

**“Getting Out of Our Own Way: SSU Responses to Long-term Shifts in Funding”  
Senate Budget Subcommittee Report\*  
February 21, 2013**

**Report on “Budget Discussions” event, November 30, 2012, augmented by faculty department chair budget strategy questionnaires, fall 2012. Distributed for discussion and comment.**

**Background:** In spring of 2012 the SSU Academic Coordinating Team asked the Senate Budget Subcommittee to compile a document of guiding principles for Academic Affairs’ campus-level response to the ever-widening CSU budget crisis. After considerable conversation and consultation, the SBS brought forward a draft report (presented last May to the Academic Senate) that identified three basic principles (alignment with the university mission, open communication, and fairness). We also identified two additional areas of consensus and interest that we called “strategies” or “tactics”: strategies for incentivizing innovation, and for increasing revenue generation (see the original table attached below).

In these last two areas in particular, it became very clear that departments and programs all across campus had many examples of tactics they were already using to do these things, (to greater or lesser success). It was equally clear that many programs had strategies they would LIKE to employ, but were prevented from doing so by various impediments, whether financial, procedural, because of staffing issues, etc.

As a follow-up to last year’s efforts, the SBS then compiled an inventory of these two kinds of practices. Councils of department chairs in the Schools of Arts and Humanities, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Business and Economics, and the Library ultimately contributed data to this second phase of the project.

Then on November 30, 2012, the Academic Senate and the Senate Budget Subcommittee sponsored a “Budget Discussion” open to all faculty. Masters students from the Organizational Development program worked with the initial data from the Councils of Department Chairs and the previous year’s identification of principles to design a program aimed at eliciting a more detailed discussion about a series of topics. At the budget discussion event itself, 31 people attended. The event ran for 3 hours. People were encouraged to rotate through a series of discussion topics at separate tables. Each table group wrote up notes and posted them on the walls of the room at the end of each 20-minute interval. People then put ‘dot’ post-its on ideas, comments or questions that they agreed with or found important, as they moved on to the next table discussion.

Departments represented included: Anthropology (4), Business Administration (5), English (2), History (1), Hutchins (2), Library (4) Math (2), Nursing (1), Philosophy (1), Physics/Astronomy (1), Political Science (2), Psychology (1), plus Academic Affairs Office.

The three topics listed below had been pre-selected by the Senate Budget Subcommittee and were reflected in the initial 2012 input from department chairs. At the budget discussion event, several subtopics and additional topics were created by the event participants. For the purposes of this report, these topics were combined into the original three. The results of the November 30 event were then

compared with the material submitted by the Councils of Department Chairs to look for areas of agreement, and to ensure completeness of the report. (The full Budget Discussion Event data set will be posted on the Senate website, so that all the recorded comments and their vote tallies can be viewed. Comments from the Councils of Department Chairs will not be reposted.)

**Key assumptions:**

- The main goal is to achieve sustainable support for the core mission of the university, not ‘one-time’ patches.
- The university’s mission is to provide quality education to its students that is relevant to today’s world\*\*.
- Further deterioration of the university’s ability to meet this core function is unacceptable.
- State funding will stabilize at current levels (best-case scenario) or continue to decline; any new revenues will be created from other sources.
- \$3 million “hole” in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs is real, and a minimum figure for ‘repairing the base’.
- There is a direct correlation between improving/broadening/stabilizing access to resources and improving program quality to support student retention, graduation, and success.
- Resources must support program innovation, not just maintaining the current situation (“sustainable” academic programs are ones that continue to improve and update to remain current and relevant).

**Top Items in Generating Revenue: “What We Want to Do”:**

- **Development (received most support/approval of any topic in any category)**
  - Call for comprehensive campaign
  - Leverage community partnerships; aggressively develop more
  - Support/expand school-based development, incentivize faculty involvement in these campaigns (see “Disincentives”, below)
  - Faculty recognize that generating revenue is a necessary and positive thing
- **Grants and contracts**
  - Expand support for ORSP to encourage faculty efforts here
  - Provide for-fee services to off-campus clients (professional, in addition to curriculum-based)
  - Connect faculty and businesses/nonprofits, etc. to develop contracts, grants. Connect community needs with university expertise: partner to go for funding
- **Expanded use of Extended Education (ExEd):**
  - Develop certificate programs
  - Expand use of summer sessions and inter-session
  - Develop online programs

- Expand faculty involvement in ExEd programs to increase course and program quality and breadth
- **Differential fee structure:**
  - Different fees for different programs (bacc v. postbac, different majors, 'student success fee' like other CSU campuses)
  - Recruit out-of-state, international students

**Top Current Successful Strategies (for saving or generating revenue): “What’s Working, What We Could Do More of, What We Need to Make Sustainable”**

- **Curricular innovation to address problem-solving and increase efficiency:**
  - small-scale pilot programs that expand as they succeed (eg. FYE)
  - “bottom-up” curricular innovation that is targeted, low-cost (eg. restructuring majors, Social Sciences SYE pilot, Writing Across Curriculum)
  - Subsidizing small seminar classes with larger ones in other parts of program (as long as smaller ones are not cancelled the next year)
  - These enable updating and enhancing curriculum with greater student support, at minimal cost (doing “the same” or better job with less money, or resources allocated more strategically)
- **Revenue generation through postbac programs, certificates**
  - Executive MBA – generates revenue that can/does support other activities, including faculty development
  - “Resource” generation beyond money: successful certificate programs bring in community support/engagement
- **Instructional technology**
  - Moodle (but needs more available support on campus; more training)
  - “MySSU” (is enabling better functionality for enrollment management and advising)
- **Requirements for sustainability of these efforts:**
  - Increased autonomy at departmental and school levels to experiment, incentivize program innovation
  - Stabilized budgeting process (instead of semester-by-semester fluctuations in amounts AND budgeting priorities – particularly around ‘target’)
  - More regularized and predictable relationship with ExEd (for certificate, self-support programs ) that makes program revenue generation and management predictable

## Top Perceived Barriers: “What’s Getting in the Way”

- **Disincentives:**
  - Both the proportion (too little/none) and timeframe (too long/irregular) for redistribution of generated resources back to departments (IDC, ExEd, etc.)
  - Negative cost-benefit ratio at the department level: annual ‘scooping’ of saved OE, lack of return to departments for effort invested (grant-writing, buy-outs, etc)
  - No support for ‘start up’: underfunded ORSP, no links for any efforts back to sustainable academic program development (no “spending money to make money”)
  
- **CSU and SSU restrictions on/redirections of the use of funds**
  - Limits on use of ExEd-generated funds outside of ExEd (CSU)
  - Restrictive/punitive limits on innovation at the campus and system level (attributed to ‘risk management’, need for ‘standardization’) (SSU/CSU)
  - Perceived fundamental lack of regard for or support of academic mission of university: all funds generated diverted to other purposes (SSU)
  
- **Lack of accessible, timely budget information for planning at all levels**
  - Over-centralized funding/budgeting model (at university and school levels)
  - Disconnect between budgeting calendar and scheduling/planning calendar
  - No sense of shared mission/goals/investment, between divisions; constant “us vs. them” mentality; instruction and program development always last priority
  - Academic units (schools, departments, faculty) seen as ‘customers’ who have to ‘pay’ to do their jobs

**\* Senate Budget Subcommittee Charge:** To inform and educate the Senate and its committees on an ongoing basis regarding the University's budget process and current budget allocations; to review the University's budget, budget process, and budget allocations, and to make recommendations to the Senate and its committees on academic and instructional priorities making claim on the University's budget.

**\*\*SSU mission: is to prepare students to be learned men and women who:**

- have a foundation for life-long learning,
- have a broad cultural perspective,
- have a keen appreciation of intellectual and aesthetic achievements,
- will be active citizens and leaders in society,
- are capable of pursuing fulfilling careers in a changing world, and
- are concerned with contributing to the health and well-being of the world at large.

To achieve its mission, Sonoma State University recognizes that its first obligation is to develop and maintain excellent programs of undergraduate instruction grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. Instructional programs are designed to challenge students not only to acquire knowledge but also to

develop the skills of critical analysis, careful reasoning, creativity, and self-expression. Excellence in undergraduate education requires that students participate in a well-planned program that provides both a liberal education and opportunities for specific career preparation.

(from the SSU Mission website <http://www.sonoma.edu/about/mission.html>)