

Moscow State University Rector Denies Massive Staff Cuts

By [Vladimir Goryachev](#)

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The university is letting go for more academics as it sees its budget shrinking. **Igor Tabakov**

The head of Moscow State University on Thursday vigorously denied an allegation by a group of academics that Russia's leading institution of higher education is planning mass dismissals, calling the accusation “completely false information.”

A group of employees from Moscow State University, or MGU, has begun collecting signatures in support of an open [letter](#) it wrote asking President Vladimir Putin to halt a purportedly planned wave of firings.

The letter, published on the University Solidarity website, says the university's administration has not received budget funds to raise employees' salaries, despite being proffered more cash under presidential directives. As a result, the only way the university can fulfill Putin's recent order to increase pay at universities is by firing personnel to free up cash, the letter says.

Mikhail Lobanov, one of the letter's authors and a lecturer at the university's math and mechanics department, said that several dozen employees had already been dismissed and that he expected the trend to continue, Kommersant FM reported Wednesday.

But MGU rector Viktor Sadovnichy, speaking at the university Thursday, said that not a single instructor had been fired and that no dismissals were planned for the near future.

“I wanted to dispel this latest false rumor and apologize to those media outlets that thought this was the voice of truth,” Sadovnichy told journalists, Interfax reported.

He said MGU had raised the average instructor salary to more than 70,000 rubles a month, which he noted was higher than the average monthly income in Moscow, and said various bonuses and grants were given out regularly to staff as well.

Sadovnichy implied that the authors of the letter were part of a group of chronically dissatisfied university employees.

“There aren't many of them, about 20 active ones,” he said. “There are two opinions about them: either they want to help the university, or to do the opposite.”

Education and Science Minister Dmitry Livanov responded Thursday to the accusations made in the letter, instructing state education watchdog Rosobrnadzor to get to the bottom of the situation and to find out whether teachers' rights were being violated, RIA Novosti reported.

"It's important to look after teachers and academics who work in our universities, especially Moscow State University,” Livanov said.

But Livanov said the letter contained a number of serious inaccuracies and dismissed the assertion that universities hadn't been given extra funds to facilitate pay increases.

Contact the author at newsreporter@imedia.ru

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