

Staff Senate Minutes

September 11, 2024

Facilitators– Detric Robinson and Ross Logan

Minutes – Jennifer Beach Anderson

Attendance:

Jennifer Beach Anderson  
McKenna Andreas-Lee  
Jeff Banks  
Gloria Bokenkamp  
Josh Boone  
Waltrina DeFrantz-Dufor  
Melissa DeWitt  
Chico Dimas  
Meg Dimsa  
Abigail Girard  
Natalie Gregg  
Maggie Heyduk  
Christine Hood  
Jason Jackson  
Gergana Kostadinova Law  
Ilona Kovacs  
Jon Kraus

Ross Logan  
John Maly  
Jackalynn Mayfield  
Aleesha McDowell  
Virginia Pitts  
Detric Robinson  
Katie Schroeder  
William "Bill" Scott  
Adela Smith  
Darlene Squires  
Jon Stone  
Rosepetal Van de Graaf  
Alexandria Vasquez Parnell  
Allison Weihrauch  
Sarabeth Wolbrom  
Jeremy Wu

Absent:

Angel Field  
Shelby Wones  
Graham Zulu

Excused:

Kacie Dohrmann  
Linda Newman

**Mary Clark and Mark DeLorenzo - New budget model**

- Have been using zero based budgeting in operational units. In the past incremental budgeting was up or down a couple percentage points, with line item reviews of authorizing new expenses. Requests for new expenses were justified by what was being cut or reduced. This model has worked during COVID
- Now there will be more accountability and agency within academic units.
- Operating margin – revenue within units minus direct expense. Can also be calculated as a percentage.

- For a financially healthy institution, we need to know what operating margin is because this is part of ratings calculations, particularly for bonding agencies.
- Concerns with introductory conversations about this model when it was discussed within a unit recently. Targets will be identified mutually and over a longer timeline than this initial conversation. Three year timeline instead of two years.
- For units without revenue, then the margin is just the expense base related to the organization

### **Enrollment projections**

- Enrollment has varied a lot in recent years. Higher right after COVID for undergrad, higher during COVID for graduate students.
- Graduate enrollment is counter to the economy, which means graduate enrollments are currently down due to a relatively strong economy.
- Online offerings are not resonating with the market in the way we expected. In person enrollments are strong and exceeding expectations. Examples: Korbel, Social Work, and Daniels.
- UCOL and 2U sponsored programs are down from expected. Since we only get 35% on 2U enrollments, the impacts of lower enrollment are softened. In UCOL, the tuition per credit hour is lower, so the impact on budget is also lower.
- Looking at first day of class forecasting to week 10 of fall quarter, graduate level is down about 550 students.
- Undergraduate budget was based on incoming class of 1,550 students, and expected to exceed that number. June 1<sup>st</sup> (extended response deadline) indicated a class of 1,350 students, as low as 1,250. Currently at 1,352 first year students, which is 200 less than the budget we developed.
- Persistence is important. We have been working very hard to improve this, which means our undergraduate numbers have been more stable, which buffers the overall budget. Meaning down 40 students overall.
- For next year, working with an agency that is helping set expectations for first year enrollment. FAFSA is expected to continue into this year to some extent. We are working on outreach to high school students to build the first year class.
- For graduate enrollment, we are looking to hold the expectations steady, while recognizing that the economy might soften.
- Softening of online is notable. Coming out of COVID, there was demand for online learning; it's easier for working professionals, so we are trying to find out why this happened.

### **Questions**

*What can staff do to support students staying engaged on campus and support persistence? Response –* Since we are tuition dependent, we should all see ourselves as part of recruiting and persistence. Custodial is an important part of the experience. We have learned how continuity in this area is part of this experience. Smile and say hi and interact with students.

*Are people getting fatigued from online classes? Are we looking for more in person options? Response –* UCOL leadership is looking at these options, both for content and modality.

*How can staff put students first in an environment of layoffs and hiring freeze/slowdown?*

*Response* – With hiring pause, this means that those of us here are doing more. We need to recognize that to honor employees we need to look at re-titling or compensating this additional workload. Moving forward, how do we generate demand and how do we honor the team supporting this function. Some units are able to hire more robustly due to revenue generation, compliance to regulatory requirements, and research.

Mark, Mary, and Julia review position requests within this context and about 1/3 of them are not approved.

*Are we extending deposit deadline to help with enrollment? How did this affect student satisfaction?*

*Response* – We need to look at these effects and how the enrollment process plays out. How we start out influences how you continue. Need to debrief and learn for the future.

*Are we dropping things like GRE requirement?*

Answer – We are moving in this direction in the future, including test optional for grad students. Undergrad is test optional, but now some schools are going back to requiring the test.

### **Julia Richmon – Operational Excellence**

- Launched request for ideas and encourage colleagues to do so. We have gathered about 250 ideas. Curating ideas into groups or combining them.
- Forming working groups, starting with HR, then expanding to every functional area. Goal will be to prioritize ideas and identify items that can be quickly implemented, then ideas with longer lead times and scope.
- Steering committee will curate all ideas and promote to the Chancellor

### **Questions**

*How can we balance our values with the budget constraints, particularly around mental health support and food pantry?*

*Response* – Mental health fee for graduate students, as this population has demonstrated a need for this service. Food pantry – we will work to make sure there are food pantry supplies available during breaks. Academically programs that made sense a few years ago don't make sense any more or there might be new programs that need more resources. Reality is limited resources that have to be invested in areas that have biggest impact.

We need to focus on impact. We need to look at things we have been doing for a long time and ask if we are doing them because we have always done them. Think about what we were trying to do achieve when we started it. Ask if we are still achieving that and if there is another way to get these results. Also ask what we can stop doing.

*More students with disabilities, students of color, international students, and other populations.*

*Concerned that we are not supporting the students who we are bringing in right now with cuts to things like the food pantry.*

*Response-* We are looking a universal design for learning, which can help address this issue. Jen Belamy and Nikki Latino are leading a group to focus on this.

For international students and students of color, we will continue to support these populations. DU is seeing 28.3% of first time first year students who identify as students of color, which is a historical high number.

### **University Budget Advocacy and Policy Committee - Gergana Kostadinova Law and Jason Jackson**

Reporting on proposal for leave policy recommendations – creative ways to recruit and retain staff.

Proposals and not budget neutral, but benefits will outweigh costs.

1. Offer a competitive total compensation package to address staff retention and staff hiring challenges
2. Uphold DU's commitment to staff health and wellness
3. Bring DU's leave policy up to par with other Colorado universities
  - a. Vacation
    - i. DU - Accrue 15 days per year for 7 years, then 22 days per year
    - ii. CU Boulder – 22 days per year up to a maximum of 44
    - iii. Metro – 24 days per year up to 40 days per year
      1. We are at least a week of vacation short from the start
  - b. Sick – DU is also short of these other institutions
4. Vacation Leave Recommendation
  - a. Increase vacation to 2 days per month from the start for 24 days per year
  - b. Start accruing toward maximum immediately instead of waiting 7 years
  - c. Add back clause for 3.75 vacation or sick time, reporting in half day increments

Discussion –

*Did you find any institutions that had a vacation increase after a certain number of years, plus what about only the full time classification? Maybe we could have an option for a lower number of years than seven.*

*Response – Other institutions didn't have that number of years because that's a way of mitigating turnover. Other universities reduced the amount that you can bank from year to year.*

*Jeff Banks – Pleased with proposal. Once you hit the maximum you stop accruing. Keep using vacation so you can keep accruing it. Half-day increment and time keeping system. Healthy family workplaces act requires reporting down to the nearest hour. Policy is on the site in draft form. Still taking comments. Changes to accruals has financial implications. Vacations on books are an encumbrance, but sick leave is not. We need to do modeling on how these accruals will play out. Can we sustain additional encumbrance?*

*Are employees using vacation balances at maximum? How much is university paying out when an employee leaves?*

*Jeff Banks – this analysis will be part of the upcoming discussions*

*Could we put a maximum on what is paid out as a way of encouraging people to take their vacations?*

*Jeff Banks – once that vacation is given to you it's yours.*

*For the increase after seven years, could we look at data about when people are leaving and adjust number of years?*

*Did we compare Quarters vs semesters? University holidays?*

*We should push to take vacation for well being.*

*When will these recommendations be submitted?*

*Response - By September 20<sup>th</sup>.*

*Current interim policy is extensive – there will be lots of questions on which types of leave to take. Can we do sick leave in one-hour increments in the new payroll system?*

*Leadership should model taking leave and use their vacation*

*What about people who are .93 FTE?*

*Those earning less than \$55k are now classified as non-exempt. They have to enter actual time worked now.*

*Was there any research was there anything about working during vacations?*

*Why don't people take vacation days? Reasons are working over vacation. Too much work when returning to work. No backup on approvals while approvers are out.*