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Millersville University furloughing 54 dining service positions due to COVID-19 financial impact



HURUBIE MEKO | Staff Writer

Oct 10, 2020



Emily Piscopo, right, of Chester Springs; gets help from her aunt Susan Piscopo, center, and her father Ed Piscopo as she moves in at South Village on the campus of Millersville University Monday, Aug. 17, 2020.

BLAINE SHAHAN | Staff Photographer

Due to the financial impacts of COVID-19, Millersville University will be furloughing 54 positions in the dining and conference services department, Daniel Wubah, university president, announced in a release Friday.

“While I recognize the exceptional quality of our dining services, I have to make this difficult decision due to the financial realities imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. I can assure you that I considered all possible options before coming to this decision as a last resort,” Wubah said.

The department lost about \$3.1 million in the last fiscal year due to meal plan refunds, the university continuing to pay salaries and benefits while dining services were closed and paying unemployment, the statement said.

Initially, the a combination of CARES Act funding and careful budgeting mitigated the losses incurred in the last fiscal year, Wubah said.



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ALEX GELI | Staff Writer

However, with COVID-19 still a factor, only a fraction of students and faculty are back on campus. Occupancy has also dropped to 29% from the normal occupancy rate of 95% since the university has taken measures to reduce density on campus.

“Less people in housing means less meal plans, leading to less than one-third our normal level,” he said. “We cannot raise prices for students to fill the budget gaps and are therefore left with an unsustainable financial model.”

In order to find a long term solution for the current financial impact, the university will also be participating in an exploratory request for proposals for dining services, joining six other Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools, he said.

Wubah said he met with dining service staff on Friday to discuss the decision. Thirty-eight employees will be furloughed effective Nov. 6, while another 16 positions are currently vacant. No additional furloughs are planned, he said.

“These financial challenges are not of our own making. They result primarily from the COVID-19 pandemic and impact an auxiliary unit whose finances operate independent of the University,” Wubah said. “Our community has long benefited from the hospitality and talent of these staff and we will continue to do what we can to keep their interest and the interest of all Marauders in mind as we navigate these uncertain times.”