Fiscal Advisory Committee to the President
Minutes of June 5, 2002

Members Attending: Ahmed Abdelal, John de Castro, Ron Henry, Tom Lewis, Phillip Mitchem, P.C. Tai

Others Attending: Reid Christenberry, Marty Fraser, Bill Fritz, Steve Kaminshine, Robert Moore, Scott Owen, Edgar Torbert

Minutes of April 24 were approved as distributed.

FY2003 Student Technology Fee

Drs. Fraser and Owen presented the FY2003 Student Technology Fee (STF) funding recommendations. They communicated the concern of the STF committee about erosion of capacity to fund new and innovative proposals because of continuing costs, including staff, funded annually by STF. Dr. Abdelal reiterated STF funding should be used to stay on top of technology, and suggested units should show commitment to their proposals by funding their own new staff positions.

Dr. Henry recommended a percentage limit for continuing costs and observed the state budget situation had dictated funding a higher percentage of continuing costs than was desirable. He added that better budget times would allow correction of such patterns of funding. He noted some proposals impose new personnel requirements on ISAT, which ISAT should not have to absorb.

Dr. Fraser stated that the Board of Regents envisioned higher priorities for hardware than personnel in establishing the STF program. Dr. Owen offered a compromise of funding staff for one year for new labs. Dr. Kaminshine recalled STF funding for staff at the Alpharetta Center had been approved on a continuing basis at its start-up.

Dr. de Castro pointed out positions not funded by STF could present an unfunded mandate to the university and ultimately drain general funds for staff, supplies, etc. He alluded to the “all one budget” concept and urged use of STF funds for mission critical things, which would otherwise not be done.

Dr. Owen outlined the process followed by the STF committee in reviewing the proposals. He indicated some mission critical proposals were in effect recommended for funding up front rather than wasting time to discuss. Dr. Henry spoke in favor of continuing to bring these before the committee in order to see the other proposals in the overall context.

Dr. Abdelal questioned STF funding for ISAT staff at Alpharetta Center, and questioned whether regular state funds had been allocated for this purpose. Dr. Henry answered that Alpharetta Center staffing had been phased in over two years because of the timing of its opening and that STF funds had been used to cover the annualization cost in the second year. Dr. Abdelal requested a check of the funding recommendations by FACP for the Alpharetta Center. He noted FACP had historically given priority to funding staff requirements in new buildings. He repeated his observation that STF was “loose money”, which should not be tied to continuing costs.
Dr. Henry pointed out the need for staff funding would be reduced if STF funds were used largely for replacing outdated hardware rather than for new projects. Dr. Abdelal asked about the percentage of STF funds for staff. Mr. Christenberry replied that approximately $200K of $4M was allocated for staff. Dr. Kaminshine stated the STF committee had very carefully scrutinized all requests for staff funding. Dr. de Castro reiterated that funding staff was preferable to not doing projects because units lacked other funding for staff. He commented that numerous positions across the university are on other forms of soft money.

Dr. Abdelal voiced concern about expanding ISAT with STF funds. He pushed for an integrated look at the ISAT budget. Mr. Christenberry responded that discussion of the Alpharetta Center staff as an expansion of ISAT was in error because the Alpharetta Center was budgeted in the J. Mack Robinson College of Business. He added that the Digital Aquarium was budgeted in Student Life. Dr. Abdelal advocated pulling these into ISAT rather than scattering across the university.

Dr. de Castro asked for a distribution of STF funding between undergraduate and graduate initiatives. Dr. Owen replied that this would be difficult and noted the ITC in the College of Education served both undergraduate and graduate students. Dr. de Castro cited a tendency to fund proposals which benefit the most students which in most cases would be directed toward undergraduates. Dr. Kaminshine responded that this was more the case for university-wide proposals than departmental proposals.

Dr. de Castro asked about the decision not to fund the ADA web compliance proposal. Dr. Owen answered that the STF committee felt the proposal was unrealistic. He noted web sites were proliferating faster than they could be corrected for ADA, and the proposal sought funds for positions already in the budget. Dr. Kaminshine added that the ADA presentation was vulnerable with respect to technical questions. Dr. Fritz commented that ADA compliance had also been a concern in the Banner implementation and remains a national issue as to what is required. Mr. Christenberry reinforced these points and added that the title of the proposal did not match what would be done.

Mr. Mitchem commented that from the staff perspective there was concern about positions being funded by student fees, but that the current circumstances for doing so were understandable. Dr. Henry replied that FY2004 budget preparations would include a review of a variety of items funded off-state budget.

Dr. Henry announced anticipated additional decreases in the FY2003 budget by direction of Governor Barnes. Dr. Henry indicated ¼ of 1% would be subtracted each quarter until state tax revenues rebound. He projected at least a ½% cut for the year. He also projected a banner funding year in FY2004 given the enrollment increases and if the economy recovers.

Dr. de Castro made a motion to recommend acceptance of the funding recommendations by the STF committee. Dr. Tai seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Dr. Henry thanked the STF committee for their work.

Enrollment Outlook
Dr. Fritz expressed excitement about the enrollment outlook for summer and fall. He quoted a summer increase of 5,000 credit hours. He also lauded the first major test of GoSolar registration with 5,000 credit hours processed in 3 days.

Test Fees

Dr. Henry distributed a request from the Counseling Center to increase or add test fees. Discussion was postponed.

Prepared by Edgar Torbert
Approved July 24, 2002