UMW University Budget Advisory Committee

2021-2022 Final Report

This final report has been prepared for the Administration and the University Faculty Council by Nabil Al-Tikriti, Laura Bylenok, Randall Helmstutler, Suzanne Sumner, Chris Garcia, Liane Houghtalin, Kyle T. Schultz, Arin Doerfler, Kim McManus-Carini, Marta Smith, Patrick Catullo, and Ellelyshia Ardo.

During the 2021-2022 Academic Year, the University Budget Advisory Committee met with or received information from 10 (ten) different stakeholders from across the campus to discuss budget structures, concerns, and priorities. These meetings included Administration and Finance, the Office of the Provost, Admissions, Information Technologies, Student Affairs, Marketing, the UMW Foundation, Athletics, and the Office of Disability Resources. UBAC also received detailed information from the UMW Libraries regarding its operations and needs.

This final report represents the committee's recommendations for budget priorities that arose from the year's meetings, presentations, and discussions. Recommended staffing needs from the 2020-2021 Final Report continue as a priority for Simpson Library, Information Technologies, and the Office of Disability Resources.

Recommendations:

-Marketing: Increase funding for the year-round marketing of UMW to potential students, something that is vital to the long-term health of the University.

The survival and well-being of our institution depends on a robust supply of students. Enrollment profiles are changing at institutions across the country, and we are no exception. The effects of COVID-19 and the shift in demographics in college-aged students have led to decreased enrollments at many institutions, a trend that will likely continue. This decrease only raises the competition among regional universities. To ensure the long-term stability of the University, we must be in a strong position to recruit the best students in this competitive environment, and this recruitment can only occur with a robust and far-reaching marketing campaign.

2020 was the first year (at least since 2013) that Marketing was given a line item in the budget. In addition, good progress has been made recently on the new branding campaign from Mindpower. There is still work to be done. Marketing efforts designed to raise our brand-awareness must be made year-round: it does not suffice to advertise only during the admissions cycle. We must continue our current momentum in raising UMW's name recognition in regions where we typically have strong recruitment and in new or under-recruited regions. Marketing to increase the number of international students is desirable from both multi-cultural and financial perspectives. We must continue to develop new marketing materials both in traditional and in social media outlets. Marketing must include a much-needed overhaul of our website, an important front-facing part of our public profile that is currently not in line with our branding campaign.

-Admissions: Increase funding for skilled services.

Admissions serves the mission-critical function of ensuring an incoming class of appropriate size and quality each year. Ensuring that Admissions is adequately funded to carry out its mission should, therefore, be a high-priority item in the University's budget.

Admissions requires skilled services to assist with the student search process through multiple channels, including emails, texts, and phone calls based on how students have responded. These skilled services are currently outsourced, because the tasks are beyond what the UMW customer relationship management team, with only two dedicated staff members, can undertake on its own. Enhancement of these important, outsourced skilled services requires increased funding.

-Simpson Library: Restore Simpson Library's hours to their pre-COVID level.

Although the HCC provides a safe study space 24/7, it does not allow students the opportunity to utilize the library stacks and check out books, nor does it necessarily provide a *quiet* study space. Students need the flexibility provided by the library being open longer as they jostle their classes, jobs, and sometimes limited time on campus. Not all scholarship is available online, and when the library closes at 8 pm, students cannot access items on reserve and often cannot do appropriate research for their papers and projects. Their college experience and training are suffering as a result. In addition, Simpson's current hours are not in line with those at other state universities in Virginia–the main libraries at Christopher Newport University, George Mason University, James Madison University, the University of Virginia, and the College of William and Mary, for example, are all open much longer hours. Students have noticed the difference, and the lack of access to Simpson may become a factor in recruitment and retention.

This restoration will require filling the (currently frozen) Evening Circulation Supervisor position and once again staffing security positions for the restored evening and night hours.

-Office of Disability Resources (ODR): Increase funding to hire two additional full-time staff members, one to facilitate a testing space for students with accommodations and to manage office operations, and another to serve as case manager and access consultant.

About 600 students are registered with ODR (12% of total enrollment at UMW), with only 3 full-time staff members. These numbers offer significant challenges to both faculty and ODR staff. It is of the utmost importance that all students have equitable access and opportunities.

Currently, faculty members must search for testing spaces with suitable testing conditions for students with accommodations—often for multiple students in a course. This process has led to inefficient use of faculty members' time and inconsistent testing conditions across campus. A centralized testing space would address both issues. ODR has moved to its new and much larger physical location in Seacobeck, which is now large enough to offer testing support. The testing space would be available for use throughout the standard class day. With an additional full-time ODR staff member serving as testing coordinator and office manager, testing conditions for students with accommodations would improve and existing ODR staff could focus on their primary role of supporting students. Furthermore, given the relatively large and increasing number of students registered with ODR, an additional case manager and access consultant should be added to its staff.

-Information Technologies: Increase funding for additional personnel and raises for current IT employees.

According to Hall Cheshire, in 2009 IT employed 45 full-time equivalents (FTEs), and now IT employs 24 FTEs, so that staffing has been cut nearly in half. (In addition, since his report, two members of the IT staff have retired.) Because of this reduction, our IT department has very little redundancy in skills and knowledge among the staff. An illness or departure of any of our vital IT employees would cripple IT operations and seriously affect the multiple critical systems that run the University. Our IT staff are overworked and overburdened, despite contracting out some of this work. (Some IT staff are still expected to work seven days a week, which is an unsustainable model.) With salaries that are not competitive, it becomes even more difficult to replace or hire IT staff. Along with increased funding, the administration should seek ways to manage the workload of our IT employees more equitably.

-Faculty funding: Restore all faculty funding to pre-COVID levels, including development and supplemental funds, research and travel grants, and sabbaticals.

Limited headway was made in 2021-2022 for the restoration of faculty funding to pre-pandemic levels, yet Faculty Development Funds (previously $500/faculty member) are currently not part of the budget. Some departments have attempted to support faculty development by using their own operating budgets, a practice that is not sustainable. While Faculty Development Supplemental Grants have been awarded in 2021-2022, they were capped at lower levels than the previous $2000—at $900 for Fall 2021 and $1800 for Spring 2022. In addition, applications for Faculty Research Grants (previously $4000, plus up to $500 in project expenses) are not currently being accepted. Although sabbaticals granted for 2020-2021 are being honored this year and next (2021-2023), sabbatical applications are similarly not being accepted at this time.

Without these supports for teaching and research, faculty (especially early career faculty) do not have the resources needed to stay active in their field. This support is critical in terms of maintaining academic currency as well as UMW's reputation and recruitment. Finally, such funding is particularly crucial in light of the modest salaries paid to faculty at UMW.

-Increase R.A. stipends and/or coverage of food and housing:

Resident Assistant stipends have remained stagnant since 2014, despite increases in inflation and the cost of housing, meaning the net salaries of R.A.s have effectively decreased. R.A. duties have also increased in recent years, yet the stipends have not reflected these additional duties.

A healthy stipend is necessary to attract more candidates and the best candidates. A high-quality residential experience is important to the recruitment and retention of students, and R.A.s are a significant component of residential life.