



Wright State University.

What will trigger furloughs at Wright State? New 'cost savings' policy explained

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By

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FAIRBORN —

Faculty furloughs could be implemented at Wright State University soon if the school's finances don't improve beyond predictions.

When the Wright State University board of trustees implemented its last, best offer on terms and conditions of employment to the school's faculty union, it also approved a new furlough policy.

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Faculty can now be furloughed so that the university can save money, according to the terms. Wright State's "cost savings days," are linked directly to it's "Senate Bill 6 score," something the Ohio Department of Higher Education uses to measure the financial health of universities.

The annual rating of 0 to 5. Half the score is based on the school's reserve fund, essentially how much cash the school has in the bank. The other two factors include a viability score which calculates the university's ability to service its debts and an income ratio which measures the school's change in net assets, according to the FY 2018 WSU budget.

Any school that falls below a 1.75 two years in a row is put on notice. Wright State projected its score last year was a .8, meaning one more year below a 1.75 would put the school on fiscal watch. WSU chief business officer Walt Branson in October projected the university will get a score of 2.2 and avoid state watch.

But, the furlough threshold in Wright State's new policy is higher than the state's level for fiscal watch.



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The administration can impose faculty furloughs if Wright State's Senate Bill 6 score falls below 2.4 two years in a row. If Branson's prediction comes true, that means Wright State can impose furloughs as soon as the state verifies its score this year.



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"We hope we never have to use cost savings days for any of our employees," said president Cheryl Schrader.

If furloughs are ever invoked, Schrader said the administration would try to pick days where students are not on campus, such as the day before Thanksgiving. The new terms and conditions of employment also state that the board of trustees advises the administration use only a maximum of two furlough days per semester.

But, union president Martin Kich has said that furloughs would essentially amount to faculty being paid less for doing the same amount of work. Though the board has suggested a max of two furlough days per semester, Kich said that its at the administration's discretion and fears it faculty could be furloughed for far longer.

Furloughs are one of the issues the union has taken issue with in the administration's imposed terms of employment. Members of the Wright State chapter of the American Association of University Professors filed a notice Monday with the State Employment Relations Board to strike at 8 a.m. Jan. 22.

"Are you going to give us a day off from teaching? We're expected to do our work as usual and simply not get paid for it," Kich said.

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