

University Budget Committee Minutes

Meeting Date and Time: 11/04/2021, 4 pm	
Meeting Topic(s): Presentation from Western Carolina representatives, update on consultant, next steps on developing a faculty inclusive Budget Planning Process	
Attendees, Members: Dr. Cindy Elmore (Vice-Chair), Steve Garrett (Secretary), Dr. Page Varnell (Chair), Dr. Beth Thompson, Dr. Meghan Millea	
Ex-officio Members: Ms. Stephanie Coleman, Dr. Wendy Sergeant, Dr. Gary Venderpool, Dr. Becky Gardner, Ms. Susan Chapman, Senate Chair Dr. Purificación Martínez, Mr. Chandler Ward	
Attendees, Guests: Dr. Brian Gastle and Dr. Laura Wright from Western Carolina University	
Meeting Purpose(s): Learn about the budget process used at Western Carolina	
Objectives/Outcomes:	
Agenda Item #1	Approval of minutes from prior meeting
Options/Points Raised:	A few corrections
Decisions or Recommendations:	Approved as amended
Agenda Item #2	Presentation by Brian Gastle and Laura Wright from Western Carolina
Options/Points Raised:	Overview of the process at WCU, with focus on faculty involvement and transparency. Discussion of specifics at ECU that differ from WCU – size, medical schools were mentioned.
Decisions or Recommendations:	We could improve the process at ECU by adopting some of the processes used at WCU. It should be scalable to our size by adding more personnel to complete the tasks. Contact UNCG, which is also working on a similar project. Consider investigating processes at NC State, which is closer in size to ECU. Committee members should continue to evaluate websites at peer / sister universities.
Agenda Item #3	Update on Consultant firm RPK for the Board of Trustees.
Options/Points Raised:	The firm was hired to help guide our thinking regarding enrollment declines and budget pressures. These are not

	unique to ECU. The firm suggested additional data sets to be included in our process.	
Decisions or Recommendations:	N/A	
Agenda Item #4	Meeting adjourned at 5:04 PM.	
Options/Points Raised:		
Decisions or Recommendations:		
Agenda Item #5		
Options/Points Raised:		
Decisions or Recommendations:		
Action Items		
Task to Be Done	Person Responsible	Due Date

Freeform Notes



WCU discussion

Process starts at the unit / department level. Each department sets priorities for one-time and recurring requests. Each College has reviews that solicit input from various faculty members.

The admin level looks at the broad set of requests and offers guidance regarding total value of requests. Once this is set, the Deans produce the final set of requests and priorities to submit to the university. The Dean level typically has the final say on the end-product. There is a good amount of support and collaboration between the different Colleges and Departments. Towards the end of the process, there is a joint meeting between the Chancellor's team and the University Budget Advisory committee. This is where the total list is prioritized.

Following this meeting, the Chancellor and Provost have a set of strategic initiatives and associated budget requests that are viewed as priorities across the entire university community.

This is a year-long process that is designed to work through the UNC system processes.

The WCU process is perceived as very transparent up to the point where the Chancellor and Provost make the final decisions, at which point it's up to the leaders to make the final decisions. The process is designed to provide the leadership with sufficient information to make informed decisions.

How does WCU handle requests for recurring and new funding when changes are required? The process is designed to establish unit, college, and university priorities that can help drive the allocation decisions. Having these clear guidelines allows the top leadership and Dean level to use available money most strategically.

Do you ever have pushback from the executive level on the process? It's not pushback per se, because the Administration is driving the process. Sometimes the top priority isn't funded due to a determination that other areas are more strategically important. The example given is Salary increases. New money might be necessary to fund raises; new money is not generally available from the state. This means that salary increases have to come from cuts in other areas.

How has WCU done with salary increases as a priority? Perception is that Admin is on board and committed, however the reality of state funding process is such that it's almost impossible for the admin to commit to firm numbers. WCU has been very active in demonstrating the pay level and benefits offered compared with other UNC-System schools. The faculty is very vocal, with both local admin and general assembly.

How is the WCU budget advisory committee elected or selected? It is a faculty senate committee, with members who are not faculty members (staff, admin, IT, finance, etc.) We will receive a copy of the resolution. The committee members are invited to attend budget meetings at the unit level.

As WCU is facing reversion, are you using the existing process to determine recommendations on potential cuts? WCU not likely to have cuts at this point. Reductions can be included in the process.

What extra work is required to manage this process? What documentation is required? There are official forms, and all priority list items require justification and support documents. The committee work is described as 'not particularly onerous.

Q: Do you think this process would scale up to a larger school? There would be more people involved, however it should work basically the same.

Q: What would you do differently if you started over? There are areas for improvement however would not do much differently. Would need a clear statement of what needs to be done and by when. Meetings should be set at the start of the year. Chancellor would provide a final list of priority items and what money was spent – line-item transparency at the end of the year.

Agenda Item #2 – Update on Consultant RPK, higher ed finance experts, input on how to manage and deal with enrollment declines, budget challenges

What was the take-away from collaborating with RPK? For the Board of Trustee presentation, it provided a different perspective on what information might be included, such as peer data information. Our challenges are not unique – they are common in the industry.

What were your thoughts about what we heard from WCU? Good points on accountability and the feedback process. There will be digital paperwork involved. It sounds like a good process. If we do something like this, we could consider using existing groups and committees and encourage greater collaboration.

Agenda item #3 – next steps in the budget planning process

UNCG is also working on a project like this and could be another good resource.

The presence of the Health Sciences / Medical School complicates our efforts. Is there a peer university with a medical school that we can contact? UNC-CH and NCSU would be options – both have separate funding codes for the academic and for medical / veterinary. It might be interesting to comp our process with a larger university. Also, need to consider Dental School (also UNC-CH).

What is the primary objective? Finding a way to include faculty voices in the budget process. We should include faculty input in decisions where budget reallocations or cuts are required to support strategic initiatives or overall financial difficulties.

All committee members should continue to evaluate, review, and think about the finance websites at NCSU and WCU.

Adjourned the meeting at 5:04 PM.