

Commonwealth shrinks Penn State's budget

by Jen Henderson
staff writer

University Park recently decreased the budget for all of the branch campuses in the Penn State system, including the Behrend College.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania withdrew a portion of the University's appropriations, making the decrease necessary.

The reduction thus far is 0.5 percent, but may exceed 2 percent. Due to this decrease, Behrend's budget will definitely be tight this year and for as long as these state appropriations are lowered.

The reductions could cost roughly \$110,000 to \$440,000. Compared to the 2001-2002 total state appropriations, approximately \$335 million, the deductions may seem rather miniscule, but many offices will be asked to tighten their belts this academic year.

The cut in budget will be administered throughout the campus' various departments, so no specific section will have to give more money than another. Because the budget decrease was caught early, it will not cause as many problems as may be expected.

Penn State is being asked to give back appropriations due to the Commonwealth's gap in taxes collected versus dollars spent. The returned money will help bridge that gap.

Penn State Behrend has already returned \$108,000 due to these cuts. This figure is expected to increase, depending on tax collections further cuts. The total may exceed \$324,000.

"The state provides money to universities based on a projected budget which in turn is based upon projected tax revenues. Due to the softening economy, tax revenues are falling behind projections, so the state had to adjust planned expenditures downward," said Dr. Jack Burke, interim provost and dean.

The circumstances now occurring also happened in the early 1990s, Burke added.

Penn State, along with many other colleges and universities, is grateful for the money the state donates for young adults' educations. With all of the students who apply at Penn State yearly, it is very hard to make ends meet if there are not enough funds to cover such necessary items as housing, food services, medical needs, and the ever-increasing need for new technology.

The cuts in appropriations may affect the educational programs that are in high demand by students. Burke hopes these cuts won't put education at risk.

"As for the impact on students, I hope there is very little, if any," said Burke. "The college plans to defer physical plan projects to next year. Thus, students won't really notice much difference since we don't expect any reductions in services."

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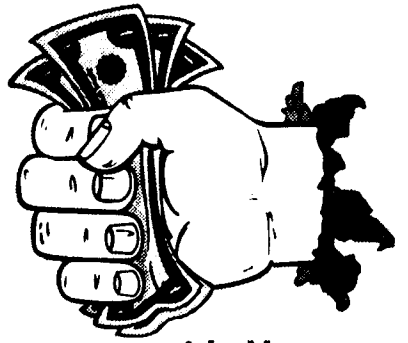
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MONEY, MONEY, MONEY, MONEY, MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Generosity replacing luxury this Christmas

by Linda Shrieves
The Orlando Sentinel

It's beginning to look like a very different kind of Christmas.

Forget about the Neiman Marcus holiday catalog, which this year features a \$70,000 limited-edition Lexus SC 430 or a special-edition Indian motorcycle for the paltry price of \$24,500.

This year, at a time when many Americans are thankful to spend time with family and friends, people are shifting their focus from the flashy, expensive trinkets or luxury items of holidays past to more meaningful holiday presents.

Suddenly, Belgian chocolates seem like a silly indulgence when you could buy a handmade Christmas decoration made by artisans in impoverished nations, a gift that helps prevent poverty by funneling money back into villages.

Who needs the latest foil-lined Hanukkah cards, when a gift of 10 UNICEF cards could immunize 30 children against polio?

And in a fruitcake-fractured society, give fruitcake lovers the gift that gives twice — reward a friend with an \$18 fruitcake made by a Texas charity and you can help the Houston-based Center Serving Persons with Mental Retardation, which has used past fruitcake proceeds to purchase a wheelchair-accessible bus.

This holiday season, Americans have a chance to give back to the world — and many already are.

"People are looking for ways to give of themselves," said Chris Raymond, executive editor of the Boston-based Web site *Spirituality.com*. "Beyond Thanksgiving, it's 'thanks-living.' People are really looking for

opportunities to share kindness, thanks and love. I'd say this is a very different time of year. I was thinking what a contrast this is from this time last year. We were a bitterly divided country after the presidential election last year. Today, we're seeing people united in prayer."

According to UNICEF, which produces greeting cards and spends the proceeds on medicines for children, card sales are up significantly this year, as much as 50 percent at Pier 1 Imports.

"We're having an outstanding year this year," said Anne-Marie Grey, UNICEF's vice president of marketing. Not only are card sales up, but she also has seen an interesting shift. Corporations are donating money to the group this year in lieu of giving corporate gifts to clients.

Grey thinks Americans have been deeply moved by the Sept. 11 tragedies, causing them to re-examine their holiday traditions.

"People want to do good. When you give a UNICEF card, it's more than saying, 'I'm thinking of you.' You're also ensuring the lives of women and children around the world are being improved," Grey says. "A very, very small amount of money can make a significant difference in the life of a child."

However, Grey says that Americans also tend to buy Christmas cards when the economy is shaky.

"Traditionally greeting cards always do well in a downturn," she said. "The bottom line is the greeting card is an affordable way to reach out to tell someone that you're thinking of them."

At Heifer Project International, a nondenominational charity that provides livestock to impoverished countries to help make families self-sufficient, fundraisers don't know how

much they'll make from holiday gifts. But this year, they've issued a special plea to help Afghan refugees, particularly widows, in Pakistani refugee camps.

"We've put out a request to the public: We need to increase our aid to Pakistani refugee camps significantly," said Christine Volkmer, a spokeswoman for the charity. "When disasters like that happen, we try to get the public's awareness to those areas. People then feel really involved in the solution."

Want to be involved in the solution? Here are some suggestions for a few meaningful gifts.

For the

fruitcake lovers out there, here's a cake that gives back. Willow River Farms of Brookshire, Texas, produces two fruitcakes, a brandied nut cake and a traditional fruitcake.

Packed with fruit and nuts and laced with brandy, the brandied cake may be just the gift for the person who resists fruitcake. The New York Times has called it "a fruitcake anyone could love."

The fruitcakes are made by volunteers. Proceeds go to the Center Serving Persons with Mental Retardation, a nonprofit organization that operates a residential high-rise in Houston and a rural farming artisan's community 50 miles west of Houston.

A 2-pound fruitcake or brandied nut cake costs \$18; a 3-pound cake costs \$27. Shipping is extra. To order, go to <http://fruitcakes.org/> or call 1-800-939-3720.

Want to help Afghan refugees? Buy chickens. Heifer Project International has been helping Afghan refugees living in Pakistani refugee camps since 1994. Because there are so many war widows, Heifer is concentrating on helping women, providing them with 10 Fayoumi poultry. The animals are small and easy to manage, are adapted to the local environment and produce meat and eggs for the families. Because of this, they are ideal for women and their families as sources of food, and they can easily be transported back to Afghanistan when the families are able to move back to their homeland.

For \$20, you can buy a flock of chicks in a friend's name and send a gift card. To order, or to get more information on other Heifer projects around the world, go to <http://heifer.org/> or call 1-800-422-0474.

How important is a small gift, whether it's the choice of a greeting card or a teddy bear for a child? Consider this: If you buy 10 UNICEF Christmas cards, the money will be used to immunize 30 children against polio. Twenty cards can provide enough vitamin A to prevent blindness in 250 children each year.

In addition to the cards, the UNICEF catalog also features ties and teddy bears, including UNICEF Teddy Mawuena, which means "Gift of God" in Ghana. Teddy Mawuena is 14 inches tall and costs \$15. He's available only by ordering directly from the catalog at 1-800-553-1200. UNICEF cards can be ordered online at <http://unicefusa.org/> or you can find them at Pier 1 Imports and Staples stores.



Charity for them ruining economy for us?

by Karen Heller
Knight Ridder Newspapers

The mall's not exactly hopping, my husband says to the saleswoman weeks after The Fact.

They tell us to be normal, to act normal, she says quietly. But it's not normal. And it's not going to be for a long time.

And then David says, "normal" isn't going to be how we remember it.

The saleswoman nods, her every gesture as subdued as the store. My grandchildren may never know what "normal" was.

This time of year is when Americans traditionally get loopy, doing what they don't in saner moments during an extended slide that finishes in a two-week crack-up of excess. It's a necessity of sorts, getting all the stuff out of our systems, preparing for the dark winter ahead. It's an exuberant way of storing nuts.

But I don't think that's going to happen this holiday season, not when opening greeting cards and mail-order catalogs may be hazardous to your health and, to many, travel appears as

arduous as it did a century ago.

The president wants us to spend. People are not spending.

Thanks to digital photographs, at no time in history have Americans been more cognizant of the gap between their living standards and those of the country their government is bombing.

It's hard to say we need a new pair of shoes while looking at children without any.

I used to be in awe of the way the French and Italians live, their long superior meals, their preference for pleasure over industry when we confine such behavior to a few weeks of the year, requiring institutionalized holidays as an excuse. Then a few historians set me straight. They're depressed peoples, they pointed out. Americans might behave like that, too, if their soil had been strafed twice in 25 years. Besides, they added, lots of Europeans don't act like that anymore. They've discovered the 10-minute lunch hour.

America was founded without fun. Pilgrims and Puritans and Quakers believed every day was devoted to God's work, every day worthy of the same celebration. The Christmas we know is a relatively recent phenomenon birthed in the 19th century, though many people were still having a miserable time.

Freedom helps. Money, too. When that fails: plastic.

I'm imagining, hoping really, that charitable giving will be up this season, not only to 9-11 funds but everywhere, locally, internationally, and that will help salve our pain. Giving, after all, is a form of spending. But we may be in for some very ascetic holidays. A few people were already indulging in denial, self-righteous pride always the last sin to go. Our food co-op sells seasonal turkey-shaped tofu, which is too weird on so many levels. Why eat food specifically designed to look like the food you chose not to eat?

But I digress. We "need" to celebrate. We need to experience joy, and not just the turkey-shaped tofu kind. We need to sing, to hike in the woods, to eat cheese, to crank up the stereo and to dance to Aretha. We need to gather together with our loved ones — that is, the people we love, as opposed to the relatives who show up at the holidays, and only the holidays (but, wonder of wonders, aren't coming this year because of concerns about travel).

We need to celebrate all that we have, including the shoes. It may not be normal, but it's a start.

National Commentary



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