

OCC has cash to absorb delay

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Did Gov. James Blanchard really defer part of the state aid to colleges? Or is it more likely to be cancelled entirely?

President Robert F. Roelofs and his central staff at Oakland Community

College are asking those questions as they ponder the \$1.5 million in state money withheld by Blanchard last week.

"A lot depends on whether it's a deferral or a cancellation," said Roelofs. "If it's a deferral, we have the cash flow to carry it. If it's a cancellation, we won't have to seriously hamper edu-

cation, but it'll put a strain on us."

BLANCHARD, citing the state's poor economy, froze state hiring and withheld \$509 million in aid to colleges, K-12 schools and local governments.

State colleges absorbed \$135 million of those cuts, K-12 schools \$216 million, local governments \$144 million and private colleges \$14 million.

"I do hope that these are indeed deferrals; but it's quite possible — depending on how we handle the fiscal problem — that they may turn into cuts as well," the new governor said.

The state constitution gives the governor authority to cut state spending when he determines revenue projections are insufficient to meet appropriations.

\$500,000 from last September," said Roelofs, citing the delay then-Gov. William G. Milliken imposed. "That was supposed to be paid in our fourth quarter of fiscal 1983 (the April-June quarter)," the OCC president said, adding, "I don't think we'll get either one, at least in this fiscal year."

BECAUSE OCC has a good cash flow, he said, the deferral will mean "no wage freeze, no hiring freeze, no layoffs and no borrowing," he said.

Other local units across the state aren't so lucky. Those with no cash balances will have to go to the banks to borrow operating cash in anticipation of the state aid payment.

"We're fortunate in two ways," Roelofs said. "We took economy measures three years ago. And we've had a very strong enrollment growth."

"The last few you educate are the least expensive because your fixed costs are covered."

He added that OCC had raised average class size, not by overloading classes but by eliminating those with very small enrollments.

U-M put in deficit by state aid delay

University of Michigan President Harold Shapiro said the state's deferral of aid payments will force the university to borrow to meet operating costs.

Gov. James Blanchard is withholding \$509 million in payments to colleges, schools and local governments — including about \$30 million from U-M.

"The university's general fund on Dec. 31 had just recovered to the break-even point from previous budget cuts and deferrals," said Shapiro.

"Gov. Blanchard's action will clearly put us back in a deficit position — forcing the university, rather than the state, to borrow funds to meet payrolls and sustain operations."

"The interest costs of such borrow-

ing won't be known until we determine the length of time the governor intends to withhold payments. We hope we can locate the funding sources necessary to accomplish such borrowings."

"AS WE understand it, the governor's action would have to continue at least two months to have the cumulative effect of \$500 million on education and other state services. At nearly \$15 million each month, the university's share, therefore, would be \$30 million."

"If the university is forced to sustain that magnitude of loss permanently, our general fund would be literally bankrupt. The capacity of the university to recover from such a shock would be problematic."

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