

**Governing Iowa's public  
universities and special schools**

University of Iowa  
Iowa State University  
University of Northern Iowa  
Iowa School for the Deaf  
Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School  
Lakeside Lab Regents Resource Center  
Quad-Cities Graduate Center  
Southwest Iowa Regents Resource Center  
Tri-State Graduate Center



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February 24, 2011

**Protect Iowa's Public Universities – Stop the Cuts!**

Through decades of support for the University of Northern Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Iowa, we have built three of the nation's finest public universities, benefitting students, local communities and our entire state.

Our universities educate Iowa's doctors, lawyers, teachers, veterinarians, engineers, dentists, and entrepreneurs. Their collective economic impact is unparalleled, reaching \$8 billion annually.

While Iowans' support for their universities remains strong, the same cannot be said for the state's investment in public higher education. As recently as 1981, fully 77 cents of every dollar for educating students at our universities came from Iowans through state appropriations.

Since then, things have changed dramatically. By 2001, only 64 cents of the universities' education budgets came from the state. The downward slide accelerated during the financial crisis. In the last two years alone, state appropriations to Iowa's Public Universities plummeted \$141 million, or 20 percent, a greater cut than all but 2 other states.

These disproportionate cuts are unfair and put our students at risk. Since 2001, funding for all other areas of state government has *grown* 28 percent, while appropriations to Iowa's Public Universities and Special Schools have been *cut* 24 percent. Today the state's contribution to educating Iowa students has fallen to 39 cents of every dollar.

The Iowa economy is beginning to recover, creating the opportunity for the state to reinvest in our universities, relieve pressure on student tuition, and protect the outstanding educational quality built over many generations.

So far, our elected officials are on the opposite path, cutting public higher education even deeper. The Governor's budget for 2012 proposes to cut another \$42 million from our universities and special schools; the Iowa House of Representatives wants to cut even further.

The unfortunate irony is that Iowa's Public Universities have never been more important to our state's future. No other institutions do more to grow Iowa's population, create good-paying, knowledge-economy jobs, increase family incomes, and improve quality of life. Their contributions are critical to filling the projected 319,000 college-level jobs Iowa needs by 2018.

Some say that the state cannot afford to reinvest in Iowa's Public Universities, despite the fact that our universities *return* \$14.50 in increased economic activity in Iowa for every state dollar invested, and that they attract more in research grants each year (\$619 million) than they receive in state funding (\$552 million). This is an investment the state can't afford *not* to make.

Others see endless opportunities for our universities to become more efficient, despite years of doing more with less. They ignore the 900 early retirements that will generate \$175 million in savings over the next five years, and the additional \$25 million in savings from faculty reductions, position eliminations, employee furloughs, and benefit changes. They overlook the fact that our universities have reduced faculty by 4.4 percent (despite a 4.9 percent increase in students), administrators by 8.2 percent and general service staff by 21.6 percent since 2009.

Still others see our universities' ongoing successes—record research dollars, growth at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, rising enrollments—and conclude that the state can reduce its investment without consequence.

Here is what they are missing. Dollars to fund our most important mission—educating students—come from only three sources: state appropriations, tuition and improvements in productivity. We share the conviction that our universities must realize additional efficiencies, but they can only do more with less for so long.

Budget cuts have already had a detrimental impact on education. At the University of Iowa 12 graduate programs have been eliminated, and fewer faculty members are teaching more students. Iowa State University students are experiencing larger classes, more crowded laboratories, and fewer elective choices. And with additional cuts, the University of Northern Iowa expects fewer full-time faculty, more adjunct professors, fewer courses, and larger class sizes.

As the state withdraws support for our universities, the financial burden falls on students and their families. Some would have you believe that every time the legislature cuts funding, the Board of Regents simply increases tuition to compensate. That's not true. For many years, our tuition rates have grown less than the national average, and tuition increases have offset less than 25 percent of state appropriation cuts over the last two years.

The reductions in state appropriations leave the Board with a difficult dilemma. Increase tuition too little, and quality suffers; increase too much and affordability becomes a challenge. The current funding gap we face would equal a 15 percent tuition increase. Restoring total funding to levels of just two years ago would require a 47 percent increase. In contrast, the Board of Regents is considering a 5 percent increase.

The Board has not made its tuition decision, and not all Regents agree on the best solution. But this much is clear: Even if the full 5 percent increase is approved, the lion's share of next year's shortfall will come from university operations, not from increased tuition.

We must end cuts in state appropriations to Iowa's Public Universities. To protect hard-won quality, ensure affordability and access for all Iowans, and ensure that these outstanding institutions serve future generations of Iowans as they have us, it is time to stop the cuts.

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