

Budget Council Minutes September 18, 2020

via Zoom:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/95585186363?pwd=TNk0L3VlaFkxUmFhSmpUa3dHeG54dz09>

3 p.m.

Present: Ashley Ghiaseddin, Kevin Trejos, Mei-Fang Lan, Ariel Pomputius, Laurie Bialosky, Keith Schneider, Lee Murfee, Lauren Solberg, Julie Wang, and Chris Cowen.

1. Call to Order

-The meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. by Budget Council Chair Ashely Ghiaseddin.

2. Introduction of Council Members and Liaisons

-Introductions were made.

3. Approve April 24, 2020 Minutes

-The minutes were approved.

4. Overview of Budget Council Mission

Budget Council Responsibilities: This council's area 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.

-Council discussed its role in connecting faculty to an increased understanding of budgetary issues on a wholistic level, including sharing and reviewing questions from individual faculty and helping to relay answers to Faculty Senate. The role of the [Faculty Senate Steering Committee](#) and how the information reaches the Faculty Senate floor was discussed. Chair Ghiaseddin is a voting member of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee and all [five Faculty Senate Council](#) Chairs sit on this committee, which approves the monthly Faculty Senate agenda. Each of the five Council Chairs presents a report at the monthly Faculty Senate Steering Committee meeting. Much of the Faculty Senate's work is done in its councils and committees.

5. 2020-21 Agenda Topic Suggestions

-New CFO Chris Cowen was invited to the October council meeting but has made himself available to join today's council meeting.

-Council discussed that this is a particularly difficult period for its black colleagues.

Faculty Senate hosted a law enforcement open dialogue this summer. The Faculty Senate Chair suggested council discuss the funding of the UF Police Department (UFPD) and the plans for the Campus Emergency Operations Center (EOC), including considerations of the timing of breaking ground for such a facility during this time of social unrest.

-Council discussed the UF Police Department and asked if funds for this department may be used to increase connections between university police and the community, including any outreach activities that can bring together the greater Gainesville community and the university. Council expressed that all options for law enforcement to promote mutual understanding, respect, and togetherness should be enabled and maximized. Encouraging transparency to the university and community, and aptly disseminating information is key.

-The hiring of new faculty and budget status will be an ongoing agenda item. Council Chair reached out to VP of Human Resources Jodi Gentry after yesterday's Faculty Senate meeting. There are faculty questions about the application of a furlough policy and if different units will be differentially eligible; what is the most equitable policy approach? How will UF support faculty and staff with external grants or contracts? Will or should internally/state funded-only faculty and staff be subject to furlough first?

-Council discussed the furlough vote being held by the UF Board of Trustees on 9/29, which is to determine if furloughs are going to be considered in the future. Although furlough options likely would not be exercised until Spring 2021, more information should be forthcoming following the trustee vote and discussion. Budget Council would like to discuss further with council's appointee from the Provost Office to better understand how furloughs will save UF money. Council needs to better understand which pots of money are being used for which initiatives, such as the Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiative, as faculty have expressed distress when certain fields are growing while furloughs are being discussed; Budget Council agreed it needs to continue discussion to gain a better understanding of the overall budget and to ensure that faculty-at-large can better understand reasons behind the university's decision to consider furloughs.

-Sustainability, campus carbon neutrality, and divestment. Several [student-led divestment and sustainability-related resolutions](#) were proposed and presented to the Infrastructure Council in [April 2019](#). The discussion focused less in divestment and more on university policies to consider the green implications of future investments and being socially conscious. COVID-19 interrupted this conversation, but council would like it to continue this academic year.

-Council plans to invite UF Executive Chief of Staff Dr. Win Phillips and faculty colleague Andrew Winden, UF Associate Professor of Law, to provide insight into UF's goal for net carbon neutrality and consideration for investments in environmentally friendly companies.

-This link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campus_carbon_neutrality was shared in the

virtual meeting chat and highlights the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment and some history about UF's role in it.

6. Administrative Liaison's Report/Updates

A. Sr. Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Chris Cowen

-New Sr. Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Chris Cowen stopped by council to introduce himself and provide a brief overview of his vision for UF. A CFO Office administrative liaison (the UF Budget Director) continues to serve on council and CFO Cowen offered to check in quarterly with the Budget Council if needed.

-Sr. VP and CFO Cowen was named to this position at the end of July, was a Bank of America Executive, resides in California, and will be completely moved to Gainesville in early November.

-CFO Cowen reports to the UF President and has financial oversight and financial planning for the entirety of the university's portfolio of operations, including the university's 16 direct support organizations (DSO's). CFO Cowen is also a member of the Board of Directors at UF Health.

CFO Cowen discussed that:

-Many funds are restricted for use and therefore do not sit in one large bucket/fund.

-The Board of Trustees (BOT) has oversight over university funds and CFO actions.

-The impact of COVID-19 will be tremendous on the upcoming budget. While much is unknown due to the ever-changing COVID environment, UF will utilize, as best as possible, all tools to bridge over any forthcoming appropriation cuts from the state. It is unknown how long COVID will continue to affect such funds.

-Other COVID unknowns impacting revenue include such wide-ranging variables as: the ability of UF Health to conduct elective surgeries; the overall investment picture; the status of and access to federal aid to UF; and the availability of and the timing of access to a vaccine.

-Many university options are being reviewed and this is hopefully a once in lifetime situation where federal executive orders and extraordinary measures are being taken in an attempt to maintain financial health in a time of great uncertainty.

-UF has resisted taking preemptive actions to cut employment as a first-response to COVID and does not want to don't want to set-back the university's primary mission and its accomplishments.

-The furlough policy is still being drafted, but UF would like to exclude people making a certain amount of money per year, namely, the most vulnerable population, who would be disproportionately affected. COVID-19 has spotlighted some of our country's societal injustices, including that the people paid least are generally in positions exposed most to the public, and a great many are people of color.

-The current public safety building needs to be replaced but what was conceived of before the spring semester (pre-COVID), might need to be reviewed again to examine

alignment with institutional values and the role of public safety moving forward. A safe campus is critical. Examining how the university is delivering and achieving this objective at our public institution can be done while embracing the university's diversity initiatives. CFO Cowen sits on the President's Cabinet with Chief Diversity Officer Antonio Farias and also sits on a committee which examines university values and metrics, and crafts and implements specific, real, and positive change. Incorporating the perspectives of all, and acknowledging diversity contributes to positive change-making. It is recognized that there is a need to advance the academic mission of the university and create the resources to do it.

-CFO Cowen looks forward to sharing ideas with Faculty Senate and to partnering in its dialogue and perspectives.

B. Julie Wang, University Budgets Director

-State appropriations and the budget is not yet known. Considerations such as bank borrowing selling bonds, and other menu options were discussed.

- Communicating trade-offs and taking actions compatible with the university's stated goals and allocating resources to avoid downsides such as salary compression was discussed.

-The more data and information the university can obtain over time about COVID, which is driving so much of the budgetary factors, the more clarity there will be about how best to move forward and which budgetary measures are most appropriate to enact.

7. Adjournment

-The meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.