

## **From staff perspective, university budget a recipe for disaster**

By Peter Kaczmarczyk  
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This guest column was written by Bloomington resident Peter Kaczmarczyk, president of Communication Workers of America local 4730.

Indiana University's current budget is a recipe for disaster. It creates an unsustainable situation that will lead to ruin if not altered. President McRobbie spelled out three priorities for the university when he explained the budget: to hire more faculty, build more buildings and avoid laying off staff. Sounds reasonable, as a university needs faculty, faculty need buildings, and faculty and buildings need staff to assist and run them. What could be wrong there?

Unfortunately, as it turns out, much is wrong there. IU has chosen to charge full steam ahead on the first two priorities, pouring every available million into them and to take a slash and burn approach to the disingenuous goal of avoiding staff layoffs. Only two results can come from this, and neither is good for IU or anyone touched by the university.

Staff hiring is frozen, and all staff positions that become open will have their funding lines cut in half. These changes affect all, from the highest paid PA to the lowest paid office or maintenance worker. These are also long-term plans. All of the university's actions and statements make clear these changes are here to stay. Departments in Bloomington have been told they must slash their budgets, although they are not being informed of the amount they have to cut. They are simply told to just keep cutting, that the administration will let them know the target amount later and that they should expect these cuts to be permanent.

Further, Larry MacIntyre, assistant vice president of university communications, stated that IU "must begin preparing now for what will likely be a budgetary cliff." IU claims to be thinking of the future, but their solution is to push the staff off the cliff now and hope the buildings will keep standing.

The results? Staff numbers could be down as much as 25 percent or more in just two years, even if some halved positions are combined and filled. Who will support the 100-plus new faculty that IU plans to hire? Departments are already stretched thin; staff of all levels overworked. How does IU plan to attract the new faculty it desires? Word will get out that IU may have shiny new buildings, but that they are strangely empty of employees.

Finally there is the draconian approach to staff taken by IU in the budget, which heaped more insult upon them. Morale is now at an all-time low. We are not blind. Millions are being poured into faculty hiring and buildings, new spending with a long-term commitment attached, yet only the lowest paid staff received a bonus. IU was unwilling

to even consider giving a bonus to all. Instead they chose to go with a plan that drives a wedge between staff and is seen by many long-term, dedicated staff as a slap in the face.

So what's the future hold? It's hard to believe that IU does not see the implications of the budget and the staffing problems that will result. One can only think they plan for staff to be replaced with low-paid, low-expense hourly workers. How else can IU possibly charge ahead on its goals, yet continue to pay for it on the backs of the workers? It's either that or the university will collapse under its weight, as staff burn out and faculty flee to some other university that will provide them the support they need, with skilled and dedicated staff, not just shiny new buildings. Either result is a recipe for disaster for IU and the people and communities that depend upon it.