

May 18, 2020

Budget Council Annual Report

In August 2019, the Budget Council Chair stepped down which led to the voting of a new chair in our September meeting. Ashley Ghiaseddin, was nominated as a member to fill in the void on the council and voted in as chair during the September meeting.

During the September 2019 meeting, the council reviewed its mission which encompasses budget and fiscal matters as they involve the academic mission of the University, including the recommendation of budget priorities involving academics and research, the fiscal implications of the creation, modification or deletion of academic programs, the collection and dissemination of information about University budgeting and planning; and monitoring whether the allocation of resources is consistent with Faculty Senate actions and the University's long term and short term strategic plans.

There was discussion of updates to the Financial Transparency Portal, which includes the daily enrollment tracking and course management system information. We reviewed the development of a video tutorial link for using the financial transparency portal, which was made available through the work of the University Faculty Senate Budget Council along with the University Financial Office and University Budget Office to summarize unit-wise information (that is available under sunshine) in faculty-friendly format

Location of the tutorial:

<http://fora.aa.ufl.edu/FacultySenate/Councils/Budget-Council> < Under *Budget Tools*, Select:

*** [Video tutorial to using the UF \(Colleges\) financial transparency portal](#)

*** [Text guide to the UF \(Colleges\) Financial Transparency Portal](#)

The updates being made to the Financial Transparency Portal includes implementation of the Compass system with tweaks still being managed. Overall college budget is accurate, but granular level comparisons were still being teased out which led to council's decision to delay release of annual financial transparency portal notice to faculty until Compass tweaks are completed.

There was discussion regarding topic suggestions for the 2019-2020 agenda, which included review of true cost models to understand what distributional shift between undergraduates, grad 1 and grad 2 mean for enrollment. Other potential topics may include investments affecting future budgets such as initiatives surrounding sustainability, budgetary consideration relative to market-based increases considering inflation, retention and recruitment of faculty with evaluation of the importance of faculty raises and merit-based compensation, as well as costs of living considerations.

There was discussion regarding prior Student Senate topic regarding carbon neutrality on campus and request for the University to consider looking at investing in 'green' companies for the future. UF was one of the original signatories back in 2005 ([American University Presidents Climate Commitment](#)). The [performance detail for UF](#), that is tracked by an independent agency called [Second Nature](#) (Note: Selecting items on the left of this page gives a good description all things being tracked.) The [comparison](#)

[to other universities](#) (Note: this loads slowly due to the large number of universities. Although divestment was discussed, members mainly focused on the future goals to invest in companies that will facilitate the carbon neutrality efforts on campus. The primary contact regarding University divestment discussion is UF Executive Chief of Staff Win Philips.

During the October 2019 meeting, the council invited Evangeline (Evie) Cummings (Assistant Provost and UF Online Director) and Nadav Katz (Assistant Director of Finance for UF Online) to discuss and overview of the UF Online model and its key components which included current status of UF online and the plan for the next 5 years. UF Online is number one in the country for affordability. The Pathway to Campus Enrollment, or PaCE, is an offer made by the university (not a separate application) and represents a cost-effective entry into UF (freshmen start their UF degree online and then transition to campus in order to complete their undergraduate degree). UF has launched an optional fee package for online students to utilize. Technology and capital improvement fees are among the fees paid by UF Online students. A taskforce continues to review how to best create STEM labs for online students and discusses methods of doing labs such as having online students travel to lab 'boot camps'. The council discussed the findings of some of the work of Dr. Brian Harfe, CLAS Associate Dean & Assistant Provost for Teaching and Technology, which relates to student virtual and experiential learning environments. UF Online has been addressing outcomes and measures with Dr. Tim Brophy, Director of Institutional Assessment.

During the November 2019 meeting, the council reviewed UF's budgetary role in sustainability as a follow up to last Spring's (2019) Infrastructure's Councils sustainability conversations (see the [4/11/19 Infrastructure Council minutes and meeting materials](#)). UF was the initial signatory of the American College and University President's Climate Commitment in 2006, when President Machen and the university agreed to carbon emission reduction and increased campus community education about climate change (goal of carbon neutrality by 2025). If energy stocks are in decline and share price is down, then market forces may ultimately lead to long term positive investments. However, the council asked what is the best way to review specific companies (and UF's return on investments) at a more granular level? The council will consider what, if any, downsides there may be of divesting but agrees that UF should be a part of the conversation that already is taking place among elite and peer institutions.

During the January 2020 meeting, the council reviewed the Spring agenda to continue our discussion surrounding sustainability and divestment.

During the February 2020 meeting, the council was provided child care/early learning facilities updates by the Faculty Senate Chair, Dr. Ray Thomas.

The Faculty Senate Chair previously met with Dr. Stacy Ellis, Director of Baby Gator Child Development and Research Center, and they discussed the childcare center in Diamond Village. One reason for expansion of services is due to long wait times for faculty/staff to have their child accepted into Baby Gator. However, cost is an issue of expansion. In October 2019, Ray met with Dr. Patricia Snyder, Director of the Anita Zucker Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Studies, and they discussed childcare services for the community at large as well. Previous discussions focused on the early childhood collaboration at [Innovation Square](#) which was initially meant to be a University/city of Gainesville collaboration, but no further discussions have been had. Updates including upcoming

meetings were discussed. Dr. Win Philips is the planned guest for the next council meeting and will discuss sustainability and divestment. In addition, the Faculty Senate Chair relayed information from a recent university conference at which Andrew Winden, UF Associate Professor of Law, discussed Corporate Securities and, specifically, the quality of data that companies are required to disclose regarding their investments (i.e. sustainable versus high energy consumers.) He discussed variability in quality and lack of oversight. The Senate or council chairs may consider reaching out to Andrew to gauge his interest in meeting with Budget Council in the future to give his thoughts on feasibility for sustainability and divestment.

In April, council would like to hear legislative updates from Mark Kaplan, VP for Government and Community Relations, or from a Human Resources representative or the Compensation Committee to provide an update of retirement and healthcare plans (in the context of comparisons to peer universities).

Regarding the self-sustainability of the pre-eminence initiative, the Faculty Senate Chair met with the Provost, who relayed that the program has been successful. Senior faculty recruited under the pre-eminence initiative had brought with them significant funding which appears to have persisted since transitioning to UF with no significant decline in the funding from the top principal investigators. Research dollars have increased, and the program is likely a main factor in UF's rise in national rankings.

Regarding a previous council inquiry about the proposed research building adjacent the Harrell Medical Education building, council chair will ask Dr. Mark Segal the status of this building as well as the funding source.

The Faculty Senate Chair also shared that preliminary discussion is being held within the Florida Legislature to consider the merging of [Florida Polytechnic University \(FPU\)](#) with UF, although no other information is available at this time.

The March 2010 meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic and the April meeting was moved to virtual zoom meeting. During the April 2020 meeting, Ashley Ghiaseddin was elected Budget Council Chair for the 2020-2021 academic year. COVID-19 budget updates were presented and specifically the council discussed the Present of the Florida Senate's, Senator Bill Galvano, memorandum which discussed the health of state reserves to continue support for the items on the current year budget. In May, general revenue collection data as well as analytics from both HIS and Moody's will allow state economists to begin the formal revision of general revenue estimates for Fiscal Year 2020-21. The council discussed that changes (including any decrease related to the impact of COVID-19) to state allotted allocations for the University may not be known until the state budget is passes for the upcoming year which is likely to be delayed due to 2020 being an Election Year. The Provost's office has informed the College Deans to prepare for at least 5% reductions allocated for state funding. The council adjourned with discussion of the Fall Agenda to include: Sustainability and Divestment (inviting Andrew Winden, UF Associate Professor of Law), review of any updates to faculty retirement and healthcare plans, and updates on Budget outlook for the upcoming year related to the Economic hardship brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ashley Ghiaseddin, 2019-2020 Budget Council Chair