NCSU to cut degree programs

RALEIGH N.C. State University leaders announced a major reorganization Tuesday that will eliminate some degree programs and merge departments and possibly entire schools.

Chancellor Randy Woodson said NCSU faces a cut of up to $80 million from its annual state budget allocation beginning with the next fiscal year. That loss is almost certainly permanent, and so large that the only way to prevent damage to the university's mission is to rethink its entire structure rather than simply telling every department to cut, Woodson said.

"The intent is to minimize the impact of the cut," he said. "Frankly, one fear is that if we don't do this, it will be death by a thousand cuts."

If NCSU leaders don't protect core strengths of the university such as engineering and science, Woodson said, it can't perform the role that the state expects of it.

He added that with such a massive cut, layoffs are inevitable. In turn, that will mean larger class sizes, fewer sections and more difficulty for students getting the classes they need to graduate on time.

NCSU has the largest enrollment of any university in the state and, along with UNC-Chapel Hill, is regarded as one of the flagships of the 16-campus state system.

A proposed tuition increase would help, Woodson said, but not nearly enough to prevent the need to restructure and to have
layoffs. And any tuition increase would come on top of a $750 hike last year, which partly offset another budget cut from the state - the fourth in a row.

"This is a national discussion, and I believe we're all looking at a recalculated norm - and that norm is lower state budgets," Woodson said. "I don't think anyone sees a dramatic recovery for state budgets anytime soon."

**Plan isn't settled**

It's unclear which programs, departments and schools will be affected, but NCSU's reorganization will move quickly. Woodson said he has appointed Provost Warwick Arden and Vice Chancellor Charles Leffler to develop a plan by March 15. Changes outlined in the plan would begin June 1. The new budget year begins July 1. "That's not to say that in March we'll have all the answers, but we'll definitely have a plan of areas to consolidate that we can begin implementing," Woodson said.

Among other things, Arden and Leffler will look at all courses and academic degree programs with low enrollment and under-subscribed majors for possible elimination or consolidation. Woodson also said he will be looking at ways to merge parts of the administration. The reorganization is expected to include consolidation of business offices that are spread in departments all over campus into a few "regional" offices in strategic locations to handle functions such as human resources, purchasing, travel, grants and contract administration.

**No figures yet**

The state legislature hasn't yet begun work on the budget, so it's also unclear just how deep the cuts from the state will be. Still, the reduction is certain to be so substantial that there is no doubt
the reorganization will be needed, Woodson said.

The entire UNC system is scrambling to plan for cuts of up to 15 percent in its budget allocation from the state.

NCSU's review of its organization will parallel another involving the entire system. System President Tom Ross recently enlisted former UNC-Charlotte Chancellor James Woodward to identify academic duplication across the system that could be cut.

Woodward, who last year finished up as interim NCSU chancellor before Woodson was hired, has become the system's go-to man for major short-term assignments.

Woodson said NCSU started its effort before hearing about the systemwide initiative but that it would coordinate with the system.

jay.price@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4526