Morehead State University yesterday became the second public university in the state to announce a hiring freeze as a result of expected cuts in state funding.

The University of Kentucky announced a similar hiring freeze Friday in response to news that the state budget for higher education will be reduced by $31.7 million.

Morehead is awaiting word from the Council on Higher Education before deciding whether to cut the school's budget, Morehead President C. Nelson Grote said in a statement.

The council, which will meet Nov. 4, will decide how much each university must absorb of the $31.7 million budget cut.

Kentucky's public universities can expect to have their state funding reduced by roughly 5 percent from the previous budget, said Norman Snider, the council's director of communications services.

While the hiring freeze is in effect at Morehead, vacant positions will be filled "only after a case-by-case review," Grote said in the release.

In addition, Morehead's budget is being reviewed, and administrators and supervisors have been asked to limit spending.

Officials at Eastern Kentucky University and the University of Louisville reported similar belt-tightening.

EKU has deferred all equipment purchases and the procedures for filling vacant positions have been tightened, EKU President Hanly Funderburk said in a statement.

Officials at U of L are meeting to study the cutbacks more closely and have asked deans and administrators to limit spending, spokeswoman Denise Fitzpatrick said.

The cuts in state higher education funding come as a result of an estimated $155 million shortfall in state revenue from previous estimates. In an effort to make up the shortfall, Gov. Wallace Wilkinson announced
$85 million worth of cuts in state government budgets including higher education, construction projects and some state agencies.