

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



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Laurier announces measures to meet \$3.2-million budget shortfall

✓ *Waterloo (Feb. 14)* — Wilfrid Laurier University is proposing to reduce its enrolment, close one non-academic department, dissolve a wholly-owned video production subsidiary, and phase out a total of 18 positions to cope with its most severe budget challenge since it became a publicly funded institution.

The measures aim to make up a \$3.2-million budget shortfall caused in part by the provincial government's recent announcement of a one-per-cent increase in operating grants for universities. They are contained in the university's preliminary budget plan for 1992-93, which will be submitted for approval this spring to the senate and board of governors.

"The university has sought to safeguard the quality of its teaching and learning environment and to maintain the quality of work life for its employees," John Weir, the university president, said in announcing the measures.

Senior administrators met with affected employees Thursday afternoon and explained the measures to representatives of employee and student groups earlier today. An internal memorandum, which explained the measures and invited further suggestions, was circulated to all employees this morning.

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Earlier, as the preliminary budget plan was being formulated, senior administration solicited suggestions from the executive committees of the staff and faculty associations on ways to cope with the budget challenge.

The proposed measures include:

- reducing first-year, full-time admissions by 276 from 1,645 to 1,379, and part-time course registrations by 854 from 9,054 to 8,200.
- dissolving Telecollege Productions Inc., which produces videos for home study courses (video distance education courses will continue to be offered);
- phasing out the word processing centre and dispersing the activity to operating departments;
- reducing the number of course offerings;
- reducing the number of faculty leave replacements;
- reducing the number of part-time faculty stipends;
- reducing staff in some support services departments;
- and reducing spending on supplies and contracted services.

Employees in affected positions will, in most cases, be retained and transferred to other positions as suitable vacancies arise; retraining, where necessary, will be provided. The reassignment of affected employees to other positions is expected to be completed within 18 months.

The creation of a special \$600,000 fund, drawn from the university's accumulated surplus, has been proposed to pay for this and other one-time costs associated with implementing the measures.

The university will also explore the feasibility of early retirement and special leave plans for support staff and managers. The current policy curtailing the use of paid

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overtime will be extended and the president will review all positions that become vacant through attrition.

The university is also undertaking a comprehensive energy conservation program.

The measures have been proposed in the wake of the provincial government's announcements of only slight increases (one per cent for 1992-93 and two per cent in both 1993-94 and 1994-95) in funding for universities over the next three years.

Commenting on the budget years 1993-94 and 1994-95, Weir said funding will continue to be constrained. "We will have to find ways to adjust to that continued pressure.

"At the same time," he added, "it is important for the university to remain dynamic. It must continue to evolve with the society it serves. It has to consider the changing needs of its students and to continue to move towards its own long-range goals.

"In the short run, it will have to do so with something like the resources it currently has," Weir said.