

USenate Budget feedback and responses: 2/22-28

Fairness in cutting positions

Comment [*references to individuals are redacted*]: you know cutting back on the low end is a huge mistake if you can follow what Tom Clifford did as president he didn't have all those vice this vice that he never had assistants whatsoever and has to go in the pasture XXX has made it very difficult in the housing custodian people please force to retire is all I'm asking XXX has made it hard on me and a lot of others...if XXX don't like you XXX will make it miserable for that person including XXXX...please here me out cut upper tier of managers and vice whatever where you getting money? cause you're cutting us out and take that money to save that person...we're not dumb...

Response: We have learned that both administrators and staff have applied for the voluntary separation program. Those who will leave the university through this program will make it easier for some of us to keep our jobs, though we may end up with new supervisors and work expectations. It's not going to be easy for anyone.

Meaningless meetings

Comment: With the current budget cuts coming my suggestion for cost savings is: "Meetings!" There are so many meetings reoccurring and others that do not provide any meaningful direction and lead to follow-up meetings that do the same. Administrators Directors Supervisors and Deans have enough to do without more meaningless meetings. The question that should be asked is: What did this meeting accomplish? If you struggle to find an answer that meeting could be once a month instead of once a week or gone all together.

Response: The members of the SBRRRC can certainly relate to your questioning the value of meetings which you feel are time-wasters. None of us like to waste our time. But, it is through meetings that we communicate with each other and ideally get work done for the common good. We hope you will pose these same questions with your committee/work groups and suggest more efficient ways to accomplish your goals. We include here a link to a Higher Education article that addresses this very issue.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/04/14/tips-making-academic-meetings-valuable-and-productive-essay>

Cell phone plans

Comment: In the UND Finance & Operations Policy Library under Section 2 "Finance Cell Phones and Other Mobile Devices 2.18" I found that there are still UND-owned cell devices and plans. Would we see budget savings by doing away with these plans and strictly utilizing the taxable monthly payroll stipend?

Response: A Finance & Operations director told us that they are in the process of revising the cell phone/cell phone stipend policy. They expect to release the policy for comment in the next month. They believe the new policy will indeed result in budget savings!.

Strategic planning – and erosion of full time faculty

Comment: RE: Budget It is interesting that within this period of cuts the President demands that the cuts be strategic yet as far as I can figure out the strategic planning is not finished. Beyond this what is clear within A&S is that the Dean is not making strategic cuts nor is she trying to find ways to protect the Liberal Arts rather she is going after the low hanging fruit. Nobody in North Dakota will miss Women & Gender Studies but luckily the Stem fields are safe. There has been very little faculty input into this expect for a few talking sections where it was clear that the Dean had already decided what would be cut. Many faculty see a very good institution being destroyed by Administrators who know nothing about our students. We should be marking the large amount of full time faculty that we have but instead we are cutting and moving to the universal model of exploiting adjunct labor. They are making us the same mediocre institution like everyone else.

Response: You are correct that it is expected that strategic cuts are to be made when the strategic plan is not complete. The SBRRRC discussed this apparent contradiction with the Provost. He pointed out that the strategic planning process was initiated well before the current budget reduction process and is on schedule to be completed by the end of the semester. Unfortunately, this is not the best timing for applying the finished product to the current situation. Even so, we already have a pretty good idea of how that plan is taking shape. Even so, one SBRRRC member commented that a strategic plan does not lay out the process by which it should be implemented. That is for us to figure out. What it does provide is a framework within which sound decisions can be made. We look forward to the day when that will be possible. The Provost unequivocally stated that he supports the maintenance of tenure-track faculty positions and using fair employment practices for adjunct faculty.

Med School Building costs and last year's voluntary separations

Comment: I'm wondering about the \$4mm that the Med School owes the University right now. Getting that money back would be helpful. Also there should be out year roll-up from the early retirement programs instituted last year. The cost of a buyout is paid upfront but the salaries go away in the budget so eventually the savings kick in. If I remember right we were talking about \$3mm to the bottom line this year and \$5mm next year. Are those numbers included in the budget? Maybe some things to ask about?

Response: The Provost is aware of your concern which has to do with the main campus helping the Medical School with a payment associated with the new medical school building. This has been confirmed by the SMHS Associate Dean for Finance. Though the SMHS has an independent budget for running its programs, it does not have a facilities budget. The finances of all SMHS building projects therefore go through the main campus. This has worked well in past projects. Last year's budget allotment, however, complicated matters. Even though the building project was in full swing and all contracts were in place for its completion, the legislature cut the second biennial installment of \$62M by \$4M. The University had no choice but to move forward with the project and had to find the extra \$4M to meet its obligations within its existing resources. The Century Code is explicit about the separation of the UND and SMHS budgets. This prevents the SMHS from transferring any of its funds to assist the main campus in absorbing the loss. The SMHS does not think this is fair and strongly supports the main campus' ongoing efforts to restore the lost building funds.

UND will see approximately \$7M in savings from the 2016 voluntary separations program and delaying hiring to fill vacant positions. This is being factored into the current budget calculations. Savings in the first year are from not paying fringe benefit costs associated with the positions affected by the program. The combined savings in salaries and benefits will be even greater in the upcoming biennium.

Representation of UND interests in Bismarck

Comment: Perhaps I should know this but -- Is there anyone (other than state reps) "fighting for us" at the state level so that we don't have to pay for a portion of our health insurance (which by the way is a slippery slope for future decreases) and endure salary decreases (via not having annual increases). In addition to the already painful act of cutting programs and persons the state is essentially demoting every single person in NDSU system and taking money straight out of our pockets to pay for their out of control and irresponsible spending. Who is "fighting for us at the state level?" I would like to see this addressed in one of your emails or articles. If we are just looking for our state representatives to do this it is not enough....we need people lobbying for us; a higher ed representative to get buy in from our state senators. It's been painful enough already. Thank you.

Response: The SBRRRC understands that the President, Vice President for Finance and Operations and others regularly communicate with the legislature during the legislative session. The SBHE and Chancellor, who represent the NDUS with a unified voice. The interests of the SMHS are advocated for by the Vice President for Health Affairs and the SMHS Associate Dean for Administration and Finance. Other community and professional groups sometimes "lobby" for UND and higher education's interests, e.g., those who advocate for public education and health professionals.

Student interests in the budget

Comment: Rather than belittling the student in the meeting the other day why didn't the Provost offer a session for students? Students feel intimidated in forums where faculty/staff are the main attendees.

Response: Your question prompted the student representatives on the SBRRRC to look into setting up a special Student Senate-sponsored meeting with the Provost to talk about the budget reduction process. The Provost indicated that he and other administrators already meet regularly with the Student Senate. The VP for Student Affairs works closely with the Council of Student Leaders.

Salary differentials and fair compensation

Comment: To keep money balanced across the board with salaries at both the top and bottom level we should implement a cap of a certain dollar amount. The lower position (\$22000) grows at a small rate compared to a higher position (\$200000). The salaries are for market increase cost of living and for how well one does in their position. That higher position \$200000 over a span would be paid over the market price whereas the lower \$22000 position is still competitive and in line with the market. After 10 years that higher position has gone up \$96k at a 4% raise vs if there was a \$4000 cap it would go up \$40000 in those 10 years. The lower \$22000 salary after 10 years would go up by \$10000 in total regardless of a cap or not in those 10 years because the highest raise they get in those 10 years is \$1252.51. \$22k 4% at 10 years = \$32565.37 \$200k 4% at 10 years no cap = \$296048.86 \$200k 4% at 10 years with cap = \$240000

Response: At first glance it may seem that the higher salary grows at a faster rate than a lower salary, but a 4% increase that is applied to either one results in the same rate of increase. By capping the higher salary, the rate would increasingly fall behind the rate of growth of the lower salary. The end result is salary compression. UND has worked hard to increase salaries over the past decade or more to bring

them in line with comparable regional institutions. Any erosion of these gains would negatively impact the university in recruiting and retaining the best talent.

Curriculum alignment

Comment: There has been mention of North Dakota being one of the last states affected by massive cuts. Has our administration identified lessons learned from the struggles of other states? This was a campus book study over a year ago with the conclusion that ND was going to face this in the near future. Are there insights from this exercise that has influenced our direction? 2. Is there a plan for curriculum alignment across programs? Many programs teach the same subject areas and have carved out niches with a focused curriculum to replace the historical offerings of a broad based liberal arts degree

Response: The SBRRRC could not track down the book study to which you are referring. Your question about curriculum alignment as a cost-saving strategy is a good one. We did not have time to get to it at our last meeting, but will try to address it next time.

Marketing plan

Comment: I think many are wondering what kind of marketing is going to occur that will improve our reputation as a serious academic institution competitive with other flagship types of public universities. Wouldn't it make sense to start with the university and department webpages? Wouldn't it also make sense to let the faculty have input into how to promote their research or the fields of study they are fighting to keep in existence?

Response: The Provost indicated that your suggestions are already part of the marketing plan. He also indicated that investment in marketing is virtually guaranteed to recoup costs and then

some. According to a February 3 UND Today article (<http://blogs.und.edu/und-today/2017/02/reboot-to-recruit/>), The \$3M in strategic fund reallocation dedicated to marketing includes \$2.5M for advertising and the commissioning of a firm to analyze recruiting needs. The remaining \$0.5M will be for website upgrades and branding. UND has already hired a marketing firm to conduct a branding study. The breakeven point for cost recovery is the recruitment of an additional 117 students over a four-year enrollment period.