**Guilford College**

**Notes from Faculty Forum on College Budget**

**Wednesday, February 11, 2015**

**3:45 – 5:15 pm**

The meeting began with a power point presentation on the college budget by the Clerk of the faculty, Dave Dobson. The notes below are from the discussion among faculty and staff that followed. I’ve listed comments in the order they were made, identifying speakers when it helps to understand their points. – Sherry Giles

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We need to have representation from all of the academic divisions in the budget cutting process. (Many people said “friend speaks my mind.”)

What is the role of the prioritization process? Why isn’t there representation from low priority groups on the committee?

Dave—is it okay to not use the prioritization process?

Yes! But we do need representation from the different tiers.

As we move forward, there is a long history of trimming here and there, and I want to encourage looking at long term strategic decisions about structural processes and make hard decisions about these things.

I appreciate the presentation; it helps to understand the budget process. When decisions are made about cuts, and people don’t know, it is a problem. Faculty and staff need to have the numbers. (Many people said “friend speaks my mind.)

We have to have the numbers. We’ve been through cutting process before, and need to have the numbers.

Staff and Diversity Action Committee representatives need to be on the committee.

What is the relationship between what’s happening between this committee and the APSA (Academic Prioritization) committee? It seems that the whole APSA process was left to the winds. There was a lot of blowback then largely because of the lack of transparency and we’re at risk of doing that again. I don’t think we should cut the Bonner program. Jane talked about excellence and our core values are part of our excellence. We need to avoid just going for low hanging fruit like the Bonner Center because that would change the nature of the college. (Many people said “friend speaks my mind.”)

I hope the committee won’t just look at the bottom line, but at the significance of the cuts for our functioning as a college.

We don’t want cuts across the board without thinking about who we are as a college and where we want to be headed.

I’d like us to re-prioritize instruction and academic support—that’s our core business (Many people said “friend speaks my mind.”)

With the loss of funds from CCE, we need to find ways to bring some CCE students back. How can we attract students back into CCE, as well as traditional students?

Thank you to Dave for pulling all this together. The story on the index graph—yellow line going up, representing institutional support, fits a picture of the stewardship drive which was aimed at buildings. The graph shows the relative values of different areas of funding. But we’d want to look at the real numbers for all of these areas.

I would ask that the committee, whoever’s on it, look very carefully at the “other” category.

Dave—I think the “other” category from IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) actually contains several budget lines, but we don’t have these numbers.

You should have those numbers.

I’m thinking about the committee revising the curriculum (Dave- they met in December) and am wondering whether it would make sense to rethink the timeline on that, to allow for more thinking about strategic investment. I don’t know much about making money, but I do know about teaching, and maybe faculty could be more involved in that.

Dave- we’d have to approve that change in timeline through the usual processes. We’re doing a lot of re-tooling now at the college—a lot of stirring now, much of it positive.

I advise against budget and staffing cuts while doing curriculum changes. This would lead to a turf war. We don’t need that now. We don’t have to repeat the same history of dealing with this crisis; well it’s not a crisis yet.

If instruction is going to take a hit, we need to think strategically about curriculum.

One way to help the bottom line is retention. We don’t have a retention plan. We have a lot of actions. Todd Clark and I (Barb Boyette) are going to sit down and create a retention plan. It’s cheaper to keep students here than to recruit new ones.

I’m wondering how J-Term is affecting retention?

Dave – JTAC – committee is looking at that.

I keep bringing myself back to the reality—we do have to cut. We have to keep coming back to that, all of us. Has your presentation been shared with the budget committee, or trustees?

Dave – no.

The instructional line is important, in comparison with other schools with better enrollment and more support for instruction. I want to be sure that faculty on committee emphasize that.

We have fewer housekeepers compared to our peers, and they are the lowest paid employees, and people of color. We’re a lean institution. Our VP of Advancement makes a lot more than VP’s at other institutions. It would be great to get a response about this. We need these numbers.

Don Smith - I’m the one in charge of the observatory—when I got here, we had a $4000 per year budget; now, it’s $2,000 per year. Last Friday, we had 200 people crammed into Bryan Jr, Auditorium for an event. We don’t get paid to do that. It is an outreach possibility. Sometimes people get so excited about the presentation, they give money to the college. And eventually, their kids might enroll here—which is a more long term benefit. There should be a strategic way to tap into these potential sources of money.

We need to have information about the “cost to dollar raised” from Advancement, and the “cost per recruiting a student” from Admissions. These are metrics that colleges use to evaluate how well these departments are being stewards of their funds.

We need to consider whether there are too many cooks making the stew. We might have too many people in the cabinet, and faculty representatives ending up fighting for their divisions and departments.

I want to make clear that I support and appreciate the work of the three faculty members chosen (to be on the budget cutting committee); but at the same time, we have to think about why we value the liberal arts, and multiple perspectives are important in making big life decisions. I’m thrilled about people working on this, but not the time to make change about how we have people on the committee.

When in the past have we had faculty representatives to make decisions about how to reduce the budget?

If the academic program could be affected by budget cuts, I hope we have people representing the different parts of the curriculum on the budget cutting committee.

When have we had faculty representatives in academic affairs, as opposed to at the presidential level?

The instructional budget used to be 32% of the overall budget, and now it’s down to 30%. One of the results is an impact on morale. There’s fewer of us, asked to do more and to do more reporting. We’re not as social a campus as we used to be. There’s a lot happening on this tiny campus, talks, art gallery showings. It’s hard for a small group of people to have a sense for all the cool things that are happening at the college and how they can be integrated. There’s anti-racism workshops, y’all. A lot is going on. I’m sure there are ways to make it more efficient. I don’t’ think there are one or two or five people on campus who have a grasp of all of that. I didn’t see that happen effectively during APSA. I’m advocating for more representation and more synergy.

Dave- I don’t have the authority to change the composition of the budget cutting committee. Jane has done something that hasn’t been done often in the past—inviting faculty to be part of this kind of committee. Trying to think about it structurally, I’m assuming we can’t put four or six more people on the committee. Is there something we can do apart from that? A weekly meeting, though I’m not sure how much could be said along the way, since the meetings are confidential. We could get the three of us (faculty representatives on the budget cutting committee) together with divisional representatives.

Instead of unduly complicating things more, I consider clerk’s committee to be the place every decision has a representative, and you’re our clerk. I think that’s the best place. Jane is the president, she has her cabinet and she has asked others to join it, faculty voices. That’s her prerogative. As long as clerk’s committee is hearing from all of us, I’d like to channel faculty input through clerk’s committee.

Dave – we’ll talk about the best way to do that at clerk’s committee.

The train has left the station. We need to use our time to communicate to people on clerk’s about our priorities.

Dave – we haven’t talked about the things you want to protect, and things to cut. Are there some things you want for us to advocate for more than others?

The priority is to protect the instructional budget. I want more conversation about fund raising. I know that we’re in an immediate crisis. And fund raising is more long term. Trustees have said we can borrow to cover the deficit this year. Is there also a push to do fund raising?

Dave – There’s the ongoing campaign, Advancing Excellence. One trustee said that our financial problem would go away if each trustee would give $10,000.

Cutting instruction now is going to affect enrollment, and faculty morale which is already low.

I had the recent experience of being at an institution that has gone through significant financial issues. First, the issues were ignored, then there were across the board cuts. Faculty flight was rampant. The faculty lost were not allowed to be replaced. Decisions were delayed. It’s urgent that we take a planned corrective action so that we position Guilford to be the great institution that it is. If we keep making small cuts as we have, we will not get better. Students will not fall from the sky and it will not be fun to come to work.

Maybe like a business, we need to be incentivized. Maybe we’d take a cut knowing we’re responsible to pull out collectively on the other side, and when we come out on the other side, we get the benefits. And we need to be sure that there’s a specific time frame. We need to do something to keep these good people here and to make sure we’re all together at the end.

I hope that faculty on the committee raise that the instructional budget has already taken hits that other parts of the college have not. We need to look at other areas first.

I also would like to add that any cuts we make on the instructional budget--unless they’re highly targeted--would prevent us from investing in programs, seeking excellence, and attracting new students.

I have a proposal from the floor—what if the faculty who are serving on this budget cutting committee would simply, if it turns out that instructional budget is going to be messed with, that we come together and decide how we want to handle it? We’re going to have to live with it. We have to know that the whole liberal arts program is being represented and understood. If instructional budget is not cut, it’s as lean as it can be, then there’s no problem with representation.

Dave – that proposal might end up pitting faculty versus academic support staff in a way that would be pretty bad. Staff could meet together as well, which could address that problem.

Looking holistically at the institution is important. We need to think of models other than just across the board percentages being cut.

Dave – That’s not strategic and also not fair.

Academics has shrunk by 7%, and other areas have increased?

Dave – yes, but we need to look at the period of time the graphs cover. I only chose a seven-year period because that’s what was in the Factbook. It’s possible the trends would be different looking at a longer period of time.

What was the personnel total compensation costs then as compared to now? In addition to that, department budgets have been cut each year over past several years. We may have to have a discussion about everyone taking a percentage cut to department budget.

Dave – maybe it shouldn’t be across the board percentages cut.

I hope this doesn’t sound like a turf issue. I’m part of a department that doesn’t have expenses other than faculty salaries. Across the board cuts would be harder on us.

UNCG doesn’t even have funds for copying.

When we compare ourselves to other schools, Elon is a school with 5,500 students, more than twice the size of us. And, there are a lot of fixed costs that won’t change even with fewer students. Bringing in new students will help exponentially.

Dave – that’s the end game that we all hope for.

Having done this before at the college, this looks like about a 5% problem. We had to do a 10% problem in the past. Faculty had been contained from growing, but other personnel had grown. We had to cut personnel from the other side. Cutting personnel is very tricky. The offerings can come from the VP level. You have to include the VP level in the analysis. VP’s will take low hanging fruit on the bottom. If the faculty representatives don’t know the relationships staff have with students, this could make a big blunder for the institution. In the past, this led to some big mistakes; key people connected with lots of students were let go, and we didn’t know that. We need to get numbers on overall categories of compensation. What’s in the budget for compensation for the former president? Can that be re-negotiated?

Dave – the next budget cutting meeting is Monday, February 16th. Faculty representatives are happy to hear from faculty members.

Can we have regular meetings of faculty about the budget cutting process?

Dave – the meetings are confidential, so I’m not sure how much we can share along the way. We can have meetings to listen. We may want to save some forums for other less depressing topics.