

U. of U. President Might Resign Over Budget Issue

Peterson Says Funds From Cuts Shouldn't Go to Other Agencies

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CEDAR CITY — If money from a 6 percent contingency budget cut prepared by Utah's colleges and universities goes to other state agencies, University of Utah President Chase N. Peterson said he may resign.

Dr. Peterson said it's not likely education will be "double crossed," but if it is, other college presidents and State Board of Regent members should consider joining him in leaving their posts.

While higher education officials are already preparing contingency budgets, Utah State Board of Education members decided Friday they'll follow suit.

A program providing an outline of how Utah's nine colleges and universities will prepare 1987-88 budgets was approved Friday by regents after a lengthy discussion.

The action, called a strategy of reallocation and cost avoidance, was controversial because it included Gov. Norm Bangerter's request that the regents, along with other state agencies, prepare contingency budgets calling for 6 percent less than the 1986-87 budget year.

A 6 percent reduction would amount to a loss of more than \$15.4 million for Utah's System of Higher Education. Although he said it isn't likely to occur, Dr. Peterson warned regents of the possibility that higher education could be "double crossed."

President Peterson said the possibility exists that lawmakers could take the 6 percent that's not spent in



Dr. Peterson

the 1987-88 contingency budget and turn it over to another state agency.

"If it happened, it would be such a betrayal of honor, there would be resignations from this end of the table, and I would hope from many of you too," Dr. Peterson told the regents. The U. of U. president said he didn't think the governor would ever do this to higher education, but pointed out the leadership in the 1987 legislative session is not yet known.

Regent Donald B. Holbrook said regents should approach the budgeting process with integrity, and added that the process didn't prevent regents from drafting a budget reflecting higher education's real needs.

At one point in the discussion, regents decided to drop language directing colleges and universities to prepare two budget scenarios featuring cuts: one to identify what cuts will be made, the other, to earmark areas where cuts would adversely affect quality and access.

The decision to drop the language came after Dr. Peterson said it amounted to telling affected faculty that some programs would go on a "maybe" cut list while others would go on a "will cut" list.

Such a placement would amount to saying some programs — and faculty — have less value than others and could be readily sacrificed.

In an unrelated action, the Utah Board of Education voted Friday to go along with the gubernatorial request to prepare a contingency budget of a 6 percent cutback. During board members' initial discussion Thursday, a decision was deferred when Margaret Nelson, the board's vice chairman, said going along could establish a legal precedent in which the governor's office would have a role in preparing the state board's budget.