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Students First

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It is a difficult time for ISU. The budget cuts have hurt very good programs.

Dr. Terry Mason, Student Counseling Service director
ing, says he has never been to Student Counseling, but he could see how detrimental it would be for a student who needed immediate attention to be put on a waiting list.

“When you have a pressing issue, you should always have someone to talk to. You should never be put on a waiting list. That might actually discourage you from going,” he says.

Emergency sessions are available in severe cases.

Thomas B. Thielen Student Health Center
The recently renamed Thomas B. Thielen Student Health Center is more frequently used by ISU students than SCS. Almost 90 percent of ISU students visit the center at least once during their tenure at ISU, says James Nelson, account director at the health center.

That’s why the health center has a bigger budget and more room to cut. More than $114,000 was eliminated, or about 2 percent of the student-health center’s current budget.

One of the most obvious ramifications of these cuts will become apparent in the upcoming months. Free flu shots were offered to students last year, and Nelson says cases of the flu decreased dramatically. Those shots won’t be free this time around, and subsequently, probably won’t reach as many students.

The health center has also cut back on hours. It is not open as late on weeknights or weekends, Nelson says. The new hours are Monday and Tuesday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Wednesday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Thursday and Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday 8 p.m. to noon.

The money to pay for the ever-popular human sexuality course usually comes from the center’s budget. With the cuts, that’s no longer true. Another department has offered to foot the bill this year, but no one knows how it will be paid for the year after that.

Then there’s the old-fashioned way to take a hit, in our own pocketbooks. That happens next year, when the mandatory $110 charge per year for each student rises $20 to help offset this year’s cuts and the unannounced doozies coming up.

“We are doing everything we can to contain costs,” Nelson says. “However, some fees will have to be raised, and users will have to pay the higher rates if they expect to have the same services. Our rates are still very favorable as compared to the local marketplace.”

For example, a Pap smear at Student Health costs $12, while women can be charged up to $200 at other health-care providers, Nelson says.

Balancing the Budget on Students’ Backs?
Everybody has to do their share at ISU as long as the state legislature continues to slow the flow of tax money to the regent universities. But can these two student-centered, critical services roll their sleeves up much more?

Andy Tofilon, Government of the Student Body president, says the cuts on the counseling and health centers show very clearly how students’ lives are affected by decisions of administrators and politicians.

“Whatever happens at this university, whatever goes wrong, whatever goes right, directly affects the students,” says Tofilon, senior in journalism and mass communication.

Pedersen says it doesn’t make sense for student-services programs such as these to be cut back as enrollments reach record levels.

“I think they should leave them [Student Health and Student Counseling] alone,” Pedersen says. “And as the student population increases, their budgets should increase proportionately.”

Maybe the state legislature will a few years down the road. The best we can hope for next year might just be no cuts, or at least smaller cuts than this year. But no one can see the future, except that it looks rough.

Jenn Amendt is a sophomore in pre-journalism and mass communication.
Additional reporting by Bethany Kobourek.