Purdue manages low intake well

By Charise Pettit
Campus Editor

At a Board of Trustees meeting Friday, Purdue president Martin Jischke talked about the impact of continued budget cuts, the vice president for human relations discussed progress toward increasing diversity on campus and trustees approved several construction contracts and professorships.

Jischke said Purdue has already experienced $75 million in statewide revenue shortfalls, which have led to $358 million in deferred repairs and renovations and many vacant faculty and staff positions across campus.

Purdue has successfully managed limited resources to become one of the best universities in the nation, said Jischke.

A presidential task force and the Commission of Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools both applauded Purdue for its efficient and effective use of resources. For example, Purdue’s higher administrative staff comprised 2.9 percent of staff in 2001, compared to 4.1 percent at peer institutions and 6.3 percent at other Big Ten schools. Purdue is able to use 68 percent of its gross square footage, when the nationally accepted benchmark is 55 to 65 percent. Research funds have reached 97 percent of the average fulltime faculty compensation level.

Jischke also stressed that the Campaign for Purdue is meant to go the extra mile, to take Purdue to the next level of excellence, and money from private funds and research cannot replace state support.

"If we are to ensure the future of affordable higher education for the people of Indiana, it will require more than asking universities to continue making do with less," he said. "It will require strong state support, along with increased private fund-raising, sponsored programs and research."

For their part, state legislators understand that education will play a major role in eliminating shortages in the future and have started forming plans that address Purdue’s requests.

Although the House and Senate versions are different, they share some points. Both fund enrollment growth, include the $36 million Millennium Engineering Building, provide a 1 percent inflation adjustment for the second year and attempt to restore repair and renovation funding currently being withheld. In addition, the House bill supports construction of the Biomedical Engineering Building, while the Senate bill would fund the program expansion but not the actual building. However, Jischke said, these versions still fall short of some of Purdue’s real needs.

“We are committed to working with the governor and General Assembly on a funding plan for higher education that is good for our state, its citizens and for our students," said Jischke.

Alysa Rollock, vice president for human relations, gave a presentation on diversity at Purdue. She said that although the number of minority faculty has increased to 11.8 percent and female faculty has increased 26.7 percent, these numbers are still below the peer institution averages of 15 and 29.3 percent, respectively.

Purdue has instituted programs and initiatives to enhance diversity, such as the Diversity, Work Life and Campus Life audit, which holds focus groups to find areas to improve in. Purdue has also seen success with talent searches to find potential students whose parents did not attend college.

Rollock said Purdue is making progress and heading in the right direction but the level of diversity is still not where it needs to be.

She said the school should focus on the need to provide financial aid for those that need it, because many minority students get better offers from other schools.

“They should not have to leave the state of Indiana," she said. "If we can offer aid sooner, then many will be able to make their choices based on the quality of the school and not money."'

Trustees also awarded the construction contract for the Bindley Bioscience Center. With a bid of $119.95 million, Weigand Construction Co. Inc. of Fort Wayne, Ind., received the contract. Construction will begin in April and be finished by June 2005.

Trustees also approved $5.2 million to expand service of all utilities to the Discovery Park located on State Street.

Phase four of the Cary Quadrangle renovation was also approved and a $5.9 million contract awarded to Kettlehut Construction Inc. The project includes making space in the basement for a student-run radio station.

In other action, trustees named three distinguished professorships. Douglas Powell was named the distinguished professor of child development and family studies. Powell is the creator of the "It's My Child Too" program, which helps young fathers. Provost Sally Frost Mason called him a "pioneer in research on early childhood parenting programs and who also sets high standards in learning and engagement."

Mark J.T. Smith was named the Michael J. and Katherine R. Birck professor of electrical and computer engineering. Smith is a leading researcher in the compression and transmission of image and video signals. He said that when he was younger, Dick Tracy and his watch with three dimensional images inspired his work now. The Bircks have also donated $30 million to the Birck Nanotechnology Center and $5 million to improvements on the Birck Boilermaker Golf Complex.

Timothy D. Sands was named the Basil S. Turner professor of engineering. He has 11 patents in the areas of pulsed laser processing of materials and nanocomposites and works on the assembly of micromachines.

Turner was a 1930 graduate of Purdue and died in 1997.

Tom Robinson, vice president for student services, also gave the annual financial aid report. He said Purdue is doing fairly well based on the amount of aid distributed: $352 million in 2001. He discussed the sources of financial aid.

The Board of Trustees will meet again May 9 at the University-Purdue University Indianapolis.