reductions.

When the budget reduction was increased to 8 percent in December, the regents reduced the em-

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A biennium’s first session is held in the odd-numbered year following a general election, with the second session occurring in the following even-numbered year. Within a biennium, legislative matters left pending at the end of the first session can be carried over to the second, but any business still pending at the end of the second session has to begin anew in the next biennium. Therefore, all legislation left pending at the end of the last session will have to be reintroduced this year to be given consideration.

Regular sessions of the General Assembly last 40 “legislative days.” The actual length of the session varies depending on the number of recesses called during the session, when the clock stops on the “legislative days” meter. The calendar calls for the legislature to remain in session throughout this week, recess Monday, Jan. 19, for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and Jan. 21-23 for a series of joint briefings on the Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010 budgets. The regular session will resume on Jan. 26.

Gov. Sonny Perdue will outline his budget recommendations in his annual budget address to the General Assembly at 10 a.m. on Jan. 14 in the House of Representatives Chamber at the Capitol. On Thursday, Jan. 22, Chancellor Erroll B. Davis Jr. is scheduled to address the Joint Appropriations Committee at 3 p.m. in Room 341 of the Capitol, making a case for the FY 2010 budget request of the University System of Georgia (more details in article on this page). 

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ployer contribution rate for PPO and Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) plan premiums from 75 percent to 70 percent. This action resulted in an additional \$8 million in savings throughout the University System.

The board took the additional step of establishing a temporary, one-semester fee for all students (\$100 at research universities and six other institutions; \$75 at most comprehensive universities; and \$50 at two-year and state colleges). The student fee offset an additional \$20

million in budget reductions at the institutions.

“Our institutions have responded to the serious challenges we face in terms of the state’s economy,” **Chancellor Erroll B. Davis Jr.** said. “We are guided in our decisions by the priority to maintain, first and foremost, the System’s core academic mission. However, we must protect this core mission without sacrificing the quality our students expect and deserve.”

Operating Budget

Formula Funding: As always, full funding for enrollment growth and maintenance and operations remains the most

important facet of the University System’s annual budget request. These funds will help the System continue to meet growing enrollment demand, provide for the maintenance of new facilities, keep tuition costs for students affordable and allow the board to pursue key strategic initiatives.

Of the total request for the System’s formula funding – \$114.7 million – \$79.4 million is based on the enrollment increase from FY 2008, which reflects a 4 percent increase in credit hours. In addition, \$9.6 million is requested for approximately 1.7 million in new square footage

throughout the University System (maintenance and operations or M&O funds). Also, \$5.7 million is requested to meet the cost of offering benefits to 1,134 new retirees.

Additionally, the regents are asking for \$20 million to cover the cost of increases in health insurance premiums (10 percent for the indemnity plan; 7.5 percent for the PPO plan; 6.5 percent for Blue Choice HMO; 3.9 percent for Kaiser Permanente HMO; and 5 percent for the High-Deductible health plan).

Physician Education Expansion: The budget request also includes \$8


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New to the State Senate

Gail Buckner of Morrow, District 44
 Jim Butterworth of Cornelia, District 50
 John Crosby of Tifton, District 13
 Lester Jackson of Savannah, District 2
 Freddie Powell Sims of Albany, District 12


New to the State House of Representatives

Stephen Allison of Blairsville, District 8
 Lee Anderson of Grovetown, District 117
 Glenn Baker of Jonesboro, District 78
 Paul Battles of Cartersville, District 15
 Tony Collins of Conyers, District 95
 Elly Dobbs of Atlanta, District 53
 Pat Dooley of Marietta, District 38
 “Bubber” Epps of Dry Branch, District 140
 Carol Fullerton of Albany, District 151
 Michael Harden of Toccoa, District 28
 Buddy Harden of Cordele, District 147
 Mack Jackson of Sandersville, District 142
 Ralph Long of Atlanta, District 61

Rahn Mayo of Decatur, District 91
 Jay Powell of Camilla, District 171
 Mickey Stephens of Savannah, District 161
 Rashad Taylor of Atlanta, District 55
 Lee Thompson of Lawrenceville, District 104
 Tom Weldon of Ringgold, District 3 

Bill Concerning MGC-GATC Employees to be Reintroduced This Year

Among the pieces of legislation to be reintroduced during this session is a bill that will allow former employees of the technical college that merged with Middle Georgia College (MGC) in 2007 to choose between two retirement plans.

If the bill passes, employees of the former Georgia Aviation and Technical College who now work for MGC will have the choice of remaining a member of the Employees’ Retirement System of Georgia or transferring their service to the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia. 

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million for the expansion of physician education in Georgia to supplement the \$10 million the state provided the University System in FY 2009 for this purpose. The new money will go towards hiring key faculty members; curriculum development; accreditation efforts and the expansion of graduate residencies in Athens, Albany and Savannah.

Among the goals of this request are to further develop the clinical campuses in Albany and Savannah to eventually serve a total of 60 third- and fourth-year students and to develop residency programs in

both locations. The plan is to add 15 students in Albany in FY 2010 with the requested funds.

A second goal is to fully fund the first-year student program in Athens, begin the process of hiring faculty for the second-year student program and provide for clerkships and residency programs in the Athens-Gainesville area.

Finally, the goal is to expand the number of students in Augusta from 190 to 200. Planning is on target to have resources in place to meet the requirements of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education and to begin student recruitment next summer, with the goal of welcoming the first cohort of medical students to Athens in August 2010.

The expansion of the clinical campuses will be accompanied by efforts to work with area hospitals in establishing residency programs.

Increases for Line Items:


The board's request for FY 2010 increases for the line-item units in the Appropriations Act totals \$1.5 million and includes:

- \$1.2 million for the health insurance line-item units; and
- \$245,000 for the Georgia Public Library Service funding formula.

Capital Budget

FY 2010 represents the second year of the University System's new capital investment model. The regents are requesting equipment funds for

four projects totaling \$13.8 million, construction funds for 14 projects totaling \$209.8 million, design funds for nine projects totaling \$19.8 million and \$1.6 million for one property acquisition. In addition, the Board of Regents is requesting \$6 million for a special initiative – the Medical Commons building in Augusta – and \$70 million in bond funds for MRR. The total amount requested for all of these items is \$321 million.

The Georgia Public Library Service is requesting a total of \$10.9 million in state funding for seven library projects around the state. 

Your Feedback Requested!

We request your participation in a very short reader survey that will help us to make this publication more useful to you. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to provide us with your valuable feedback. This site will only be active until Feb. 6, so please take a moment to give us your opinions right now. Thank you!