

Will Research Dollars Become (Ex)Spendable?

BY SCOTT BELL

The state university system has been decimated by budget cutting and allocation realignment. While funding for prisons has risen from 2% of the state funding budget to 8%, the education funding has dropped from 12.5% in 1985 to 7.5% in 1995. Unfortunately, enrollment in both state universities and prisons has increased. In 1985, 60% of the education system funding came from state sales tax. Presently, 49% of the funding is coming from sales tax.

At the University of Florida in Gainesville, 29% of the funding comes from taxes and the lottery, while 71% comes from tuition, various funds, endowments, etc. University of Florida research funding only takes 22.5% of its funding from taxes and the lottery.

IFAS relies on state funding for 56% of its \$163 million budget, and the research section relies on the state for 64% of its funding.

What does this have to do with golf course superintendents?

The state legislature has asked for a 25% savings in operating costs to give the money back for allocation to other areas. This request comes after a 1992 reduction in operating costs of 15%. Obviously the quality of the education would be the last thing that the legislature will want to cut since Florida students already rank below national averages in many standardized tests.

Write to your state

senators and

representatives...

Let them know that

you benefit from

Florida research.

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The main part of the budget cutting would happen in the university areas and particularly in research. While the universities can raise tuitions to make up shortfalls, and since they are less dependent on tax dollars than IFAS, the universities could survive this, although I'm sure that the quality of education would drop, and nobody wants that.

IFAS, on the other hand, could be severely hurt by a 25% budget cut. Anyone who has worked on the research committee or with the research green can tell you that IFAS

is not rolling in money. IFAS has turned out internationally-known research in turf and ornamentals as well as in other areas such as agriculture, industry and business.

While all of this research has been generated, the IFAS operating costs have remained the same since 1980 and the faculty growth (number of positions) has remained the same. Close to home, the FGCSA has our research green at an IFAS facility and close friends like Elliott, Cisar, Giblin-Davis, Snyder and Busey all work at South Florida IFAS facilities. Our industry

has greatly benefited and will continue to benefit from the work done at the IFAS facilities.

What can you do? Write to your state senators and representatives, who are listed in the beginning of the white pages in all phone books. Let them know that agribusinesses needs research to be done in our state. Let them know that you benefit from Florida research.