

University Budget Advisory Committee

Minutes – 2/4/2021 meeting

Prepared by Michelle Pickham

Voting members present: Nabil Al-Tikriti (Chair, At-large)
Laura Bylenok (At-large)
Liane Houghtalin (CAS)
Kyle Schultz (COE)
Chris Garcia (COB)
Suzanne Sumner (At-large)
Stephen Davies (At-large)

Non-voting members present: Michelle Pickham (Secretary, University Staff Council President)
Patrick Catullo (Athletic Director)

Guests: Keith Mellinger (CAS Dean)

1. Prior to the meeting, discussion transpired via email regarding the designation of Secretary. Dr. Davies and Ms. Pickham agreed in the Fall 2020 semester to share and alternate the secretarial duties. Dr. Davies received the Secretary distinction for the Fall 2020 semester, Ms. Pickham will receive the Secretary distinction for the Spring 2021 semester.
2. Dr. Mellinger began the presentation stating that the amount of funding cuts to CAS that weren't related to personnel expenses this past year was \$753,000 which included:
 - (a) Faculty research grants – cut completely
 - (b) CAS equipment budget – cut completely
 - (c) Faculty supplemental budget – cut almost completely
 - (d) Undergraduate research budget – cut completely
 - (e) Summer science institute – cut by 1/3
 - (f) Operating budgets for departments – cut by 5%
 - (g) Dean's operating budget – cut by \$35,000
 - (h) Adjunct unallocated budget – cut by \$135,000
3. Priorities set by the President were to cut what we could that didn't include budgets related to personnel expenses to avoid any furloughs or layoffs. Some items cut may have to be considered permanent cuts going forward. FY22 is expected to look much like FY21, but some money may be able to be shifted around from other areas.
4. Dr. Mellinger commented that CAS needs money back in the adjunct unallocated budget to meet the staffing needs of the CAS for instruction. He added that enrollment and the state budget are drivers for recouping any money for any areas, which we just don't know yet what that will end up looking like. He further added that when the big budget decisions are made, they are made at the cabinet level, not at the Dean level.
5. Dr. Mellinger stated that CAS priorities include:
 - (a) #1: Staffing - even if that means potentially cutting the supplemental budget again. This is a priority to meet the needs of the students and provide relief for current teaching loads.
 - (b) #2: Additional funding for faculty supplemental budget.
 - (c) #3: Additional funding in undergraduate research budget to sponsor student projects.
6. Typically, a chunk of the CAS Dean's operating budget over the years was spent on random requests, which could include getting speakers or honorarium and related expenses, ETF overage spending, etc. So now that those random requests aren't being asked for, the Dean has some operating budget left over that could be used to supplement other needs if they arise.

7. Dr. Houghtalin asked if faculty have an honorarium or a speaker, can they come to you for money to supplement or add to the honorarium?
 - (a) Dr. Mellinger said he would first ask if you could cover it from your department operating budget. If so, then your department funds should cover. If not, we can have a conversation.
8. Dr. Houghtalin asked if the adjunct faculty budget is dependent on the enrollment? Since we don't know how enrollment in the fall is going to shake out, how do we handle the adjunct faculty slots?
 - (a) Dr. Mellinger asked to run your enrollment for the last few years and see the trends to get a best guestimate for realistic adjunct staffing needs.
9. Dr. Al-Tikriti asked what were the numbers for the past year's freshman class and what was the melt?
 - (a) Freshman class for this academic year is around 750. At the start of the semester it was a little higher and at the census it dropped a bit. Our target is around 950. Interestingly, retention of the upper-class students went up. Guesses are that students were staying where they were comfortable instead of changing schools in the middle of the pandemic. Estimate for the fall was about a 10% decline in enrollment. We had more than a 10% decline for freshman but since we had more retention of upper-class it evened out a little better. Every week the students aren't here we lose \$700,000.
10. Dr. Al-Tikriti said about 1700 students are on campus now, but what is it normally?
 - (a) Mr. Catullo confirmed we have about 2200-2300 beds available on campus, of which about 100 are for quarantine.
11. Dr. Sumner asked if that meant that students could be in a single room and wouldn't need to cohabitate or share a room?
 - (a) Both Mr. Catullo and Dr. Mellinger confirmed that is more a residence life question, but and it would cost more to live in a single room.
12. Dr. Bylenok asked if \$135k was cut out of approx. 700k for the adjunct budget, and you're asking for a restoration to include adjunct and visiting positions, would the visiting positions come out of a different pot of money or is that factored into the 700k?
 - (a) Dr. Mellinger replied that the CAS Dean's office keeps a detailed list of any faculty positions that fall into 1 of 3 categories:
 - i. Person left last May (resigned/retired) and the position is filled with a visitor or filled with an adjunct
 - ii. Person left sometime in the academic year and the position isn't currently filled
 - iii. Person has declared that they are going to leave in May (retiring/resigning) and there's no search happening for a replacement
 - (b) For some of the positions, they have authorized a search for a visitor, for some the departments were told to plan for adjuncts, and for the others, plan as if you have a visitor and the decision will be made a little later. There could be a salary differential between the faculty who left or is leaving to what we are paying the visitor. Any differentials or "savings" could be requested by the CFO to fill some of the budget deficit.
 - (c) Dr. Al-Tikriti asked if the CFO does ask for more money, is that for one year or a longer term?
 - i. Dr. Mellinger replied if enrollment settles and it looks like we will land at a lower but steady smaller total class size, then we can't support all the faculty positions we have. But the hope is that we do that in a strategic way over the years instead of laying off people. That's why we're hiring visitors not knowing if we can support a tenure track position.

13. Dr. Bylenok asked what happens if the attrition doesn't match up with the demand?
 - (a) Dr. Mellinger replied that we will figure it out.

14. Dr. Bylenok asked how long can a faculty line stay in cryo-freeze until its resuscitated?
 - (a) Dr. Mellinger added that the positions right now are sitting in a pot of money and as we start to balance the budget, the Dean solicits from department chairs on what they need in terms of positions. Every year the chairs need to make the case for what the needs are.

15. Dr. Davies commented one struggle his department has is administrative support. Is this widespread across the University? Do we see this changing?
 - i. Dr. Mellinger replied that yes, it's widespread with most areas across campus and, no, we don't see this changing.

16. Dr. Sumner asked what's keeping you up at night?
 - (a) Dr. Mellinger replied with:
 - i. how we are going to get through the SACS review
 - ii. learning to pick up the pieces from John Morello's retirement,
 - iii. the general concept of burnout among faculty and employees in general

17. Dr. Al-Tikriti asked what do you think will become permanent that we've experienced over the past year?
 - (a) Dr. Mellinger responded that the J term is a faculty decision and isn't going to be successful if the faculty don't support it, so that could or could not be permanent. He added that the influx of technology in the curriculum such as zoom and faculty integrating more technology into their teaching he expects will become commonplace.
 - (b) Dr. Al-Tikriti further asked given the near and medium-term challenges and potential opportunities, what do you see coming 3-5 years out?
 - i. Dr. Mellinger replied that in the next 3 years, we're going to have an interim provost. A new provost, especially if they come from the outside, could change everything after the interim position ends.

18. Dr. Al-Tikriti closed the meeting reminding the Committee that Dr. Juliette Landphair is presenting at the February 11th meeting which will start at a delayed 4:00pm.