

U budget cuts advance in House

The bill cuts \$89.2 million from the University's two-year budget.

MIKE ZITTLow
mzittlow@mndaily.com

The Minnesota House Ways and Means Committee passed a bill Monday that cuts \$89.2 million from the University of Minnesota's projected two-year budget and poses reductions to the state agency that provides financial aid for students.

The bill, which already went through the House Finance Committee, draws from the University's projected budget increases. In 2012, \$44 million of that will be cuts to Operations and Maintenance. There will be an extended \$4 million cut to the school's Agriculture and Extension Service, as well as extended reductions to other areas like health sciences.

A similar bill will go before the state Senate Committee on Finance on Wednesday.

University Chief Financial Officer Richard

Pfutzenreuter said the University had no input in the bill. The proposed cuts affect funds that would have gone toward financial aid, rehiring 75 faculty members and maintenance costs, he said.

It's too early to tell whether the cuts will mean a tuition increase, Pfutzenreuter said.

Republican legislative leaders have said this is only the first round of budget cuts. Pfutzenreuter said round two will be "the dicey proposition for the University."

The bill also includes a \$200 million cut to state agencies but specifies that higher education cannot be included.

But Rep. Lyndon Carlson, DFL-Crystal, said it could mean a \$30 million cut to the Minnesota Office of Higher Education — an agency that provided grants, work study funds and scholarships to 84,500 students in 2009.

Cuts to the University and to the Office of Higher Education mean "lost opportunity" for students, said Carlson, who voted against the bill. The University will have to deal with the "pressure" of inflation and increasing student enrollment.

"[The University] will not be getting the kind of funding to support its growth," Carlson said. "We're going to see tuition increase. We'll probably see cuts in staff and faculty."

Rep. Bob Gunther, R-Fairmont, who proposed the section of the bill that might mean cuts to the Office of Higher Education, said the bill is necessary to pull Minnesota out of financial crisis.

"If we don't do this, we're going to have to lay off a lot of people," Gunther said.

Democrats criticized Republicans on the committee for passing a "piecemeal" bill that had "limited public input."

Rep. Ann Lenczewski, DFL-Bloomington, complained that the bill had not been displayed on the committee's website in time for the public to give its input.

Republicans said the bill is a responsible action to combat the state's deficit.

"The sooner you stop spending, the more options you have," Rep. Mary Liz Holberg, R-Lakeville, chairwoman of the Ways and Means Committee, said.

BACK TO STUDYING



KARA HARMS, DAILY

Art senior Brett Westgor studies next to art displays in the Regis Center for Art.

County, U to see ramp revamp in next 10 years

The project will replace 7,000 pedestrian ramps and cost \$7 million.

BY KATHRYN ELLIOTT
kelliott@mndaily.com

Hennepin County plans to replace 7,000 of its pedestrian ramps on street corners over the next decade, including some near the University of Minnesota campus.

At \$1,000 per ramp, the project will cost \$7 million. Hennepin County has access to an initial \$1 million in federal funds, but to stay on schedule the county must come up with another \$1 million each year, likely through reallocations.

The areas for pedestrian ramp replacement include Fourth Street, University Avenue and Washington Avenue.

Although each intersection must be evaluated for its unique conditions, the ideal replacement would place curb

budgets for the long-range overhaul because, he said, it's the responsible thing to do.

Grube pitched a seven-to-10-year plan to the county Board of Commissioners earlier this month. He plans to hold several open houses to get community feedback before it gets final approval from the board.

Parts of the county with the most traffic are likely to get new ramps first, Grube said, which puts the Dinkytown area in the "earlier rather than later" end of the project. Still, the first geographic area Grube has targeted is North Minneapolis, both to get one area of the city done and so construction crews are "pros" by the time they reach the more densely populated areas.

As for Stadium Village, although Washington Avenue Southeast falls within the county boundaries, Grube said upcoming light rail-related construction on the bridge means he'll delay any

under the Americans with Disabilities Act, legislation meant to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities.

Since 2003, standards for pedestrian ramps have required a "tactile warning" — raised bumps on the ramp's surface — for people who are blind or use wheelchairs.

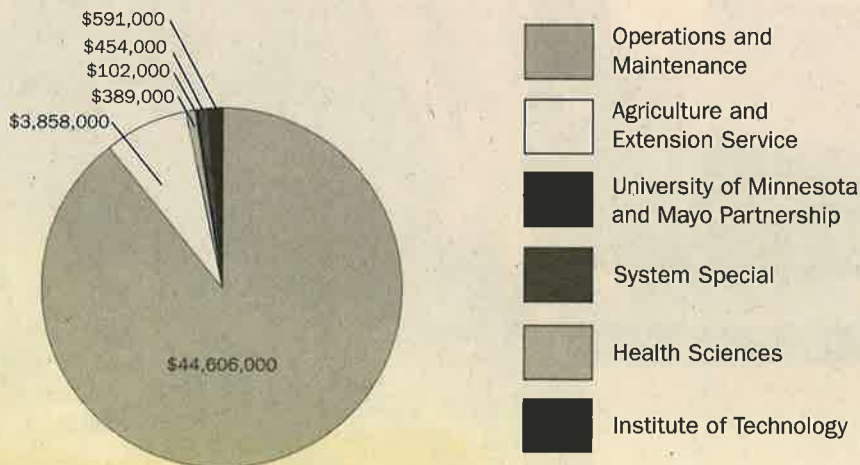
Kristie Billiar, ADA Implementation Coordinator for Minnesota Department of Transportation, explained some of the design possibilities for new ramps.

MnDOT developed an ADA transition plan in 2010 in response to increased complaints. One facet of the plan involves curb ramps. A prominent consideration in replacing the ramps is using hardy materials that can stand up to Minnesota winters.

Some of the old ramps were made using a "cast-in-place" technique for which truncated domes, the "bumpy" surface, are still used

DIVIDING THE CUTS

Total appropriation: \$50 million



SOURCE: MINNESOTA SENATE