

College of Built Environments - College Council

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Faculty perspective on navigating through challenging budgeting times at UW

This document integrates the key feedback collected by College Council members through a) faculty department meetings, b) the all College meeting on June 10th, c) a survey open to all faculty from June 10 to 16 and d) emails.

We highlight some overarching comments provided as well as integrated observations received by the CBE faculty for each of the questions we posed to the faculty.

General comments

- Several faculty highlighted the difficulty in providing specific recommendations as the current, nor future budget projections haven't been shared at the department and college level. Additionally, the lack of transparency and inequities among faculty salaries has also been highlighted
- Upper administration should understand that different colleges/schools/departments and laboratories can be impacted differently by cuts
- The college should first do an assessment of areas outside of faculty/staff positions where savings could be realized
- Each Department is different and what might work in one department might not in another regarding cuts. Transparency will be critical.
- Money saved from freezing hiring and increased revenue with higher enrollments should be factored in rather than forcing budget cuts
- If faculty salaries decrease, competitive faculty might leave
- Utilizing previous cost cutting experience in terms of what worked and what did not is critical in moving forward
- Making sure that the long-term goals are served is more critical than meeting only short-term emergency needs

1. Connecting strategic plan themes with a response to budgeting shortfall

1.1. How would Equity/Social Justice (ESJ) be reflected with measures guiding cost saving decisions?

- Budget cuts should be an opt-in model with self-identification without assumptions. Several faculty highlighted that cuts should not hamper the EDI process. Tenured faculty should absorb more of the cuts vs. those more financially vulnerable and especially diverse personnel
- Furloughs should be temporary and ensuring that the quality of education delivered to the students is maintained is critical
- Creating a comprehensive collegewide plan on minority student recruitment, outreach, scholarships, mentoring and job placement with industry support. Architecture has been successful and they should share their insight.
- Increasing the number of minority scholarships will be key in attracting them
- Recruitment of minority staff and faculty should also be a priority including the retention of the diverse college personnel

- Providing retirement/exit packages to help restructuring and attracting diverse staff and faculty.
- Course reductions should be based on EDI goals, with combined courses across fields being promoted

1.2. How would Health and Well-Being (HWB) be reflected with measures guiding cost saving decisions?

- Maximizing flexibility in all aspects is critical (staggering times, long lunch breaks etc.) and offering safety training on both physical and mental health of our entire community
- Consolidating activities to minimize need for on campus presence for multiple days through efficiency, which will minimize potential exposure and need for PPE
- Invest strategically without human cost
- TA's should not be put in higher health risk, by in-person teaching
- Inform faculty and staff how to help students with mental health issues and guide them to appropriate resources, rather than just sending them a website
- Revision of the studio culture is needed to maintain well-being and create a covid-informed space layout for our studios

2. Approaches to align financial resources with our goals

2.1. In response to the current financial crisis, what are some guiding principles/criteria that can steer cost saving decisions?

- Maintaining program quality, momentum & safety is a priority along with research and student support
- Redundancies should be avoided leading to less hours per week for staff and more collaborative teaching by regular faculty rather than affiliates if there isn't a diversity component
- Consolidation of events and functions across departments and any non-essential spending across the College
- Attention to low enrollment classes taught by part-time non-permanent faculty may well be warranted, and elective classes that are enrichments but not central to accredited programs may need to be reduced or eliminated. Additionally, interdisciplinary programs should be protected (e.g. certificates)
- Lower payed brackets should be protected
- Courses that are requirements for accredited degrees should be protected as well as interdisciplinary and certificate courses
- Some online courses can potentially bring in more money and they should continue to be online
- Tendency to reduce number of courses can be against ABB, however, low-enrollment courses should be explored
- Faculty time is not fungible, as they have expertise in some areas. Consider negotiating %FTE cut for a course waiver and see the number of faculty who accept it. Reinstate 40% teaching and retirement
- Improving income opportunities by offering certain courses fully online
- There should be equity in teaching loads before certain faculty are requested to increase their load
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2.2. What criteria would you propose when assessing areas of possible budget cuts?

- See 2.1

2.3. What do you consider priorities when developing cost saving measures?

- Long-term program quality and community safety should be non-negotiable
- Maintaining part-time, affiliates, lectures are central to some units
- Entrepreneurial opportunities (e.g. CSDE better admin support) new ARC program - more collaborative efforts to grow the pie
- Consolidating courses could be good if we redirect resources for courses with higher enrollment or campus wide or gen ed requirements
- Student support and access
- Certain department activities are replicated across and more operational efficient ways should be identified by consolidating them across the college
- Increasing fundraising
- Avoid "sponsorship" or further eroding of the public mission of the university through pay-to-play schemes that dilute program quality

3. Ways to communicate around financial decision-making processes

3.1. Would you prefer internal department discussions and/or a college meeting on cost saving measures over the summer?

- All are useful
- Uncertainty is stressful and debilitating (bad for HWB), and should be reduced by taking decisions earlier rather than later. As long as the decisions' reasoning is transparent and their driving principles are fair, faculty will accept the necessary sacrifices.
- There is a need for a consistent approach across the college and discussions within each department, with transparency being critical

3.2. As UW leadership and Deans will have more knowledge in the following weeks/months concerning the extent of the budget cuts, how would you like to be involved in feedback on potential actions (e.g. townhall, survey, etc.)?

- All are useful along with full budget transparency, including endowments and allocations
- The all college meeting with the break-out rooms was useful and should also happen within larger departments
- Expectations should be provided on what to anticipate in near term (1 year), and a longer term (2-3 years) and what the possible scenarios are.