

# Platteville, Parkside consider layoffs, furloughs to address structural deficits

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Leaders at UW-Platteville and UW-Parkside say they're considering taking new steps to address structural deficits, including layoffs and furloughs, in the face of enrollment declines and financial challenges.

The potential moves come on the heels of UW-Oshkosh announcing it will lay off more than 200 of about 1,460 employees to address an \$18 million deficit.

UW-Platteville has a projected \$9.7 million deficit, while UW-Parkside's is projected to reach at least \$4 million by the end of the fiscal year.

UW System President Jay Rothman in a statement said the announcements from UW-Platteville and UW-Parkside are "disappointing and unfortunate - yet not unexpected."

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"Our universities are facing demographic, political and economic realities that require hard, though necessary decisions. These actions we are forced to take represent missed opportunities for our students and families but are necessary given our circumstances," Rothman said.

Dem Gov. Tony Evers had proposed a \$305 million increase in state funding to the UW System in his 2023-25 budget, but the GOP-controlled state Legislature rejected that move. Instead, it cut state funding by \$32 million as Republicans, most notably Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, criticized its diversity, equity and inclusion efforts as wasteful, leftist indoctrination. The System could earn that money back if it comes up with a plan to use it for workforce development purposes.

Vos, R-Rochester, in response told WisPolitics he hopes campuses will “start by eliminating their unnecessary DEI positions.”

“It would be a first step in showing they’re serious about cutting wasteful spending, shoring up their deficits, and working with the Legislature to develop sustainable long-term funding solutions,” Vos said.

Dems focused on the funding cut in their response to the campus moves.

Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer urged Republicans to use a special session called by Evers next month to address the budget shortfalls, as well as child care costs and paid family leave. Republicans have quickly gaveled in and out of previous special sessions.

“Our community members are face-to-face with furloughs and spending cuts. There are livelihoods on the line across the UW System,” the Racine Dem said. “Inaction on September 20th is unacceptable, and I hope my Republican colleagues see the gravity of this situation.”

GOP leaders and the Joint Finance Committee co-chairs didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.

UW-Parkside Interim Chancellor Scott Menke told employees the administration needs to consider all options to conserve resources.

“While our preliminary estimate for freshman and transfer enrollment looks promising for the new school year, it will likely take more than a year to recover from our current shortfall,” Menke said.

Last fall, 3,966 students enrolled at UW-Parkside compared to 6,485 at UW-Platteville. Overall, 160,782 students enrolled in UW System schools. UW-Parkside had 525 total employees in fall 2022, according to UW System data, while UW-Platteville had 915 employees.

Menke cited challenges such as declining enrollment, reduced state support, the former tuition freeze and inflation. He said the school is considering using up to \$1 million of its unused balances to cover a portion of the deficit and reducing department budgets and spending across the campus by 10 percent.

Other changes include only filling positions identified as “critical need” areas,

pausing all new initiatives, and campuswide furloughs. Menke said Parkside may make other changes as well if needed, including layoffs, consolidating and restructuring departments and creating incentives for early retirement.

Meanwhile, UW-Platteville Chancellor Tammy Evetovich said the university is weighing implementing one-time budget retractions, along with furloughs and staff reductions.

“While implementing the strategies before us will not be easy, we need to position ourselves for long-term financial stability and prosperity,” Evetovich said.

Prof. Terry Warfield, a member of UW-Madison PROFS’s Steering Committee, told WisPolitics the situation is “predictable” after the Legislature decided to cut the UW System budget.

“It’s hard to fathom why we wouldn’t invest more to help these campuses respond to these challenges and to continue to provide higher education and more skilled and well-educated people that join the workforce,” Warfield said.

See the letters to campus employees:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/230821UWParkside.pdf>

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