Advancing University Budget Process: The Role of the SBC

This report presents results from discussions held by the University Senate Budget Committee (SBC) in the summer, 2010, in response to the Georgia State University Budget Guidelines, in which the Budget Methodology and Policy section notes, “The FACP will consider the funding priorities suggested by the University Senate Budget Committee in developing their short- and long-range priority recommendations.” Specifically, this report examines the SBC-FACP relationship for the purposes of advancing a budgeting process that is strategic, transparent and long term in orientation. This report presents SBC’s consideration of (1) how to support FACP well, (2) how to facilitate input from the University community regarding funding priorities effectively and efficiently and, (3) how to advance the University’s budget process generally. Important aspects of the University and State of Georgia budget processes considered by SBC include the fast pace of the annual budget process, the numerous decision makers and stakeholders involved, the multiple past and ongoing commitments and cost drivers, and the often quickly changing fiscal scenario. SBC also remained cognizant of the University’s current strategic planning initiative and its impact on the University’s budget process this year and in the future. Principles guiding SBC discussions to advance the budget process included (1) the coordination of short and long term budget priorities; (2) the coordination of budget and strategic priorities; (3) development and application of benchmarks and performance measures; and (4) timeliness of the budget development cycle.

The SBC considers its work to be two fold. First, the SBC should be proactive in gathering information, ideas and concerns from the University community and shaping this material into budget priorities that are then presented to FACP for consideration. In this capacity, the SBC operates as facilitating analyst – facilitating communication from the University community to FACP, recognizing the University’s strategic priorities, and where necessary, providing analytical support along with the information that flows upward. Secondly, the SBC should be reactive to FACP, serving in an analytical and conduit role in which information from FACP is provided clearly and efficiently to the University community for consideration, assessment and reaction. Again, where necessary, the SBC can provide analytical support along with the information that flows downward.

To best accommodate these dual roles, to support FACP and to advance the University’s budget process, generally, the SBC will:

1. Meet monthly during the academic year to facilitate greater understanding about budget issues as well as to provide adequate time for SBC to prepare considered reaction and feedback to FACP.
2. Continue to make use of ad hoc research subcommittees to analyze special topics and produce reports that inform the University community, FACP and, where appropriate, the external community.
3. Upgrade the SBC homepage to improve communication about budget issues throughout the University community.