

USenate Feedback: 3/21-3/28

Health Insurance

Comment: There are many retired military working for the state that have VA Benefits Tricare and some may have Medicare is there a program in which they could opt out of the current health insurance the state buys and thus save the state millions and since they opt out to save at least 10-12000 a year in cost be given a \$50 a pay check as incentive

Response: This question was first posed in the February 21 Feedback. The SBRRRC is still awaiting information from HR and Payroll Services. When we learn something we will post a follow-up response. Thanks for your patience.

Salary reductions

Comment: I am for salary reduction enable to keep job positions but lets pro-rate these deductions if needed to be done for example a person making \$25000 year would get a .5% (one half of one percent) reduction and pro-rate it up the ladder like an individual making \$350 000 would get an 15% reduction in pay this is only a example that could be done to save jobs and save the university

Response: Salary reductions are not a significant part of any of the draft budget reduction plans. This is because salary reductions would negatively impact recruitment and retention of the most qualified employees, whether they are paid \$25,000 or \$350,000. The questioner is referred to a similar question posed to the SBRRRC in the February 28 Feedback.

Airplanes

Comment: Regarding the airplane use by the Dean of Medical School who pays for it? If he does that is good; but if he doesn't it could be a cost savings.

Response: This question is similar to one from the March 7 Feedback.

All travel is approved and reimbursed in accordance with established UND policies and procedures. The UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) utilizes the aircraft charter services of UND Aerospace on occasion when the need justifies the expense. This typically is done when multiple UND employees need to be in Bismarck for a meeting and the surface travel time greatly exceeds the meeting time. In 2015 and 2016, this was done an average of two times per year with an average of 3 passengers transported on each trip.

When traveling alone to the three regional campuses of the UND SMHS, the dean may utilize a private aircraft to maximize efficiency. When he does so, he is reimbursed according to UND policy at a rate of \$0.70 per air mile (compared with \$0.535/mile for ground transportation), a rate that is below the actual costs incurred. The dean is responsible for the differential between actual cost and UND reimbursement.

Purchasing Contracts

Comment (identifying information redacted): Is there a way to get rid of a contract or purchasing from [REDACTED] for Office supplies. We can't seem to get good customer service with [REDACTED] and Purchasing and the company have failed to hear our complaints that are causing a lot of issues for our staff and faculty.

Response: The SBRRRC forwarded your concern to the Director of the Office of Procurement and Payments, who is in the process of reviewing it.

Trump budget cuts

Comment: The Trump administration's call for a 20% reduction in NIH funding if enacted would also have a negative impact on behavioral research at UND as well as biomedical research. North Dakota is a behavioral health workforce shortage area. In addition UND has the only Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner program in the state of North Dakota. The implications of the proposed DHHS cuts would also adversely affect UND.

Response: The SBRRRC agrees with this comment and recognizes that more than just the NIH budget is on the line with regard to research. The use of the term "biomedical research" in the March 21 update was meant in its most inclusive sense. The Trump budget proposes cuts in multiple agencies that support science including the DOE, EPA, NOAA, and NASA (<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/03/nih-doe-office-science-face-deep-cuts-trumps-first-budget>). The arts and humanities are also targeted. The Trump budget proposes the elimination of the NEA and the NEH altogether (<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/03/nih-doe-office-science-face-deep-cuts-trumps-first-budget>).

SMHS budget reductions

Comment: Where are the School of Medicine and Health Sciences budget cuts posted? Thank you!

Response: Details of the SMHS draft budget reduction plan have not yet been made public. The plan is summarized in a UND Today article (<http://blogs.und.edu/und-today/2017/03/menu-of-options/>).

Online-only Winter Semester

Comment: Has the university considered taking the weeks of summer break and making them part of an online-only Winter semester. This would decrease the need to have Facilities work overtime to clear parking lots and sidewalks for students. It would also provide a recovery semester for first-year students that screw up their first semester at UND. It would also leave non-local students a better impression of the area since the spring semester would start in March and extend into summer decreasing their exposure to sub-zero temperatures and blizzards. The presence of students during summer would also increase the likelihood of the city being able to draw in entertainment acts. Costs of having a winter

semester would be minimized by using Tegrity recordings of Fall semester courses. By avoiding having on-site classes during the dead of winter the university at the very least would remove one point of stress for everyone.

Response: The academic calendar is set by the NDUS so that all eleven institutions are on the same schedule. Therefore any change would need to be system-wide. The Provost said that having a winter session has been discussed at the NDUS level but many campuses were unwilling to change their semester start and end dates. According to the Provost, it turns out that NDUS terms are a little longer than the national average. It could therefore be possible to shave off one week from the spring and fall semesters and create a four-week winter inter-session. The Provost, who supports this concept, said that a short winter term would provide more flexibility for students to pick up extra credits. This in turn would reduce time-to-graduation – a parameter that would have a positive impact on the budget. The Council of College Faculties is also looking into this concept.

Though this plan would not help the severe winter weather perception problem for some students, it could be a great time to do study abroad in a warmer climate.