



Faculty Senate

227 Wyoming Hall • Dept. 3961 • 1000 E. University Ave. • Laramie, WY 82071
phone (307) 766-5348 • fax (307) 766-5347 • e-mail faculty@uwyo.edu • www.uwyo.edu/facultysenate

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

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

RE: Faculty Senate Input for 2013-14 Budget Reduction Planning

DATE: May 04, 2012

In response to your request for input addressing the latest directive from the Governor calling for state agencies to prepare for an 8% budget reduction, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee discussed the most appropriate vehicle for input and decided to modify our previous memo dated December 09, 2011. Input was also requested and received from the Budget Planning Committee, a Standing Committee of the Faculty Senate. As you will see, the principles of our December 09, 2011 memo are largely unchanged, with the exception of some updates relating to an 8% budget reduction instead of 2, 5, and 8% scenarios. On behalf of the Faculty Senate, thank you for considering our input.

Background:

In December 2011, 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 University of Wyoming Faculty Senate stands by the primary views expressed in its 2009 document. The document was 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. The revised White Paper was previously submitted to Academic Affairs.

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.

Budget reductions in 2009 resulted in a “squeeze” on Classified Staff vacancies. Not all staff vacancies have been filled. As a result of nonexistent raises during the last three years, new faculty positions have been reduced because promotion raises must be taken from the Centralized Position Management pool. Personnel cuts drastically affect the ability of some academic units to function at a high level.

Obviously, the cuts mentioned above cannot be made again – the “low-hanging” fruit is gone.

Reductions in force:

An 8% reduction is significant and will likely 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 8% (15.66 million dollars) equates to the salaries and benefits of 93 faculty positions, 66 administrative positions, or 225 staff positions, (using an average salary plus benefits, adjusted to 73% of the reduction) – or equivalent cuts to within some combination of the three employee categories.

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". Compounding this scenario is the fact that the University continues to be adversely affected by staff reductions precipitated by 2009 budget cuts.

These are only theoretical examples, difficult or impossible in practice to implement. They are outlined only to convey the significance of an 8% budget reduction scenario. Cuts in personnel would have devastating effects on the University and the state of Wyoming 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 8% equate to a 31.3% increase 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 8% in magnitude will noticeably decrease the institution's ability to serve our students and the State. Reductions in academic unit support budgets would significantly diminish our graduates' abilities to compete by reducing or eliminating many learning 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.

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 will directly affect students.

Other budget areas:

There are other sections of the budget that have been discussed by faculty and which should be critically evaluated.

The scholarship budget is approximately 16.3 million dollars. Although an area some might consider cutting, scholarships are extremely important to high quality undergraduate education at UW. Scholarships allow the institution to recruit the highest quality students from the state, the nation, and the world. High quality students strengthen the learning outcomes of all students in a program. Recruitment of international students strengthens diversity at the university. Therefore, we recommend minimizing the impact of budget reductions on scholarships.

Support services less directly related to the university mission should be carefully evaluated and ranked, from most essential to least essential, based on their direct relationship to the academic mission. Those services ranked lowest should be considered for significant budget reductions or elimination.

Athletics is an important, some would argue essential, part of the university. Most faculty, however, find it difficult to tie athletic programs directly to the academic mission of the university. Additionally, competing at the I-A level is a challenge for the University of Wyoming as it seems that NCAA rules naturally favor institutions which enjoy a much larger population than Wyoming. In spite of this, our athletic programs have made substantial progress recently and enjoy significant support around the state. We would be derelict in our duty to protect the primary academic mission of the university, however, if we did not consider significant cuts to our athletic programs. The possibility of competing at a level lower than I-A should be considered.

In each instance, scholarships, support services less directly related to the university mission, and athletics, we must be mindful of unintended consequences. Even when support services or athletics are deemed not to be directly related to the primary academic mission, diminishing their function or program elimination can have significant negative effects on the institution in both the long and short term. These decisions are complicated by a combination of Section I/Section II/revenue generation funding and possible negative political fallout.

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. As the state's only major four-year institution, we must recognize the extremely important role UW plays in maintaining the vitality 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. It is, however, impossible to make the 2009 cuts again. Those things are gone.

The administration should continue to forcefully convey to the Governor and Wyoming 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. Inflation is taking a toll on availability of real dollars. Further budget reductions will have measurable negative impacts for the University of Wyoming and for Wyoming citizens.