



California State University, Sacramento
Office of Academic Affairs
6000 J Street • Sacramento Hall 230 • Sacramento, CA 95819-6016
T (916) 278-6331 • F (916) 278-7648 • www.csus.edu/acaf

October 12, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sacramento State Academic Community

FROM: Joseph F. Sheley, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Academic Affairs Plans, 2007-08

I am writing to update you on the many items on the Office of Academic Affairs' agenda this year. The same information has been shared with chairs, program directors, and members of the Faculty Senate via power point, but this memo places things a bit more on the record. I apologize in advance for its length. We have many significant issues to address.

Enrollment and Budget

The larger budget context in which we are operating is perhaps clearer now than it was a year ago. The state's financial situation mirrors ours fairly exactly: shrinking revenues, a structural deficit that everyone knows needs fixing, growing demand for services (even with obvious demographic flat spots), an infrastructure that increasingly requires repair, and very serious competition for what's left in the budget. Higher Education's place at the table in California (nationally as well) is in a holding pattern and shows no signs of improving as corrections, health care, and P-12 receive attention. Competition for enrollment (i.e., funding) among the CSU, community colleges, and the UC (not to mention private colleges) is now fierce.

Our enrollment situation is steady. We keep growing but at a slower pace than we'd prefer. We predict missing our target this year by slightly less than one percent, though perhaps a very concerted effort to address some pockets of mid-year attrition and increase the mid-year transfer flow will close that gap.

Slow enrollment growth means slow budget growth. This affects our ability to address the structural deficit (spending our savings to compensate for too little revenue) that we have been experiencing the past few years. The University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC) worked very hard this past summer to identify the size of that structural deficit: \$7.5 million. UBAC proposed and the president accepted a plan to reduce the deficit by \$3 million this year; that plan translated to a reduction of slightly more than \$2 million in Academic Affairs' baseline (ongoing) funds.

Academic Affairs held enough in reserve that I was able to assure UBAC that we could roughly duplicate last year's academic activities during the current year with a \$2 million reduction.

Given that we have not recovered from the financial hit that we took earlier in this decade, business as usual is not something to celebrate, but at least it provides a sense of predictability this year.

UBAC will now work with the president to address the remaining \$4.5 million in the structural deficit, and that will mean that we on the academic side need to be forward looking and innovative. This can be done if we prioritize our needs and focus on “tradeoffs” within the major variables that shape the Academic Affairs budget. Having studied that budget and listened to your thoughts for a year, I believe those “big ticket” variables are eight (though I will entertain others should you care to suggest them):

1. *The interplay of faculty size, number and size of course sections, use of the schedule, curriculum design and modes of curriculum delivery.* If we choose to make changes in this regard, we must do it within our current enrollment structure and with assurances of quality in the classroom. Beyond normal schedule adjustments within the colleges, no systematic reduction of course offerings will occur without a well-defined plan to meet students’ needs and to maintain FTES. If we choose not to make changes in this regard (and we can so choose), we will need to address major tradeoffs in the other areas to follow.
2. *Instructional equipment.* We have fallen behind in this area during the past few years, and we cannot let the situation continue. There can be no cuts here though we can catch up in well-planned fashion, and we will need to budget to keep from slipping again.
3. *Full-time/part-time (FT/PT) faculty ratio.* We now stand at about 60 percent full-time faculty equivalent (FTEF). An increase is desirable, to be sure. However, we are not in a financial position simply to increase the size of our FTEF and the FT/PT ratio through additional full-time hires. At the same time, we must also understand that even a conversion of part-time faculty positions to full-time positions comes with a cost. A move from 60 percent to 70 percent FT would involve roughly 100 FTEF conversions at a cost of about \$1.1 million.
4. *Faculty and staff development.* It is important that we support the efforts of our faculty and staff to develop professionally. We spend significant amounts on development activities ranging from sabbaticals to professional travel to summer research support. We have not systematically assessed how and to what end this support is structured. I would like to increase it in well-planned fashion, though it is obvious that we cannot do this without tradeoffs regarding the other variables on our list.
5. *Salary compression/inversion.* Last year, I promised a number of junior faculty members, who most felt the effects of compression, that I would keep this issue on the table for them. Some, but not likely all, of the difficulty will be addressed as the details of the latest contract are worked out. As with the other variables on the list, we will have tradeoffs to make regarding this one, and they will be sufficiently significant that everyone should be involved in the discussions.
6. *Faculty and staff IT stations.* We have permitted too much of our stock of IT workstations to erode beyond the five-year “refresh” range. It will take over \$1 million to replace the current five-year stock, and we will need to put into place a spending plan to avoid falling behind again.

colleges. I ask your patience as we attempt to convert a budget reporting method understood primarily by deans and budget analysts to one that is more reader friendly.

- I await the report from the work group that began last spring looking at graduate education. We will go forward soon with a search for a graduate dean. I realize that graduate admissions and degree processing are hot-button items currently. The Office of Graduate Studies is trying to work through these issues in a manner that, absent substantially increased funding, adds method and accountability to what, frankly, has been primarily the sum total of the disparate approaches and practices of over 40 programs for years.
- Academic Affairs remains committed to improving our situation regarding classroom space (we need bigger classrooms) and office space (we need to be ready for the 60 or so new hires coming in fall 08). New classrooms are coming on line, classroom use will be improved, and we will examine office availability systematically.
- As I promised last year, I will be putting together a work group to study our commencement practices. Tight budgets and, for some, comfort and even safety concerns fairly much dictate that we will use ARCO Arena for the time being. Nonetheless, commencement is a major celebration of the efforts of students, faculty, and staff to accomplish a cherished personal and institutional goal. We should always be examining ways to make it better.
- I will continue to urge greater partnerships between the Office of Advancement and our colleges and the Library. Marketing, promotion, and development are difficult. We need higher levels of integration of goals and tasks.
- I will continue to advocate for stronger and more focused attention to international education, particularly the recruitment of international students to our campus and the provision of opportunities for a far larger number of our students to study abroad.
- Finally and significantly, in addition to advocating for (at least) 3-3 teaching loads for our faculty members (without losing FTES), I have raised with the deans and chairs my sense of the need for our senior faculty to be clearer about RTP expectations for their junior colleagues. I read a huge number of files last year and was struck by the lack of direction afforded candidates for tenure and promotion. This level of ambiguity and attendant anxiety is neither necessary nor desirable and, though ultimately this is properly a faculty issue, I will encourage attention to it.

Have a productive and enjoyable semester. Our difficulties sometimes cause us to lose sight of the fact that ours is a great university. As always, I look forward to working with you to address our challenges and to enhance the quality of the academic experience of students, faculty, and staff at Sacramento State.

7. *Graduate thesis supervision.* With one exception (College of Education because it provides almost exclusively graduate and credential instruction), we have left the matter of funding thesis supervision (graduate education more generally) to the individual colleges to work out. Many would prefer that we fund this centrally. In order to accomplish this end, we would need to divert money from other variables on our list at both the college and Academic Affairs levels – again, tradeoffs.
8. *Assigned time.* Not counting externally funded and FTES-enhancing (e.g., mega-section instruction) reimbursed and assigned time, last year colleges and departments awarded substantial WTUs to their faculty members. My sense is that none of these assignments was without merit, but it is also clear that we have never systematically considered this vis-à-vis the other variables on our list, as we structure our budget priorities.

I need a sense of your priorities as we begin to fashion budgets for next year and for perhaps two years beyond that. To that end, **I will be scheduling a number of open forums this semester by which to hear your thoughts on the matter and to answer your questions.** As well, I have set up a separate email address by which you can reach me about budget priorities, AAbudget@csus.edu. One of your colleagues noted recently that everything can't be done by plebiscite and that *someone* will have to make the hard academic-side budget decisions around here. That someone is I, but I'd like to make those decisions after hearing your ideas and priorities.

Other Academic Affairs Matters

- Our accrediting body, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), has given us about 18 months to improve our efforts in the areas of assessment of learning outcomes and graduation rates. You will be hearing much about these issues this year. Enrollment management, retention, graduation rates, learning outcomes assessment, instructional IT, and support for thematic efforts such as our STEM initiative will occupy funding attention in this and the next several years.
- The Strategic Planning Council (SPC) continues to move forward with structuring a set of priorities by which budget and other decisions will be made. On behalf of SPC, I thank the many faculty and staff members who have provided valuable commentary on those priorities to date. We encourage you to stay engaged in the process.
- As the president has noted, we greatly need to increase productive communication and information flow on our campus. To that end, we have added an “Academic Affairs Data Center” to our website <http://www.oir.csus.edu/aadc/>. The center will contain information on such matters as program costs, teaching assignments, hiring trends, and full-time/part-time ratios. The data will contain errors (since this is the first time anyone has combined the various data sources needed to examine these important issues), but overall they are clean and quite useful.
- Now that census is complete and our budget allocation is known, I will soon make available the revenue and budget allocations for our many academic units, the Library, and