

Responding to requests from a legislative committee and the governor, the University of Wyoming has started working on plans for three possible budget-cutting scenarios.

The Legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee has asked all state agencies to submit plans to reduce their state-funded budgets by 5 and 8 percent. Gov. Matt Mead, meanwhile, has separately requested a 2 percent budget-reduction plan.

A 2 percent cut would reduce state general fund appropriations to UW by \$3.7 million a year starting in July 2012. A 5 percent cut would mean a \$9.2 million annual reduction, and an 8 percent cut would total \$14.7 million per year.

In response to the requests, the UW Board of Trustees on Friday directed President Tom Buchanan to develop a process for (1) soliciting input from UW stakeholders on the principles and priorities to be considered in identifying reductions of these amounts and (2) developing a plan for implementing the reductions, should they occur.

“At this point in the appropriations process, no one knows for certain whether a budget shortfall may occur, but committee members have asked for this information as they draft the next biennial budget, and we will comply,” Buchanan says.

The governor will send his budget recommendations to the Legislature by Dec. 1.

The trustees' directive parallels the process that UW used to respond to then-Gov. Dave Freudenthal's mandate to state agencies, in January 2009, to plan for budget reductions of up to 10 percent. Later that year, the governor instructed state agencies to implement those plans for the second half of that biennium. UW completed implementation of its plan in June 2011.

Buchanan expects to provide information about the university's plans in mid-January when UW officials meet with the JAC to discuss the FY 2013-14 biennial budget request. Whether it will be necessary to implement actual budget reductions will depend on the outcomes of the Legislature's 2012 budget session, which is scheduled to run Feb. 13-March 9.