

LOCAL

University of Louisville pulls funding from student newspaper. Could this mean the end?

**Thomas Novelly**

Courier Journal

Updated Sept. 18, 2017, 5:44 p.m. ET

The University of Louisville could soon be the only college in the Atlantic Coast Conference without a campus newspaper.

Amid the university's \$48-million budget shortfall, school officials told the student journalism staff they would cease funding for the independent student newspaper, the Louisville Cardinal, by the end of the 2018 spring semester.

"We're caught in the middle of the university's financial problems," said Jenni Laidman, chair of the [Louisville Cardinal](#) board of directors. "We don't know what the future's going to hold ... but it could mean the end of the Cardinal."

Dale Billingsley, acting executive vice president of U of L, sent an email to the student editor of the paper, stating that this would be the final year supporting the school paper.

"Please note that due to the tight budget situation, this will be the final year for this commitment," Billingsley said in an email. "By providing this notice early, we hope to give you ample time to find other sources of revenue for future years."

You may like: [Lawsuit: 'Unauthorized, high-speed' police chase led to July deaths of two teens](#)

Read this: [Rand Paul criticizes latest GOP effort to repeal Obamacare during Kentucky stop](#)

Since becoming an independent newspaper in the 1970s, the Cardinal received anywhere from \$40,000 to \$60,000 from the president's and provost's office for advertising. Whatever wasn't spent on advertising was kept by the paper and factored into its operating budget, Laidman said.

In 2016, the university decreased its funding commitment by \$20,000. At the end of the 2018 spring semester, that number will drop to \$0.

Now with no future university funding, Laidman said they're forced to search for other options.

"A Cardinal photograph appeared on the front page of the New York Times," Laidman said. "And our staff has won many regional journalism awards. So, at our peak, our existence is under threat."

Kyeland Jackson, a second-year graduate student at U of L and current editor-in-chief of the Cardinal, said Billingsley's email opened up a new reality for the paper.

"It became really emotional for me when I realized the impact this could have on future journalists coming through," Jackson said. "The staff has become resigned to the fact that we'll be acting under a really strict budget now."

Those budget cuts, Jackson said, mean the staff won't be able to send aspiring journalists to conferences, a missed opportunity for young staff members to network and learn.

University of Louisville spokesman John Karman said the paper was warned numerous times over the last two years about the possibility of cuts.

"The financial challenges at U of L are a reality we all have to face," Karman said. "All departments are affected. It's unfortunate, and it's a matter of priorities. ...

everybody is feeling it."

You may like: [The Fat Lamb launches lunch service built on 'quality and speed'](#)

Read this: [Free popsicles at the opening of new Clifton neighborhood Cocoberry Pop](#)

The news has brought outrage from a variety of journalism outlets. Dupont Manual High School's program said U of L has been an integral part of their studies

"Manual's journalism magnet program is shocked & saddened to hear that U of L is cutting support to the Cardinal news after this year," the journalism program tweeted. "The student paper has been a link to our program, helping our grads find a relevant academic path to journalism careers within Louisville."

David Thompson, the executive director of the Kentucky Press Association, said the university should be disappointed with its decision to not spare \$20,000.

"We're bothered by it, obviously," Thompson said. "It's really a cause for concern ... now it'll be a struggle. These kids will have to worry about selling ads, as well as classes and still finishing the paper."

But amid the news, the staff has remained hopeful. Ralph Merkel, the Cardinal's adviser, said the paper has been around for 92 years. And he doesn't plan on that stopping anytime soon.

"I'm certain that we'll weather this," Merkel said. "But I think what needs to happen is that people need to write us checks. It's important to show your support in a sad Facebook post, but we need people to advertise with us."

Reach Reporter Thomas Novelty at 502-582-4465 or by email at tnovelty@courier-journal.com. Follow him on Twitter @TomNovelly.

