Hofstra University offers debate spots for WSU students

By Lynn Hulsey
Staff Writer

FAIRBORN — Wright State President David Hopkins announced Tuesday the university has withdrawn from hosting the first presidential debate in September.

- WSU cited rising costs and lackluster fundraising
- Costs rose well over $8 million
- University informed Commission on Presidential Debates at noon
- WSU in an internal remediation to overcome budget deficit

RELATED: Wright State cancels presidential debate: 5 things to know

UPDATE @ 2:32 p.m.

Hofstra University has offered to allow 15 Wright State students to attend the first presidential debate at the Hempstead, N.Y., campus, which replaces WSU as host of the debate, according to Wright State President David Hopkins.

"What a very generous offer. I really, really appreciate that," Hopkins said a day after announcing that Wright State was withdrawing as host of the debate.

Hopkins said Wednesday that university donors will be asked to cover the costs for the students, who will be chosen by lottery.

Hopkins on Tuesday announced that he had told the Commission on Presidential Debates that Wright State could no longer serve as host of the Sept. 26 debate, the first of four in the general election.

Hopkins cited rising security costs that were driving estimated costs up from the $5 million he anticipated to as much as $11 million. He said the university had not been able to convince donors to contribute enough to cover the cost, and the financially strapped university could not afford to cover the cost of a debate.

UPDATE @11:47 a.m.

Fairborn mayor Dan Kirkpatrick has confirmed a major reason for Wright State withdrawing from the debate was security concerns around Wright State being an open campus.

He said officials were confident the Nutter Center could be secured through checkpoints, security guards and fence, but with all the students and community members on campus, it did not feel safe.

UPDATE @ 3:34 p.m.

The planned presidential debate at Wright State University had been expected to generate about $14 million in economic impact for the immediate area near the Nutter Center, a local official said.

"As we expanded it, obviously this impact was to ripple throughout the entire region with an estimated economic impact of approximately $25 million dollars," said Paul Newman Jr., the Fairborn Chamber of Commerce executive director.
Newman said he believes it was a difficult decision for Wright State and David Hopkins, the university president.

However, Newman was surprised by the decision and had no warning the university was thinking about pulling out from hosting the event.

Wright State President Hopkins had repeatedly vowed he would not fund the debate through university reserves, which have plummeted from $162 million in 2012 to a projected $40 million by 2018 as school officials have spent more than they were taking in.

Wright State is cutting $18.9 million more from reserves over the next two years and planning $27.7 million in budget cuts, including $8 million through staff attrition. WSU trustees also raised tuition for graduate and out-of-state students.

**TIMELINE: Wright State University and the presidential debate**

**UPDATE @ 2:58 p.m.**

The president of Wright State’s faculty union, Martin Kich, said cancelling the debate was probably for the best.

“I think it’s unfortunate we’ve gotten two months away from it and we have to pull the plug on it. I don’t think that makes anyone look good. But if the alternative is we would be left with a sizeable financial liability because of this, then I think it’s the smart thing to do,” he said.

Kich said he felt the university was low-balling what the debate was actually going to cost.

“Under ideal circumstances, I think it would be a nice thing for the university to host this kind of an event, but given the financial issues the university is grappling with, from the start this seemed like a kind of dubious proposition.”

**RELATED: No debate for Wright State — community reacts**

**UPDATE @ 2:45 p.m.**

In a release Tuesday, the Wright State Board of Trustees Chair Michael Bridges said the board fully supports Hopkins’ decision.

“It’s the responsible thing to do,” Bridges said in a release. “While the community has been overwhelmingly supportive of Wright State hosting the debate, the safety and security of the campus and community is of paramount importance.”

Unlike private universities that have hosted debates in the past, Wright State cannot restrict public access to its campus, which added to the security challenges, the university said.

“We were fully aware of the challenges and were prepared to meet them when we decided to host the debate, but things have changed,” Hopkins said. “The current national environment has made security even more critical.”

**UPDATE @ 2:23 p.m.**

The Commission on Presidential Debates posted this announcement on its website:

“In light of Wright State University’s announcement of earlier today, the September 26, 2016 Presidential Debate will be held at Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY. The Commission very much appreciates Wright State’s efforts. Hofstra University served very successfully as a presidential debate site in 2012. On September 23, 2015, the Commission announced that Hofstra University had agreed to serve as an alternate site this debate cycle if needed. The Commission looks forward to working with Hofstra once again.”

$2 million in gifts and pledges will be utilized for student and debate related activities. @daytondailynews@WHIORadio—— Kara Driscoll (@kardadr) July 19, 2016

**UPDATE @ 2:13 p.m.**

“We’re not going to shut down the educational institution,” Hopkins said.

Wright State was one of four host universities chosen this year by the the commission, a non-profit in charge of producing the General Election debates.

Earlier this month, officials said the debate was expensive, but worth it.

**DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APPS FOR LATEST BREAKING NEWS**

**UPDATE @ 2:09 p.m.**

Greene County Sheriff Gene Fischer said he had not spoken with anyone at Wright State University on Tuesday. He had sent some people from his office to Cleveland for the Republican National Convention to check out the security layout on Monday.

“I’m convinced we could have had enough manpower, where’s the money coming from I wouldn’t have any idea,” he said. “We would’ve been able to get the manpower, but fundraising is always an issue.”

Fischer said he didn’t remember exactly how many law enforcement personnel would have been needed to cover the event.

“With everything going on, every time something happens, the number has to get bigger because you never know what to anticipate,” he said.

**UPDATE @ 2:01 p.m.**

“I really wanted this experience for our students,” Hopkins said in a news conference.

The escalating security concerns have caused the financial costs to rise too much, Hopkins said.

The university was expecting to pay about $3.5 million when planning first started, but now it’s exceeded $8 million, he said.

Hopkins said with the nature surrounding this presidential election, the costs were too high.

“We went into this in good faith,” Hopkins said.

Hopkins talks about safety. pic.twitter.com/f4yKmAyNZI — Kara Driscoll (@kardadr) July 19, 2016

**EARLIER REPORT**

WSU President David Hopkins said Tuesday that Wright State is withdrawing as host of first presidential debate scheduled for Sept. 26 at Nutter Center.

He cited escalating costs for security and the inability to raise enough money from community and state to cover what could be as much as $8 million to host the event.

Hopkins said Tuesday in an exclusive interview that he was motivated in part by security concerns raised by the recent attack in Nice, France.

“I can’t assure the safety of our students and the community,” Hopkins said.

Hopkins informed the Commission on Presidential Debates at noon today, and hopes to recoup at least some of the $2 million fee that was paid to the Commission in advance. Approximately $500,000 had been spent already on Nutter Center upgrades.
University will lose some of the $2.5 million they've invested in hosting the debate.— Kara Driscoll (@kardadri) July 19, 2016

The university has raised about $3.5 million in contributions, state funding and in-kind pledges.

The university is in an internal remediation plan to overcome its budget deficit, and that also played a role in the decision, Hopkins said.

“I can’t dip into more reserves to do this debate,” Hopkins said. “I’m not going to do this when we’re in remediation.”

Hopkins said his board of trustees has been supportive and understands the concerns about spiraling costs and safety.

“I wanted it so much for our students,” Hopkins said. “I hate this decision. It hurts my heart.”

$68 Gray A-line Half Sleeve Wrap Dress
$68 - stylewe.com

7 Reasons Why Glasses Should be Bought Online
GlassesUSA.com

10 Mega Pastors Bank Accounts You Won’t Believe
Trend Chaser

Entry is FAST & FREE for $5,000 a Week “Forever”
Publishers Clearing House

Don’t Leave These 7 Items Inside When Showing Your House
Bankrate

If You Are A Ohio Homeowner Who Owes Less Than $300k, Pay Off Your Mortgage At A Furious Rate
Accredited Debt Relief