



University Senate Council
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MEMORANDUM

To: President Eli Capilouto
Interim Provost Tim Tracy

From: Lee X. Blonder, University Senate Council Chair on behalf of the University Senate Council
(unanimous endorsement)

Cc: John F. Wilson, Faculty Trustee
Irina Voro, Faculty Trustee
Members of the University Senate

Date: October 4, 2012

Subject: Feedback from Faculty on First and Anticipated Second Round of Budget Cuts

Priority: High

In light of faculty concern regarding the first and anticipated second round of budget cuts, the University Senate Council conducted two open forums. We designed these forums to give faculty stakeholders the opportunity to voice their views on the impact of the budget cuts on the University's academic mission, including but not limited to:

- UK Core
- undergraduate and graduate education
- the ability of faculty to fulfill research, teaching, clinical and service missions

These forums took place on the following dates:

- Tuesday, September 25th from noon to 1:30 pm in room 230 Student Center (about 26 attendees)
- Friday, September 28th from 10:30 am to 11:50 am in room 223 of the Multidisciplinary Science Building (about 70 attendees)

The Senate Council also solicited comments via an electronic message board. The message board is anonymous, requires no log-in, and is viewable at this link:

http://www.uky.edu/Faculty/Senate/current_events/budget_forums_comments.htm

In what follows we (1) summarize the themes that emerged at the forums and on the message board, as well as comments directed to the faculty trustees via email, and (2) make specific recommendations for action. We quote some anonymous comments that are particularly representative.

A. Summary of Themes

1. Transparency and Consultation. An overarching theme among faculty is frustration regarding the lack of transparency and consultation with respect to budgetary decisions and strategy. Many feel disadvantaged because they have had little to no information on the exact nature of the budget, when the second round of cuts will be exacted, and whether they will have any role in the process. Likewise, faculty noted that the budget “crisis” has led to reduction in personnel and resources, without clear recognition of the dire impact on the educational mission. One electronic comment poster stated “it is already difficult to accomplish simple tasks around my department, such as getting copy machines unjammed, finding someone to help a student, and debugging IRIS or blackboard. This is time that I cannot devote to teaching, research and service, and is probably more expensive for UK than the funds saved by the layoffs.” Faculty pointed out that if taxpayers want to get a quality product, then it will require a concerted effort by University administration to talk to the faculty about what that will take and to listen to the faculty regarding the consequences of proposed cuts at the college and departmental level.
2. Vision and Understanding. Professors who have been teaching at UK for decades, and who have served as department chairs and associate deans, stated that the budget process was lacking in vision, poorly managed, and potentially disastrous for the University. A number of faculty attested that if the planned 4.2% cuts to academic units are enacted, undergraduate and graduate education will be severely compromised. With limited options, deans will have to make the difficult choice of firing staff, teaching assistants (TAs), or lecturers. In one college, the Advisory Committee may ask faculty to sacrifice merit raises to save lecturer positions and the national reputation of the program. Forum participants failed to see evidence that the higher administration recognizes the personnel and infrastructure required to enable faculty to perform as scholars who bring cutting-edge research and artistic achievement into the classroom. Some programs, facing the loss of their operating budget, anticipate being forced to dismiss most non-tenure-track faculty and to sacrifice open positions, no matter how vital they may be to the academic integrity of the unit.
3. “False Crisis.” Faculty recognize that the reduction in state government support represents a small part of the budget cutback. As such, they feel that the current crisis is largely due to presidential priorities including new spending proposals in excess of \$50 million: a debt service fund of \$15 million, strategic initiatives, scholarships, and a 5% merit raise pool. These constitute recurring dollars. Some faculty questioned the wisdom of such decisions and expressed frustration that calls for moderation have for the most part been ignored. At the same time, faculty voiced concern about (1) the justification for past and future reductions in force, and (2) the increase in the size of the first year class in the absence of adequate resources and personnel to teach and provide services such as advising. Many wish to see the salaries and benefits perks of top administrators trimmed in the interest of fiscal responsibility. Some argued that in spite of a need for building and infrastructural improvements and raises, the consequences of these budgetary set-asides are so dire in terms of their effects on the academic mission that they are neither justified nor reasonable.
4. Impact on Graduate Programs. Faculty expressed consternation that there is little understanding of what graduate programs do for UK, their impact on the state, and why UK must remain a leader in graduate education. As an example, of nearly 200 doctoral alumni produced by just one department in the last four decades, 20 are academic leaders in institutions in Kentucky. It is widely envisioned that the second round of budget cuts will necessitate widespread elimination of TA positions and that this will negatively impact both graduate and undergraduate education. Nationally ranked departments will no longer be capable of attracting the best and brightest graduate students, and sections and courses taught by TAs will be eliminated at high cost to undergraduates and faculty. Many faculty implored the administration and the Board of Trustees to understand that UK’s graduate and professional training programs play a vital

role in the Commonwealth. In addition, they predicted that the larger educational infrastructure will be crippled if we proceed on the planned course.

5. Impact on Undergraduate Programs. Faculty expressed anger regarding the administration's publicized focus on excellence in undergraduate education while at the same time stripping funding from educational units. Many see the increase in enrollments combined with reduction in resources, staff, and faculty as undermining the quality of undergraduate education. Regular and Special Title Series faculty as well as lecturers and TAs are "knocking themselves out" – packing classrooms and trying to be upbeat, motivating, and inspirational – knowing that UK needs those tuition dollars to secure jobs and resources. The expression "butts in seats" is widely used to describe the current direction of undergraduate educational priorities as promoted by the administration's policies. Many feel that the UK Core in particular, a program that faculty and administrators put years of effort into developing and implementing, is in jeopardy. One faculty member characterized the blow as "death by one thousand cuts." Faculty noted the growing difficulty facing departments in providing the UK Core requirements to an increasing number of students. In addition, the expansion of class sizes resulting from increased enrollments is causing some faculty to resort to peer grading to keep up with the workload.
6. Impact on Faculty Workload, Scholarly Productivity, and Evaluation. Faculty expressed concern about the impact of the budget cuts on issues related to workload, distribution of effort, performance evaluations, and tenure and promotion. As noted previously, budget cuts to academic units in the planned amount of 4.2 percent will result in: (1) lay-offs of key personnel, (2) faculty attrition without replacement, (3) increases in class size, and (4) cuts in TA positions and sections, with resultant demands on the remaining faculty to increase teaching loads or clinical activity at the expense of research and service. Faculty also noted that they are being required to do more administrative and secretarial work without compensation. Faculty remarked that budget cuts have undermined research and education by eliminating funding sources that support speaker series, faculty travel to conferences, and collaboration with colleagues at other institutions. Under the budget cuts, tenured and tenure-track faculty will have less time and resources to devote to scholarly activity, which will threaten career advancement as well as the national ranking of programs and the University.
7. Athletics and Healthcare. In spite of the increased contribution of UK Athletics to scholarships this year, faculty feel that more could be done. Others are concerned about UK Healthcare debt, whether the debt is serviceable, and the future of the academic physician given the revised practice plans and productivity measures being promulgated in the College of Medicine.
8. Libraries. Faculty are distressed about the impact of cuts to the Libraries with respect to the book budget, the availability of materials for teaching and research, and faculty and staff positions. They commented that it is no longer possible to continue to build notable collections in the face of substantial budget reductions.
9. Scholarships. Participants questioned the rationale for directing an ever increasing part of the budget to merit scholarships, irrespective of student need. Furthermore, in spite of increasing enrollments in general and of gifted students in particular, participants noted that there is little investment in programs to support the education of such students. Faculty asked: "What are we telling those students and parents while we simultaneously offer them less?"
10. Future Budget Model. One faculty member expressed the reservations voiced by many regarding a budget model that rewards academic units based on the number of student credit hours generated.

This will have several consequences, none of them good. Decisions will no longer be based on academic quality or the idea that a comprehensive flagship university should offer a full range of

courses in all areas, but purely on quantity, whether a course can attract and accommodate a large number of undergraduates. Further, rather than encouraging cooperation and interdisciplinary collaboration, this model will encourage aggressive and damaging competition between units, to the inevitable disadvantage of smaller units, no matter how high their quality.

B. Conclusion

The following quote by one faculty member summarizes the position of many:

At times like this, it is critical that we focus on the *central mission of the University*: providing highly-trained, well-educated and energetic young workers and entrepreneurs to act as the economic driving force of the Commonwealth.... Our current roadmap has us dramatically increasing the student to faculty ratio, while simultaneously requiring the use of more and more part-time instructors. This *cannot* lead to the highly trained workforce that the Commonwealth so desperately needs. Many on the faculty have noticed that our drive to increase enrollment has led to the admission of more and more poorly qualified students, who are likely to drop out of college with an enormous debt and no degree to show for it. We need to focus on providing *the best education possible* for the number of *qualified* students we can reasonably handle with full-time faculty. The "volume" approach of churning out huge number of graduates, particularly in this economy, will not move Kentucky forward. It will simply lead to a larger number of unemployed college graduates suffering under crushing debt. We need to focus on *quality*, not *quantity*.

C. Recommendations

Based on the views of the faculty as reported in this memo, we, the Chair and membership of the University Senate Council, ask that you, the President:

- Halt the second round of budget cuts to academic units.
- Consult with an Advisory Committee selected by the Senate Council to provide viable, informed, and mutually acceptable budgetary guidelines for future decisions as they impact the teaching, research and service missions of this University.
- Promote the [Values](#) espoused in our Governing Regulations – particularly “*mutual respect and human dignity*” and “*diversity and inclusion*” in all future personnel actions.
- Direct that, in the spirit of shared sacrifice, the highest paid administrators take salary cuts. For example, top administrators at [UC Riverside](#) sustained voluntary 5 percent salary cuts during the budget crisis of 2009.
- Eliminate the current practice in which the University contributes the entire 15 percent of the annual retirement benefit for select “executives,” the discretionary authority of which is granted to you in [AR 3:1.IVC](#). Instead, require these administrators to contribute 5 percent of annual salary to their retirement plan out of pocket – as do the vast majority of UK faculty and staff.
- Provide a point-by-point response to faculty, staff, and students regarding the concerns expressed in this memo.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration of these issues.