

## Budget Committee Meeting Minutes: (4/8/22)

Faculty Senate Members in attendance:

B. Steve Csaki

Stan Alluisi

Margaret Cotter-Lynch

Andy Kramer

William Fridley

Katheryn Shannon

Members Absent:

Kay Daigle

Fendrich Clark

Cody Bogard

### Agenda

- I. Discuss the best manner in which to fulfill the Budget Committee's charge as per the Faculty Senate Constitution, Article V, which states: *The function of this committee shall be to advise the University Vice Presidents and the President on general budgetary matters. Periodically, this committee will communicate with the faculty regarding the status of the budget and will attempt to establish a consensus on funding needs and priorities.*

**There was a discussion led by VP Westman, and added to by both VP Golden and President Newsom about the process by which budgetary matters are addressed. Budgetary forms are sent to department Chairs and funding requests are made by the Chairs and then sent to the VPs where they are decided upon. In a memo sent to Chairs that referenced these budgetary forms, VP Westman reminded Chairs to keep in mind that state allocations are expected to remain flat for this year. President Newsom spoke about the difficulty of getting more funding from the state. Senator Csaki pointed out that even if there may be risk associated with asking for more funding, SE should still do so. President Newsom responded that he is actively engaging legislators on SE's behalf as much and as often as possible.**

**As for the actual question of how the BC can fulfill its charge, Senator Cotter-Lynch suggested that the BC have two meetings each academic year with the President and the VPs, one in the Fall, and one in the Spring around the time that the budgetary forms are sent to the VPs in order to offer advice on the**

**budgetary matters each semester. President Newsom agreed that that was a good idea.**

II. A. Discuss the committee's additional charge, the **first** part of which is:

The committee shall provide a motion to address updating the University salary card to between 80% - 90% of regionally similar institutions and moving the University to adopt annual salary step increases based on a national Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) system. **As a committee we agree with the conclusions reached by the Salary Card Working Group (FSCWG), particularly this portion:**

*2) Tuition and fees will likely have to go up to pay for [salary increases] as well (although much less than would have been the case in the past, as a larger fraction of SE revenue comes from tuition and fees), and we are very aware of price sensitivity and where a lot of our students are coming from economically. But we should expect that the cost of an education should go up with inflation over time (we can still be good stewards of tuition while allowing for the real costs of what we provide). Much of the talk about the "skyrocketing cost of tuition" has been about how the cost of an education has risen faster than inflation (often to compensate for state disinvestment). When your pricing does not rise with inflation you are either saying "we found a great new way to save on costs" or "we were overcharging you before."*

The Budget Committee does not yet have a definitive position as to **how** the budget must be increased in order to rectify Faculty and Staff salaries, but agrees that the overall budget will need to be increased in some manner.

We recommend that, prior to increasing tuition and fees, a request be made to RUSO to increase the state allocation. An argument to do so should include facts such as SE's growth (the fact that it is the only RUSO institution to grow in the last two years should be stressed), our mission statement (*Southeastern Oklahoma State University provides an environment of academic excellence that enables students to reach their highest potential. By having personal access to excellent teaching, challenging academic programs, and extracurricular experiences, students will develop skills and habits that promote values for career preparation, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning*) that includes specific reference to "academic excellence" and "excellent teaching," and the fact that by any objective measure SE faculty and staff are underpaid, particularly now that the housing market in Durant has skyrocketed, drastically changing the cost of living here. Other related issues should be included in this argument.

As for how to determine the base pay and the market adjustment within disciplines beyond using CUPA (as per the FSCWG recommendation), we should also look at discipline specific guidelines provided by their organizations, where available, for example in Aviation where the Aviation Accreditation Board International – AABI recently completed the five-year reaffirmation visit at SE. During their out-briefing they specifically stated that we were underpaying one of our faculty members given his qualifications.

**The bulk of the our meeting time was devoted to discussion of the above issues. President Newsom praised the work of the SCWG, but said that he had not fully digested their**

**suggestions. He asked specifically about what it meant to be “off-card.” Senator Cotter-Lynch explained to him that roughly 50% of faculty had salaries that were not based on the card in the sense that these salaries exceeded the stated amounts on the salary card.**

**Senator Fridley suggested that we ought to consider a percentage increase in faculty and staff salaries as a starting point. President Newsom indicated that more time was needed to make sure that we get this right.**

**Senator Csaki commented that he understood that we needed to get it right, but that it should be possible to do this in a timely manner and simultaneously do it well. The meeting ended on that note.**

**B. Second part of additional charge:** The committee should also develop a plan of action for more faculty involvement in the budget process.

See above discussion of meetings.

We hope that this portion of our additional charge is, or can be, addressed in our overall charge.