

USenate feedback – 3/7-3/21

Capacity and program growth

Comment: At the Wednesday budget briefing the assumed goal was that UND want to increase enrollment. Can we handle more customers? When asked if UND had the capacity to handle a larger student body the Provost said that “of course some programs are already at capacity.” And he went on to say that growth would occur in other programs that still had room for more students. So which programs is he talking about? How about a list of program names that are at capacity and those that he intends to see grow? And aren’t those low-enrollment programs the same programs that during this current economic crisis and with MIRA are having their budgets and capacities decreased?

Response: About 40 mobile-friendly landing pages for academic programs have been completed in advance of full rollout of by the end of the year (see the March 14 UND Today article “A pitch for marketing” to learn more (<http://blogs.und.edu/und-today/2017/03/a-pitch-for-marketing/>)). These early releases were identified by the Provost, Deans and Chairs as having capacity for growth. The full list of 23 undergraduate and 13 graduate programs can be found on slides 26 and 27 of the marketing presentation made by Sol Jensen, Jennifer Stoner and Timothy Pasch at the March 8 Budget Forum (<https://und.edu/provost/files/docs/marketing-nvestment-budget-forum-030817.pdf>). The SBRRRC does not have a similar list of programs that are at capacity. The Provost gave Psychology as an example of an undergraduate program that is at capacity.

Cheer and Dance team

Comment: why didn't the cheerleading coach have to present to the IAC last fall? Are they being considered in the athletic dept budget cut?

Response: According to the Head Coach of the UND Cheer and Dance team, this official UND activity is funded primarily through fund raising. These funds are used for travel and uniforms. The small amount of athletic department budget that is dedicated to this non-revenue-generating activity goes to staffing. Fifty to 70 students participate in cheer and dance teams every year. The head coach likely did not report to the Intercollegiate Athletic Committee last fall because cheerleading is not a NCAA-regulated sport. No information is available at this time about whether the Cheer and Dance teams will be affected by budget reductions

Across-the-board cuts

Comment: Budget cuts need to be offset by tuition increases and do not cut across the board. These across the board cuts have hobbled departments with 80-1 student to faculty ratios in lab-intensive areas while perpetuating a 4-1 student to faculty ratio elsewhere. If cuts are to be made they should be made deeply in a few areas rather than 10% across the board.

Response: Though the 12% budget reduction is being applied evenly across academic units, Deans will be making the budget decisions at the college level. These reductions will need to be approved by the Provost, who has instructed the Deans to be strategic in their reduction plans. The Provost agrees with the commenter that across-the-board reductions is not a good strategy. Tuition caps have yet to be set. This decision, which should be the prerogative of the SBHE, has in recent years been taken up by the legislature. There is talk in the legislature of setting a 3% cap or a 4% cap with 1% going to repairs that requires a 2:1 match from existing University funds. The Student Government recently passed a resolution favoring the 3% cap with the logic that the alternative would drain funds from an already strained budget. Do not expect tuition increases to adequately compensate for the budget reductions.

Administrator contracts

Comment: All VPs and asst/assoc VP contracts should be reviewed and they should be on a year-to year basis as with new faculty hires with no tenure and along with the recent SBHE decision on 605.3.

Response: SBHE policy Section 604.3 (<https://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/sbhe/default.asp?PID=193&SID=7>) and NDUS Human Resources Policy Manual Section 17 (<https://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/hr/?SID=36&PID=238&re=d>) describe procedures for annual performance evaluations for all non-faculty NDUS benefited employees, including upper level administrators. Evaluation of the Chancellor and presidents are considered separately.

Reduction in force

Comment: How are positions being evaluated to be eliminated?

Response: Staff positions not protected by tenure are being carefully evaluated by Deans. Any positions targeted for reduction in force must undergo review by Human Resources according to UND's Reduction in Force/Mandatory Furlough policy (<http://und.edu/finance-operations/files/docs/rif-furlough-procedures.pdf>). The SBRRC plans to explore the fate of unfilled tenure lines more fully in later meetings.

The EERC

Comment: Having just read through the budget proposals from each unit I'm very curious where EERC is in all of this. By their own admission they've operated in a deficit for years. Yet they are nowhere to be found in any of the budget proposals being submitted. At the very least they should be expected to cut enough to make up for the deficit.

Response: The EERC has not had a deficit for the past two years. Except for a very small amount of appropriated dollars which are subject to the 12% cut, the EERC's budget is contract-driven. Though it is largely immune from the state's budget woes, the EERC is continually challenged to sustain a flow of extramural support in order to operate.

Follow-up on Tenure process (3/7)

Comment: (identifying information redacted) The President, VPAA, and other upper admin SAY they are committed to tenure and faculty. However this seems rather disingenuous because last week a faculty member in [REDACTED] was told that their tenure packet was being held up because of "low enrollment" by the Provost! Tenure is NOT tied to enrollment it is tied to performance. This faculty member has met or exceeded ALL expectations in all categories and teaches multiple classes that are always full.

Additionally, they have received all positive votes by every level up to the Provost's office. So for him to hold that tenure packet up for the stated reason seems rather contradictory. Upper admin is living in an alternative universe governed by "alternative facts". We need to wake up and hold them accountable for the things they say which are often times at best half-truth.

Follow-up: The SBRRRC revisited this question at the 3/21 meeting. The Provost indicated that there are no tenure cases that are being held up at this time and that all cases have been forwarded to the President. Further discussion among the SBRRRC uncovered thorny questions. For example: Should some tenure decisions be budgetary in nature? Should a tenure line be devoted to a department with no major? What are the long-term financial commitments associated with hiring a tenure-track assistant professor? The SBRRRC does not have good answers to questions like these. The committee will formulate a framework to have a dialogue with the Provost on these and other budget-related tenure-related issues in the coming weeks.