



Faculty Senate

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TO: Myron Allen, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Wyoming

FROM: Warrie J. Means, Chair, Faculty Senate, University of Wyoming

RE: Faculty Senate Input for Mandated 2011 Budget Reduction Scenarios

DATE: December 09, 2011

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met and discussed your invitation for input in regards to the 2011 budget reduction requests by the Governor and the Joint Appropriations Committee. Input was also requested and received from the Budget Planning Committee, a Standing Committee of the Faculty Senate. Additionally, the Faculty Senate Chair requested input from senators. Following is a compilation of those efforts, organized and prioritized by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. On behalf of the Faculty Senate, thank you for considering our input.

Background:

The Executive Committee and the Budget Planning Committee both reviewed the Budget Planning White Paper produced by the Budget Planning Committee in March, 2009. This document was carefully crafted in response to a 2009 budget reduction mandate. Given that the 2009 document stated the views of the Senate in a thoughtful and effective manner, the 2011 University of Wyoming Faculty Senate stands by the primary views expressed in its 2009 document and will resubmit this document to Academic Affairs. The document has been modified to reflect recommendations of the Executive Committee, a better understanding of Section I versus Section II funding, and updates as a result of the 2009 budget cuts and their subsequent implementation. A copy of the revised White Paper accompanies this memo.

First and foremost, we should be thinking about what is best for the institution – long term. It is impossible for budget reductions of this magnitude to be accomplished in a way that is good for the institution. We are already operating in 'lean' mode. Budget reductions occurring in 2009 had permanent impacts and the University is in a lesser state than before. Examples include elimination of the Graduate School, Geology Museum Curator, Centennial Singers, Center for Conferences and Continuing Education, UW Visitor Center, Wellness Center and Health Promotion, and the Wildfire Dance Team. Classified Staff vacancies have not been filled and new faculty positions have been reduced, drastically affecting the ability of some academic units to function at a high level. Obviously, these cuts cannot be made again – the “low-hanging” fruit is gone.

Reductions in force:

Significant reductions in the University’s budget could result in people losing jobs. Approximately 73% of the institution’s Section I budget is in salaries and employer paid benefits. Across-the-board budget reductions of 2, 5 or 8% (3.7, 9.2, and 14.7 million dollars, respectively) equate to the salaries and benefits of 53, 135, or 211 staff positions, respectively (using an average salary plus benefits, adjusted to 73% of the reduction). Compounding this scenario is the fact that the University continues to be adversely affected by staff reductions precipitated by 2009 budget cuts.

Similarly, reductions of 2, 5 or 8% equate to the salaries and benefits of 22, 56, or 87 faculty positions or 16, 40, or 62 administrative positions, respectively (using an average salary plus benefits, adjusted to 73% of the reduction). Elimination of tenured or extended term positions is complicated if any budget reduction scenario should require such action. That scenario is governed by UW Regulation 6-41, which would require appointment of a 13 member

Financial Crisis Advisory Committee and declaration of Financial Exigency by the President and the Board of Trustees. The scenario is further complicated, since UW Regulation 6-41 states that "the University shall make reasonable efforts to transfer the faculty member to another open and funded position".

These are only theoretical examples, difficult or impossible in practice to implement. They are outlined only to convey the significance of the budget reduction scenarios. Cuts in personnel would have devastating effects on the University for decades.

Tuition increases:

A large proportion (71.9%) of the University's Section I budget is derived from the State's General fund. Significant reductions in State appropriations to the University, therefore, result in very significant decreases to the Section I budget. Increases in tuition would be necessary to maintain the functions of the University and to make the institution less vulnerable to external economic pressures. Reductions in State funding of 2, 5 or 8% equate to 9.3, 23.5, or 36.8% increases in tuition. UW tuition is very low in comparison to other institutions and the Faculty Senate recognizes the advantages of low tuition to the student. However, the Faculty Senate supports reasonable, consistent increases in tuition, with revenues directed towards the academic enterprise, as outlined by President Buchanan in his memo dated June 4, 2009.

Support budget reductions:

Cuts of 5 or 8% in magnitude will significantly diminish the institution's ability to serve our students and the State. With such a large proportion of the Section I budget in salaries and benefits, making substantial reductions in only non-salary/benefit portions of the budget are crippling and severely limit academic unit functions. Units have not fully recovered from 2009 support budget cuts. There is a minimum level below which support budgets cannot fall without drastically curtailing academic program functions. This level varies by academic unit, but is likely in the 5% range.

Reductions in academic unit support budgets would directly affect students by reducing or eliminating many activities. Undergraduate Teaching Assistants, tutors, research opportunities, work study and on-campus student hourly positions would be diminished. Undergraduate and graduate student participation in regional, national, and international competitions, performances, research activities, and conferences would be threatened. Senior design/research projects, study abroad opportunities, undergraduate field trips, and department supported student clubs would likely be eliminated. Students would see slowdowns in library systems, access software would not be current, library hours would be reduced, and collections would be diminished. Repair and maintenance to equipment used in undergraduate and graduate teaching and research would be curtailed. Undergraduate counseling services, writing, math, and oral communication labs would be cut. Classroom modernization, renovation, and technology maintenance would be eliminated and teaching software licenses would not be renewed. All of these activities allow our students to be competitive in a global marketplace. Their reduction, therefore, would significantly diminish our graduates' abilities to compete.

Summary:

Individuals may voice concerns over specific programs. When viewed more globally, however, there are no programs that can be cut without causing a negative impact to our students and the citizens of our State.

When cuts were required in 2009, the administration made choices that minimally affected the core mission of the University. The Faculty Senate proposes that any potential cuts should follow the same approach. That is, protecting as much as possible the core elements of the University's mission: faculty support, extension/outreach, libraries/research and student support.

The administration should forcefully convey to legislators that the University budget has no 'bloat' in its current state. We have been doing more with less for some time. Over time, our standard budget has increased less than the average State budget. We have moved items from Section I to Section II where appropriate; we have made some units more self sufficient. Further budget reductions will have measurable negative impacts.