

Report on the Meeting of the Budget Advisory Group (BAG IV) to the Senate Executive Committee and the University Senate

March 10, 2011

This meeting was largely spent on budget updates from major university divisions and services.

Division of Student Success

Presenter: Christine Bouchard, Vice President for Student Success

This division is responsible for a wide range of activities focused on helping students succeed in their academic careers at UAlbany. The division manages housing and related activities for the 7,400 students who live on campus, provides services to insure student health and safety, and provides a variety of opportunities for students to participate in activities on campus and in the larger Albany community. The division's \$15.8 million budget is largely drawn from student fee income from the housing fee which resident students pay and the comprehensive student fee, which supports the student health center, the university police department, and other student support services. The bulk of the division's resources are spent on salaries, which are funded by both state resources and fee income. Like other non-academic units, the division has been compelled to absorb significant cuts in state funding over the past three years. It has absorbed by not replacing employees when they have left and transferring state funded positions to fee income. Further reductions would likely be addressed by further reductions in personnel.

Discussion of this presentation centered around the potential for further savings, particularly in student health and public safety. The division has realized salary savings from relocating to a new facility and greater reliance on nurse-practitioners and physicians assistants, but is understaffed relative to professional norms in mental health and counseling services. The number of students presenting with mental health symptoms has increased significantly of late, as has the number of attempted student suicides. Public safety is a major selling point for UAlbany for both students and parents. The division has relied heavily on "security assistants" to maintain a visible presence by patrolling buildings and similar activities. The pay for these positions is low and turnover has been high, with the result that the number of these personnel has been cut in half over the last few years.

Division of Communications and Marketing

Presenter: Catherine Herman, Vice President for Communications and Marketing

This office is responsible for public relations and marketing for the University. It maintains the university's web site and social media presence, and provides media and other communications services to the university. The office's \$1.5 million budget is almost totally drawn from state funds and devoted largely to personnel. The office is experiencing difficulty keeping up with changes in communications technology, particular recent increases in mobile visits from such devices as iPads and Blackberries, and

expanding the use of such social media as Facebook and Twitter. The office has recently added a video platform to its website, since people appear to watch videos longer than they read print. The level of IT support for these activities has declined substantially and is currently below other SUNY University centers.

Discussion of this presentation centered around the appropriate ways of evaluating these activities and expanding the revenue generated through these activities. Selling advertising is one obvious possibility, but the body which governs the allocation of web domains frowns on advertising on .edu websites such as the university's. The university's website has proven to be an important portal for potential students seeking information about both undergraduate and graduate programs and is more efficient than traditional print means of disseminating such information.

Information Technology Services (ITS)

Presenter: Christine Haile, Chief Information Officer

ITS is responsible for managing and overseeing information technology activities on campus. The office's \$13.6 million budget is drawn from state funds, the dorm income fund (for managing IT in the residence halls) and the technology portion of the comprehensive fee which is paid by all students. Like other non-academic units, the office has had to absorb significant cuts in its state funds budget. These reductions to date have to date been absorbed largely through reductions in the unit's non-personnel budget, although there will have been a net loss of 19 positions since 2006-07. Equipment replacement has been slowed up and staff time has been increasingly focused on maintaining existing services rather than improving services or developing new ones. The unit has become increasingly reliant on contractors for services, which makes further cuts to the non-personnel budget difficult to achieve in the short run. While all of the university's classrooms are now IT friendly, there is an on-going need for funds to replace aging equipment.

Discussion of this presentation centered around the possibility of further savings through further consolidation of services. There is some potential for further savings via consolidation of server operations and cell phone services. The university has recently shifted to a new e-mail system which has the potential for savings and the university's main telephone contract is up for renewal, which creates the opportunity for potential savings via a shift to an internet based system. Achieving the proper balance between the centralized core services which this office provides and the more specialized IT needs of departments is a matter that requires on-going negotiation and adjustment.

Division of Academic Affairs

Presenter: Susan Phillips, Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs

This division is responsible for all the university's academic activities, including the schools and colleges as well as a wide range of academic support activities, ranging from enrollment management, graduate and undergraduate education, to the university library, art museum and the New York Writer's Institute. UAlbany's mission statement and strategic plan call for it to function as a research university. This

means it has responsibilities for the creation and dissemination of knowledge and the training of new scholars as well as for instruction in graduate and undergraduate education. Both teaching and research components are necessary components of a research university.

UAlbany's all funds budget provides a rough indication of the equality of the contribution of these components to the university's finances. Tuition and a portion of the state tax support can be viewed as generated by the university's teaching mission; while income from grants and contracts, department IFR's, and indirect cost recovery would not exist without the university's research and other entrepreneurial activities. Both sources make approximately equal contributions to the university's overall financial picture. Among the academic units, however, there is a strong inverse relationship between research and teaching activities. The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) accounts for about 70 percent of the university's instructional activities, and about 15 percent of the university's overall income from external funding; while the other schools and colleges account for about 30 percent of instructional activities, and about 85 percent of income from grants and other outside support.

The pattern of reductions in state support to date has been significantly skewed in favor of CAS. While CAS' state funds budget is larger than those of the other schools and colleges combined, they have absorbed significantly smaller reductions in both absolute and percentage terms, than other schools and colleges. In cumulative terms, including the most recent round of reductions, CAS has been asked to absorb reductions equivalent to 12.7 percent of its 2008 base, while other schools and colleges have absorbed reductions equivalent to 19.8 percent of the same base.

This presentation was not completed, so discussion was deferred until the next meeting.

Next Steps

The next meeting will be devoted to the completion of the Academic Affairs presentation. BAG will then begin consideration of alternative scenarios for the 2011-2012 and beyond budget.