

University Senate Budget Committee

Tuesday, September 18, 2012

315 Dahlberg Hall

3:00 PM

Members Present: Lesley Reid, JoAnne Bacon, Deron Boyles, Margo Brinton, Jennifer Chiovaro, Petty Gallagher, Charles Gilbreath, Skye Hardesty, Miriam Jackson, Bill Kahnweiler, Vincent Rehder, Mary Ann Ronski, Rose Sevcik, Volkan Topalli, Katherine Willoughby, Xu Yongsheng.

1. Last meeting's minutes were unanimously approved.
2. Updates regarding future meetings.

There will be no public BOR meeting this month; it will be held next month. Our next Budget Committee meeting will be a joint meeting with the Faculty Affairs Committee, held in the ground floor meeting room of the SunTrust Annex Building. Jerry Rackliffe will be giving an update on the budget at this meeting; Linda Nelson and Beth Jones will be giving updates on changes to benefits and what we should anticipate going forward.

3. Open discussion of hybrid retirement plans.

Lesley Reid reported that FAC and Budget will be reactivating a standing Benefits Joint Subcommittee that has not been active for several years. The main focus being creating built-in infrastructure for continually looking at benefits encroachment. Cherian Thachenkary will chair that committee.

The primary function of that committee this year will be examining a hybrid alternative to the current TRS/ORP retirement plan, in which employees can balance their risks by investing 50% in a defined benefits plan and 50% in defined contribution plan. The work of the committee will be purely exploratory, to determine if this is something the Senate should advocate for or be prepared to advocate against, should the BOR propose it.

Budget committee members expressed concerns that if such a proposal passed, a hybrid plan may become the only option, and that this plan could be just another way of pushing people out of TRS. Members wished future exploration to consider the politics of both programs, possible undefined benefits of ORP and the current changes in healthcare pension plans and other post-employment benefits. Lesley Reid stated that this would be a year long exploratory process.

4. Report on the status of the Doctoral Funding Model Subcommittee.

Mary Ann Ronski reported that a survey of funding models across departments revealed that stipends are low, in comparison to other universities across the state and nation. There was great variability across disciplines in this regard. The committee will have some recommendations regarding the amount of funding and will discuss some of the issues we need to face in relation to stipends, including health insurance and fee costs.

The BOR had implemented a three-tier system of student health insurance billing, dividing students into three age groups of (1) under 24; (2) 24-35; and (3) 35 and above, with fees increasing at each tier. Graduate students were disproportionately affected by this change, as many are in the 2nd or 3rd tiers and thus saw fee increases. There was a large response from the graduate student body, arguing that this system was age-discriminatory, and that their stipends were not enough to cover both increased student fees and the increased health insurance costs.

GSU stepped in to cover the difference in health care fees between the 2nd and 3rd tiers, and also offered a plan for funded students to automatically deduct student fees from their stipends over three payment periods. Members were concerned about (1) how fee differentials would be addressed in the future; (2) that there is no single voice for graduate students across disciplines; and (3) how the Senate could facilitate the graduate student body bringing their concerns about insurance and fees to the BOR.

5. Update on the formation of a Gender Equity Subcommittee.

Lesley Reid reported that this subcommittee will be jointly formed with the FAC, who will appoint a chair sometime soon. Peggy Gallagher, Margo Brinton and Elizabeth West will be the Budget Committee representatives. The main goals of the committee will be (1) to look at how we can regularly reassess gender inequity in salary and time at associate professorship, and (2) to come up with recommendations for how to make future adjustments.

6. Update on the Salary Compression Subcommittee.

Volkan Topali, chair of the subcommittee, reported that it will be focusing on the creation of a standing group who will look at salary compression going forward. Volkan will be the chair. His goal is to begin with information gathering, spending time understanding where we are in terms of salary compression, and developing a good set of metrics to capture information.

Ellen Posey, in the Office of Institutional Research, has been preparing the data on salary compression in order to bring a report to the subcommittee. She indicated that she would have it ready by the end of October. She has been putting together longitudinal data on GSU salaries, at the college, discipline

and departmental levels, to be compared to data on a group of other very high research universities (from the Oklahoma State Salary Study). Volkan indicated that he also wanted to specifically look into our ability to keep pace with peer institutions in regards to faculty retention and hiring.

7. Future meetings and events.

The next Budget meeting will be jointly held with the FAC on October 16 at 3 PM, in the SunTrust Annex Building's ground floor meeting room. In regards to Spring semester Budget meetings, we will continue to meet on Tuesdays. Although not ideal for everyone, this time works for the largest number of members.

Finally, the Chancellor will be here on October 6th at 1 PM, in the Troy Moore Library. Committee members raised four key issues to bring to the Chancellor's attention. Volunteers agreed to draft questions regarding each issue, and then email them to Lesley. Whoever was to be present would ask the questions. The issues were as follows: (1) commitment to raises; (2) changes to student health benefits; (3) proposed elimination of retiree health benefits; and (4) overall support for the mission of research universities.

8. There was no new business discussed.

9. Meeting was adjourned.