University Senate Budget Committee Minutes

January 8, 2004


The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

I. Approval of Minutes
Minutes from the meeting on December 4, 2003 were approved.

II. Quality, Centrality, Viability, and Comparative Advantage
Provost Henry gave an update on the process. The QCVCA process, like redirection in the mid-1990s, is a “one-time look” at the total budget and its alignment with the University’s strategic plan.

III. Recommendation from Priorities Subcommittee
Following discussion, the Committee adopted the report (in the appendix) from the Subcommittee on Budget and Priorities, to be forwarded to Fiscal Advisory Committee to the President.

IV. Report from MRR Subcommittee
Dr. Netzel presented the report from the MRR Subcommittee; the Subcommittee’s recommendations will be considered at the next Budget meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.
I. The Subcommittee’s Charge and Collection of Information

Last year the Senate Budget Committee's subcommittee on budget priorities issued a report that developed budget priority principles for University spending for FY 2004. This year this subcommittee has been charged with identifying priority principles for FY 2005 and to do so mindful of the forecasts about the budget. This subcommittee is not starting from scratch in this endeavor because last year’s subcommittee report is less than a year old and continues to be relevant.

The report of last year’s subcommittee was based on the expectation that new money would be available in FY 04 and that the principles identified in the report would guide the allocation of new funds. Though the report did not specifically focus on the possibility of budget cuts, significant aspects of last year’s report were, and are, adaptable to that eventuality. This year, because the possibility of budget cutbacks or redirection became known before the completion of this process, the subcommittee’s charge was clarified to cover this possibility, as follows:

The subcommittee's charge is to identify budget priority principles to guide budget determinations both in the event of new money (whether generated externally or internally) and in the event of the need to cut or redirect money.

To develop this year’s budget priority principles, the subcommittee again surveyed all University Senate Committee chairs and the Provost for their input (see Appendix, attached), and relied on the University’s Strategic Plan as the key source for identifying the major goals of the University. In addition, concurrent with the subcommittee’s efforts, the Provost initiated a process across the University for assessing academic programs and activities in terms of their quality, centrality, and viability, and comparative advantage, with an eye toward sharpening the University’s strategic focus and generating funds within the existing budget to support quality initiatives in areas identified as strategically important. In support of this latter process, the provost circulated two documents, one entitled “Quality, Centrality, Viability, and Comparative Advantage of Programs Centers and Activities,” and the other entitled “RFP – Potential Areas of Focus.” We considered these documents as well in developing budget priority principles.

Based on all of these inputs, the subcommittee agreed that the University’s focus on increasing the quality of the University was the overarching goal that should affect the prioritization of budgetary decisions. We have focused mostly on academic matters but acknowledge that all aspects of the University are important in furthering the University’s strategic goals. The faculty, staff, undergraduate, and graduate students of the University all play crucial roles in the success of GSU and while not all budget items can be made priorities, there are a number of important concerns for faculty staff and students that we believe should be reviewed in the future.

The subcommittee consists of:

Glenn Abney
II. Recommended Budget Principles and Priorities for New Funds

The subcommittee finds that the following principles and priorities reflect, and would advance, the University’s strategic plan for supporting excellence to increase the quality of programs, graduates, and research, and recruit outstanding faculty, staff and students. The priority listing is not meant to imply that the higher priority items be fully funded before funding the remaining items. The allocation will depend on the availability of funds but should be made in a way that is consistent with the University’s goal of improving the quality of Georgia State University.

1. **Tenure track faculty**: Tenure track faculty are the life-blood of a research university, and hiring adequate numbers of tenure track faculty at nationally competitive salaries is critical to the success of a university’s teaching and research mission. GSU should strive to increase the number of tenure track faculty in order to gain a proper balance between tenure track and non-tenure track faculty appointments. This effort should include the conversion of current non-tenure track appointments to tenure track appointments in those departments where such conversation would be appropriate to further the advancement of the University and can be justified.

2. **Academic Program Review Action Plans**: Action plans resulting from academic program review enable the University to meet the needs of undergraduates, expand support for graduate programs, and generally raise the quality of the University. Because of these widespread benefits and the need to underscore the importance of the Academic Program Review process, funding these actions plans should be an important priority. Many existing action plans remain unfunded, however, because of budget limitations over the last few years. To overcome this problem, the University should consider establishing a separate fund that would be used to reduce the backlog of those action plan items that remain viable and also fund the more recent plans. At the same time, whether or not such a fund is feasible, support for action plan items should not be evaluated in a vacuum; rather, these plans should be prioritized both within and across colleges and schools as they pertain to the support of improving the quality of the University. Deans would prioritize the action plans within colleges, and the Provost would prioritize across colleges.

The rationale for this high priority is that we see financial support for academic program review action plans as critical to achieving the strategic plan’s central goal of increasing the
quality of the University. This priority also naturally supports the educational mission of the University because strong research is inextricably linked to good classroom experiences, especially at the upper-level undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, many of the action plans include significant items such as increased hiring, moving to tenure track placements, and increased support for graduate students, all of which were identified as important by several Senate committees.

3. The Libraries: Well-funded libraries are critical to the success of research universities; they play a pervasive role in supporting student learning, faculty scholarship, academic programs, and opportunities for collaboration between students, between students and faculty, and between the University and external constituencies. As a result, the University should strive to provide increased support for the collections and services of the University’s libraries, with the goal of achieving membership for Pullen Library in the Association of Research Libraries. We note that funding for library services and collections has not kept pace with either inflation or the increased demands associated with the growth of academic programs and the large growth in undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty.

4. Programs of Distinction in Areas of Strategic Importance: The development and enhancement of programs and initiatives in areas of strategic strength is another important component of the University’s effort to enhance quality and improve its reputation. Programs of distinction help to attract quality students and faculty, increase the University’s profile and visibility, promote interdisciplinary collaboration and research, improve the educational experience for students, and serve the public interest. Directing resources in areas of strategic importance also is consistent with the Chancellor’s list of University System Budget Management Principles, which states, “The University System must focus its resources and energy on its core mission. The University System cannot be all things to all people; an institution cannot be all things to all people.” Thus, support for programs of distinction in strategic focus areas should be a University priority.

5. Faculty Research and Internal Grants: Support for faculty research is inextricably linked to the overarching goal of the strategic plan of increasing the quality and reputation of the University. One facet of that support, the internal grants program, provides support for faculty research through mentoring and research initiation grants and for graduate programs through funding of graduate students. The current funding of the internal grants program is not sufficient to support new scholars and new lines of research, all of which are needed to support the University’s progress in meeting its goals. As stated in the proposed 2004 Action Plan for the University, “attention should also be given to develop programs for underserved groups, especially those groups that do not traditionally attract significant external funds.”

In addition, the faculty would benefit significantly from an increase in Research Office staff to support pre-award, compliance, and post-award activities as well as to assist in ensuring research integrity and the enhancement of related compliance programs.

6. Attracting Quality Graduate Students: Many graduate programs are having an increasingly difficult time attracting top quality graduate students due to better monetary and fringe benefit offers at other institutions. Providing health insurance for graduate students
will help improve this situation and should thus be a priority. Good graduate students will help to increase the productivity of the faculty and continue to increase the quality of good programs.

7. Facilities and Technology Infrastructure: Facility support services and the technology infrastructure, as well as the academic sector of the university, are under significant strain due to the recent large increase in number of students and faculty. Quality of facility support services and the technology infrastructure impacts all student learning, but critically impacts research programs, and upper-level undergraduate and graduate learning (especially laboratory experiences). Additionally, GSU has a large number of older buildings that require increased facility support services compared to newer buildings. Thus increased funding for facility maintenance and repairs should be a priority.

8. Action Plans Developed Through Administrative Support Unit Program Review: The University goal of improving quality depends in significant part on the effectiveness of its administrative support units both at the university and college level. The newly developed program of administrative support unit program review is an important means of achieving this administrative effectiveness. Thus, support for action plans developed through administrative support unit program review should be a priority.

III. Recommended Budget Principles and Priorities in the Event of Budget Cuts and/or Redirection.

In order to protect the University’s overarching goal of improving quality, any plan for budget cuts and/or redirection should be implemented strategically and not across the board. Thus, to the extent possible, the principles and priorities discussed above should be used in assessing what areas to protect, or to hurt least, in the event budget cuts are necessary. In addition, a strategic approach to budget cutting and/or redirection is consistent with plans now under discussion in the University to review programs and activities in terms of their quality, centrality, viability and comparative advantage. The process for such a review should be as open, consultative, and inclusive as possible.