

MINUTES

Regular Meeting of the CU Denver Downtown Campus Faculty Assembly's

Budget Priorities Committee

April 1, 2025

10:00 – 11:30 AM

HYBRID

In Person Student Commons 3018

Zoom link available

BPC Attendees: Sarah Fields (Chair, CLAS), Kelly McCusker (Secretary, Auraria Library), David Tracer (Vice Chair, CLAS), Travis Vermilye (CAM), Joanne Addison (CLAS), Tony Cox (Business), Julien Langou (CLAS), Julia Mahfouz (SEHD), Christine Martell (SPA), Miloje Radenkovic (CEDC)

BPC Absent: Kevin Hirth (CAP), Manuel Garza (Staff Council Rep)

Guests: Chancellor Kenneth T. Christensen, Ann Sherman (Executive Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration), Dan Maxey (Chief of Staff), Scott Dawson (Dean, business School)

Welcome and introductions (10:00am)

Chancellor Kenneth T. Christensen (10:00am – 10:30am)

- Thoughts about how to avoid competition between schools and colleges to promote more nimble curriculum change and evolution?
 - We do have a structural budget deficit. We need to do something different to fix this. Regents and system expect us to change it.
 - It will take growth to get there. He feels strongly about growth and reinvesting and he believes it's possible.
 - Just because a couple of schools / colleges are healthy does not mean the university is healthy. Units can only be healthy and thriving if the university is healthy and thriving.
 - Our approach should be to collaborate to grow return on investment.
 - Investment strategy in new programs and new students, preference will be given to collaboration – best practices (Example: CLAS learning assistance).
 - Changing the mindset and how we invest are the two key ideas.
 - Follow up question: Why has the incremental model in BARC been pushed to the side?
 - Incremental models don't take into account fluctuations and people were concerned when everyone was cut across the board with budget reductions. That is an incremental model.
 - Want to see more of a Boulder model, in favor of an incentive based model. Incremental is built in inertia.
 - Want to see flourishing units invest in ways that are productive, not just for unit, but for the university.

- Priorities in spending the existing monies and the one-time monies from system (new \$1.5M over 3 years from central – this is in addition to the \$455,000 per year) to support graduate programs? Thoughts about long term sustainable graduate student funding?
 - Tied together with university budget cuts.
 - Pam Jansma (Interim Provost) is working on how best to utilize \$1.5M. Want to see it used in ways that have impact.
 - Two sides: 1) research which has a lot of turmoil and unknowns and 2) budget: you can't do a lot when there is no funding.
 - Taking money from one bucket to give to the next to keep things going is not useful.
 - Grow enrollment in our revenue generating programs, then we can talk about sustainability in graduate programs.
 - Strategic planning will be happening this year and want graduate education to be a piece of that. What are our goals? What are we training students for?
 - The report from Council of Graduate Schools will help us plan.
 - There is / will be a committee working on this.
- How can BPC help him?
 - Scarcity mindset is running rampant and natural reaction is to huddle up and protect.
 - We need to trust that we can all thrive if we can grow out of this budget deficit. Help amplify this message.
 - Growing enrollment will be hard but he thinks it's doable.
 - How did the mindset shift at his last place?
 - Relaxed the huddling in and defensiveness and tried some things.
 - As Interim Provost launched four programs on Coursera with partnerships through shared governance.
 - Hope we'll see a little turn in enrollment this fall.
 - Trusty and verify.
 - Doesn't want to continue doing things that don't work.
- When will units know budgets for next year or any further cuts across the board or discretionary?
 - State's Joint Budget Committee (JBC) finalized things last week. Instead of -1% reduction, we are looking at a 2.1% increase. Additionally, there were modifications to tuition rates, with increases of 2.5% and 3.5% (state and out of state respectively).
 - For FY 26 we projected a \$5.8 budget deficit; we are not looking at across the board reductions. With \$5M retirement savings and administrative cost savings, we might have a slight positive outcome. This should take care of the projected deficit for FY 26.
 - This helps for FY 26, but we still have a deficit in the future.
 - Budget is going to Board of Regents next Thursday and Friday and additional modifications through June and hopefully adjust enrollment projections by then.

- A preliminary budget is usually sent out in May and then finalized budget sent out 1-2 months later.
- Hoping to get a flat level of enrollment rather than the -1% predicted last fall.
- Concerns about incentive budget model voiced and how it doesn't take into the human factor.
 - Chancellor Christensen and Ann Sherman disagreed, this is what CACB is for.
- How do we identify barriers?
 - Example: Writing and editing with AI certificate approved; however, it's not available in the catalog yet due to technical issues with it being made available.
 - Example: Many great examples of shared governance lately. We shut down in the summer and things are paused.
 - Has seen this frustration in the past too. Not necessarily good for students too. Want us to think about summer more holistically, summer becomes a more legitimate term (for example: teach two out of three terms, and pick two terms). CLAS is doing this on a case-by-case basis.
 - CAM used to teach a lot of online classes over the summer but had to lower due to budget.
 - Early 90s all faculty taught year-round.
 - Many hoops for non-degree students who want to take a summer course.
 - We'll figure it out, it's important to be nimble. Last thing we need is more red tape. Want to find ways to streamline, especially in terms of program development and launch since those are revenue generators.
 - Create working groups in different operational domains (not all at once) to identify barriers in the fall. First, one would be student support services.
- Next week, how to close the structural deficit, April 8, 12:30-1:30 (in person) and April 14, 2-3pm (Zoom).

Faculty discussion (10:30am – 11:00am)

- Approved March minutes
- Future BPC conversation
 - Would like to better understand how funds can be moved around.
 - Questions about incremental model.
 - Want predictability and want a reasonable sense of return on it.

Business School new program proposal: Scott Dawson (11:00am – 11:15am)

- Close connections with the Denver community and a lot of outreach to industry.

Final Faculty session (11:15am – 11:30am)

- Future discussion, information to include in new program proposals, why is something D1, D2, or D3.
- Vote on Business School program: unanimous approval