

'Everyone's pointing fingers' at WSU

University groups disagree about budget cut plans

By Kelsey Husky Daily News Staff Writer

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Washington State University's chapter of the American Association of University Professors sent a letter to President Elson S. Floyd and Provost Warwick Bayly stating unhappiness with how budget planning has worked for this round of cuts.

AAUP is a group that advocates for shared governance and academic freedom. Judy Mueth, a women's studies professor and WSU's AAUP president, said the group isn't happy about the university's interpretation of shared governance as well as the timeline for handling the cuts.

"It really seems like the administration wasn't in good faith asking for input and going to handle that input well," she said about information being provided at the end of the semester.

Mueth said the faculty wants more of a say in how cuts are made since they're in charge of curriculum. Cuts in any way affect curriculum, be it who is hired or what programs are cut, and WSU has too narrow an interpretation of how much power faculty should have.

She said during previous cuts, committees were formed to streamline suggestions and plans. While individual members felt decisions were made above their heads, it was a positive thing to have the structure in place.

Faculty Senate isn't "willing to buck the tide" and stand up for faculty, she said. The senate is a governmental group of faculty members with representation from each college as well as other university-related people.

Senate Chairman Max Kirk, a professor in the construction management program, said he hasn't heard specific issues from faculty about the senate's performance.

"If they don't like what's happening, they should say something," he said.

The budget cuts are causing distress among faculty, he said, especially in the arena of job loss, but the same thing happened two years ago with the last budget crisis.

"Everyone's pointing fingers at everyone else," he said, but WSU administration has very little that they can do to combat cuts besides eliminating positions.

"The university has nothing left," he said. "I know that as a fact."

He said WSU has grown to the point that he thinks it can't be sustained - the only option is restructuring, which includes some eliminations.

Kirk said he, and other members of the senate, are at risk for losing their jobs.

"But does that make me want to go out and attack?" he said.

WSU spokesman Darin Watkins said anxieties are the result of hard times, and everyone is feeling the pinch.

Floyd declined to comment.

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