

RESPONSE OF CAH *AD-HOC* EXECUTIVE SUBCOMMITTEE TO THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS TASK FORCE BUDGET REPORT

I. PREAMBLE

There is no doubt we face a budget crisis. We recognize the severe lack of state funding for the CSU and that for the CSU to thrive in the twenty-first century, this funding needs to be restored. We know having the university of the past is not possible and we recognize the need for changes.

There have been no fewer than three campus “budget crises” since the 1980s. Each crisis was managed with the realization that budgets would not be restored to previous revenues. With each crisis everyone wondered how we could find more to cut; yet, we persevered, reducing budgets through cuts, enrollment management and creative restructuring while taking on more work with fewer resources. Every budget crisis has involved talk of combining, eliminating, or dispersing academic units and colleges.

This crisis, however, involves a more formal proposal, the Academic Affairs Task Force Budget Report (AATFBR), recommending major changes that have the potential to undermine the university mission and faculty shared governance. As we point out below, given the lack of argument, justification of choices, and cost analysis in the AATFBR, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible for the faculty to have an informed response of any kind. The AATFBR did not emerge from the faculty and in no way are its recommendations based on faculty consultation.

Our document raises fundamental concerns about the process of decision making at this university and makes recommendations on how best to move forward. All of these issues must be addressed irrespective of the above reservations and any modifications to the Task Force recommendations that might take place.

II. PROCESS

The College of Arts and Humanities Executive Committee formed an *Ad-Hoc* Executive Subcommittee in response to the Provost’s request for input on the AATFBR recommendations. This subcommittee was formed to collect, analyze and formulate the college faculty’s response and recommendations.

Members included a subset of the CAH Executive Committee and faculty with budget experience, all of whom are full professors.

In spite of a short window of time and the semester calendar, we met on four occasions for a total of eighteen hours. We also communicated throughout the winter break via email and met in working groups. We reviewed, assessed and evaluated the available budget data; we sought to understand the AATFBR; we explored the current Budgetary

Allocation Model; and we compiled a list of realistic and substantive alternative solutions on the college and university levels. We solicited input from faculty of the College of Arts and Humanities (oral and written, including anonymous) and consulted individuals with specific areas of expertise.

In order to understand the rationale of the Task Force and to seek possible alternative solutions, we sought access to the data upon which the Task Force based its recommendations, as well as other relevant data. This proved to be frustrating. We were informed the public budget book was not accurate, and we were given only one brief and un-detailed budget document in response to our request for the data used by the Task Force: the 2011-12 Working Budget. See also below Section III. B. 6.

III. CRITIQUE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A. General Context

Upon close examination and investigation, the AATFBR and subsequent meetings do not meet best practices of problem solving, long accepted as effective models for thoughtfully managing problems.

1. A problem exists because someone believes the *status quo* is unsatisfactory and is blocked from obtaining a future goal. Any group facing the task of managing a problem must first define how they see the problem:
 - What specifically is unsatisfactory about the *status quo*?
 - What specifically is the desired goal?
 - What specifically is blocking the path to achieving it?
2. Ineffective problem-solving groups jump too quickly to a solution focus circumventing analysis that must occur prior to selecting an effective solution. Critical preparation has to be done, and this work is not evident in the AATFBR and was not evident in subsequent meetings with the Provost and Task Force members. We have no reason to believe critical preparation occurred, given the recommendations and the lack of explanation, answers or information in response to inquiries. We have been presented with extreme solutions to a problem whose definition has not been thoroughly detailed. After framing the problem by answering the above three questions, the following questions need to be answered:
 - a. What criteria emerge from careful research into the history and causes of the problem? That is, by what standards (warranted by the research and detailing of the obstacles) were alternative recommendations judged?
 - b. What was the list of possible alternative recommendations generated by the Task Force?

- c. How was each potential recommendation evaluated against what criteria?
 - d. How do the AATFBR recommendations, such as the dismantling and restructuring of specific colleges, emerge as the best alternative given the criterion analysis?
 - e. What was the cost-benefit analysis of the proposed AATFBR recommendations?
3. Solutions to problems that are not carefully developed in a reasoned, well-researched manner only produce more problems—sometimes worse than the original problem. Hastily arrived at solutions may in fact create new obstacles generating worse conditions or a whole new set of problems. This is why cost-benefit analyses and analysis of a solution's implementation are necessary for careful weighing of potential trade-offs.
4. Further critical questions:
- a. What circumstances led to the creation of the Task Force instead of existing structures such as the Academic Senate and the University Budget Committee?
 - b. Why was this group formed with these particular members?
 - c. By what criteria were members selected?
 - d. What level of familiarity with the defined problem did each bring to the discussion?
 - e. How did the Task Force define its charge?
 - f. What groups or individuals were defined as most impacted by the recommendations and were they sufficiently represented or considered? How was their *level* of acceptance of the recommendations evaluated by the Task Force (e.g., as a potential obstacle)?
 - g. What research was done to accurately project the long-term impact of these recommendations on teaching, student learning, faculty research, and academic and community/regional cultures?

B. Specific Concerns Regarding Methodology

Critical response to the AATFBR recommendations is difficult, as there is so little evidence of analysis and argument in the document.

1. There was no justification for limiting the focus to the levels of colleges and below. This concern includes not only the neglect of the consideration of the full Academic Affairs budget but also the broader university budget, including Athletics.
2. There was a lack of evident data on which recommendations were made.
3. There was no evidence of any cost/benefit analysis, the importance of which is defined above, and no evidence of any implementation analysis which would include projected logistics of restructuring, faculty and staff workload increases and true implementation costs (in both dollars and extra work).
4. There is no evidence of best practices of problem solving applied to the AATFBR processes (as outlined above).
5. There is no identification of how the specific recommendations better preserve the mission of the university than any alternatives considered. For example, *prima facie*, the dismantling of Science and Math and the merger of Arts and Humanities with Social Sciences appear to be among the least feasible solutions financially and administratively, and they also appear to be contrary to the mission of the CSU which “[s]tresses the importance of the liberal arts and sciences as the indispensable foundation of the baccalaureate degree.” What was the basis for this recommendation versus other possibilities?
6. The CAH *ad hoc* sub-committee had difficulty getting the data the Task Force used in making its recommendations. The three-page Academic Affairs Working Budget, dated 12-08-2011, we finally received suggests that either the Task Force did not have complete and accurate data to work with, or that we were not given the complete set of data that was actually used.

C. Formation and Composition of the Task Force

1. There is no evidence APM 113 (IV. Procedures for Organizational Changes in Colleges/Schools, Divisions, and Departments and Programs) was followed in the formation of the Task Force, its deliberations and recommendations.
2. Task forces are by definition outside of faculty governance and thus are no substitute for consultation or shared governance. The formation of this particular task force raises concerns about the disenfranchising of faculty. No justification was given for the decision to bypass the use of the University Budget Committee for this task.
3. The Task Force membership is disproportionately weighted toward the professional schools and administrators and lacks sufficient faculty representation. Full professors, with chairing, curriculum and budget

experience, volunteered but were excluded from the Task Force. If the University Budget Committee was not going to be used for this task, a more representative task force would have been weighted toward Arts and Sciences faculty (relative to FTEF and FTES). A more effective task force would have been comprised of faculty whose primary assignment is teaching and whose RTP status does not render them vulnerable. Conflicts of interest should have been considered. For example, candidates for promotion should not have been on the task force.

IV. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

We call for:

1. **Slowing the immediacy of major changes** to the University structure and **increasing the speed of analysis** of potential recommendations in terms of their cost effectiveness and impact on the University Mission, especially in light of the President's commitment of reserves to bridge the current shortfall. All areas of the University budget warrant consideration, including all of Academic Affairs and level A allocations, including Athletics.
2. **An external independent audit of the University.** The severity of upcoming cuts warrants an external independent audit of *every division of the University*.
3. **An evaluation of the entire Academic Affairs budget.** All of the budget must be under consideration for additional cuts, not simply the college level and below. Cuts above the college level should be considered first. The blood should flow to the central organs that keep the body alive.
4. **A revision of the current Allocation Model.** We support the Task Force findings. While carry-forwards are never long-term solutions, their consistent presence in some colleges and not others likely indicates a problem with the model rather than the quality of administering colleges. Such revision could be an immediate return to the previous model, which would allow time for well considered additional revisions.
5. **A return to a less centralized Academic Affairs.** An historical tracking of the Provost's budget and carry-forwards is in order. This is warranted given the shift toward an increasing centralization of funding and power in the Provost's Office, resulting in the degradation of shared governance and academic decision-making due to the disenfranchisement of colleges, departments and faculty.
 - a. **Evaluate current new programs and initiatives and curtail their proliferation.** More and more expensive programs (e.g., CSALT and TILT) and initiatives are housed in the Provost's Office. In times of severe economic crisis, these must be curtailed.

- b. Suspend future implementation of cohort hires.** These are another manifestation of centralization. We are not against the idea of cohort hires, but their implementation and timing. Although the Provost's Office provides half of the faculty's salary, giving the illusion of additional funding, this is money that would have otherwise been distributed to the colleges. As the cohorts increase in number, more and more money is being withheld in the Provost's office, instead of being distributed through the colleges. In its current process, the identification and definition of the cohort themes cedes also too much control over academics and faculty scholarship to the Provost's Office.
- c. Suspend the appointment of special assistants to the Provost.** These appointments shift established curricular and programmatic decision making to the Provost. This is done with assigned time that otherwise could have been available at the department level.

During a budget crisis, any available funds for faculty salaries or assigned time should be distributed to the colleges for necessary hires as determined by the faculty (who are experts in their fields) according to teaching and research needs in their disciplines. Extra interdisciplinary or experimental programs can be implemented (through proper faculty consultation procedures) when the university is in a better financial situation.

- 6. Using existing shared-governance processes: The University Budget Committee and the Academic Senate.** These, rather than a task force, are the appropriate channels for making recommendations regarding merging/elimination of programs/units and budget analysis. For any proposed restructuring, adhere to APM 113 (IV. PROCEDURES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES IN COLLEGES/SCHOOLS, DIVISIONS, AND DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS).
- 7. Using best practices for problem solving.** See III A above.
- 8. Full transparency.** One of the stated core values of Fresno State is "Responsible and open inquiry, dialogue, and expression." Were the Task Force's work and University's accounting fully transparent, there would be no need for this report, and for many of the questions raised in Section III. Free speech includes having access to information. Otherwise rumors, fear, and speculation result.
- 9. Considering any restructuring of the University only as a last resort, with detailed cost-benefit analysis.** See III B above.
In addition:
 - a. "Cost efficiency" should not be confused with educational or institutional value/worth.** Efficiency is a worthy goal, but we must recognize "cost efficiency" is not necessarily an indicator of "worth" to the university, and should therefore not be used as the sole criterion for fiscal decisions. For example, Department A might be "cost efficient," offering mega classes, but not be central to the core of the university mission; while Department B, which due to discipline needs, offers

smaller class sizes (e.g., writing classes), is thus less “cost efficient” but central to the core of the mission. Similarly, a program that includes public events (concerts, debates, exhibits, readings, theater productions, etc.) might be highly visible or engage with the community in ways that greatly benefit the university (donations, national reputation and recruitment, community relations and partnerships), as well as being a source of positive PR.

- b. **“Program size” should be viewed in context.** For example, smaller graduate programs can benefit departments and the region and can be more cost efficient than larger programs. Additionally, a program with few majors may be central to the mission of the university or have added value for the university, while some large programs may be less central. It could also be that some smaller programs may be more cost-efficient than some larger programs. Program size must be viewed with an understanding of context.

10. Maintaining our identity as a high caliber comprehensive engaged university.

The importance of this identity was emphasized by President Welty at the last faculty assembly. If any merging/elimination of programs/colleges/schools becomes necessary, we must identify what our core programs are, preserve them, and cut outside of this central core, remembering that the CSU mission “stresses the importance of the liberal arts and sciences as the indispensable foundation of the baccalaureate degree.”

On behalf of the College’s faculty, this report was submitted to and unanimously approved by the CAH Executive Committee on 1/18/12.

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