

Feedback on USenate Website February 10-14

Eleven questions and comments relevant to the current budget process were submitted through the University Senate Feedback page between February 10 and 14. Here are the comments and our responses based on dialog and at the February 14 SBRRRC meeting.

Remodeling costs

Comment: I'm disappointed that the Math Active Learning Lab (MALL) is going to displace the kitchen lab that the Nutrition & Dietetics program is using. The MALL could really go anywhere on campus - perhaps even in the Library if it's a goal to get more students to go into the Library. Instead we're spending money to remodel a space that currently has a specific function for an academic area that has no other place to go.

Response: We learned that the decision to displace the Nutrition & Dietetics kitchen lab in O'Kelly to make way for a Math Active Learning Lab was made some time ago and that funds for remodeling the space are already committed. The costs associated with the remodeling will not impact the current budget reduction process.

Health insurance

Comment: Benefits can add significantly to an employee's total compensation package. The State of North Dakota offers state employees a comprehensive benefit package. It would be unfortunate if this package would diminish by requesting that public employees pay the 5% of their premiums.

Comment: Please look into keeping the health insurance free for the employee. If you have to charge start with charging for spouse and children first. I don't feel it is right to punish the employee that is taking a single coverage. Please look into charge for spouse and children first. Thank you.

Response: The decision whether public employees will have to pay 5% of their health insurance premiums rests with the Legislature and the Governor. The outcomes of that legislation are independent of the current budget reduction process.

Voluntary leave

Comment: We could save some money by offering voluntary leave in the summer. Many staff members have lighter load in the summer and would enjoy some non-paid time off. Let them spend a month fishing if they want. Not a huge savings but maybe could help.

Response: Though these kinds of individual sacrifices are generous and altruistic, these would be temporary savings. The directive from the administration to all colleges and support units is that budget reductions must be from the base of permanent dollars. One time savings are not options.

Four-day school week

Comment: Perhaps this has already been suggested but I offer up the four day school week as a way to minimize spending. I'm attaching a link to some research that shows "Our results suggest that student

academic achievement has not been hurt by the change in schedule. Instead the evidence indicates that the adoption a four-day school week shares a positive and often statistically significant relationship with performance in both reading and mathematics; the math results in particular are generally robust to a range of specification checks." It's possible that UND would not benefit as much in that it doesn't spend as much on transportation but I think it's an option and one that would minimally effect students unlike options like cutting courses and cutting teachers. [Commenter cites a document from the Association for Education Finance and Policy].

http://www.aefpweb.org/sites/default/files/webform/4_Day_School_Week_02_20_12_v2.pdf

Response: Thank you for your creative idea. The four-day school week has been experimented with at the K-12 level within our region. We are not aware of it being applied in higher education, though. Even if such a plan were possible, it could not be implemented in the time- frame relevant to our current budget-reduction process.

Administration's share of budget reductions

Comment: Staff and Faculty are being told that our positions may be cut. What about administration/Dean's?

Comment: There is much concern about staff jobs being cut. Has UND looked at management dean and faculty positions as well? Also shouldn't they take pay cuts?

Comment: If the deans and administration took a pay cut it would solve much of UND's finance issues.

Comment [edited to remove offensive language and references to individuals]: Start by cleaning up and over staffing upper management. Come on you know **XXX** that you **XXX** in high up paid jobs want to make cuts in food service and custodial and whatever else just to add more money to line your pockets and jobs. That needs to end **XXXXX**.

Comment: Instead of cutting staff positions consider cutting dean positions. The School of Medicine has 18. That is excessive!

Comment: [underlines added to highlight main points] I was relieved when I learned that President Kennedy had stressed last Summer when he arrived at UND the importance of Liberal Arts core as a component of UND mission. My question is what % of total expenditure will be allocated for administrative positions and support staff in administrative offices as compared to the money spent in academic programs. I hope UND make details of position and salary spending more visible to public. Academic programs have done the best already. Really there is no room to cut further if we want to keep UND trenchant or even relevant to the needs of our students as it is now. We should hear justification for each administrative position created in the past two decades. These numbers will tell us and students clearly as well as the general public whether UND is really exercising the best judgement under the circumstances and keeping students in mind. President Kennedy thinks it is vital to fill UND event-coordinator position (Grand forks Herald Feb 11 2017) I believe one of the reasons small or large alumni donors contribute to UND is because they feel they received excellent education or were inspired while they were students especially if their experience at UND shaped their lives. Industry donors would look at whether UND graduates are capable of doing things they need in order to succeed and help the industry prosper through critical thinking excellent communication and problem solving skills and can compete with graduates from the universities worldwide. In this regard it is critical to

enhance (at least retain) quality of faculty (not overloading and replacing with temporary hires). Students falling behind tell me that they can't learn because classes are too large and teachers are not able to address their difficulties or are simply not available when they want to see them. This may be especially true for students taking hard courses such as Math or Sciences. It is critical to reduce (at least preserve) the student faculty ratio. The focus of spending should move toward students. Small departments small classes which are nevertheless critical components for students could wind up being cut off based on the business model. True it is almost inherent that these days Universities are operated based on a business model. But even so think about let's say a convenience store that decides to close when there are not enough customers it is abandoning the initial stated claim of a convenience store. It is popular because the midnight disparate customer can still count on it. In cutting off students from critical parts of their educational needs because of low enrollment strictly based on cost analysis I say we will be gone too far. Our future society will be less vibrant. Perhaps essential to all of us is to be able to process dazzling media effects and fake news critically. These days people are facing inconceivably serious challenges. How to navigate through serious threat of job loss for instance due to the inevitable increase use of robots or Artificial Intelligence? For example an Oxford 2013 study indicates 47% of existing jobs will be lost to robots within next 20 years (<https://www.wired.com/2016/12/white-houses-fix-robots-stealing-jobs-education/>). If so how should we prepare the students for this? They need to learn to think flexibly and have a broad knowledge and skill base. We can't just let them buzz through strokes of computer keyboards or make decisions from one-liner headlines. Based on my experience at UND it seems many students are much more serious and more civil these days and they are eager to learn. They feel they are lost confused and trying to figure things out. UND's Strong liberal arts core will play critical role for student's success.

Response to questions about administration: The SBRRRC spent considerable time discussing the essence of these comments with the VPAA. He assured us that all units, including the administration, will see cuts and that a number of senior positions will go away. The VPAA has provided the SBRRRC with draft budget reduction plans from all administrative units under his purview. He has asked that all units that report to him be strategic in their budget reduction plans. These units include non-academic units in addition to academic units. At the college level, the type and extent of administrative reductions are determined by the Deans. The VPAA is only one of six vice presidents, though. The SBRRRC has not yet had the opportunity to review any budget reduction plans for units reporting to these other vice presidents, or of other units that report directly to the president. We will continue to ask for that information. The VPAA indicates that salary cuts to administrators, faculty or staff are not part of the budget reduction plan. This is primarily to maintain competitiveness in hiring and retaining the best talents. After the meeting, the SBRRRC located the following relevant data: Read p. 5 of the minutes of the [North Dakota Legislature 2016 Interim Higher Education Committee meeting](#) which describes a study of NDUS administrative costs. The associated [Appendix S](#) details numbers and salary trends of UND administrators.