CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, EAST BAY
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Minutes of the COBRA Meeting, Friday, January 21, 2011

Present: Hongwei Du, Pan Fung-Shine, Michael Hedrick, Gary Li, Carol Reese, Aline Soules, Eric Suess (Chair), Peg Winkelman, Meiling Wu

Guest: Jiansheng Guo

Meiling Wu has joined the committee to replace Jiansheng Guo.

Discussion

The discussion centered on the recent gubernatorial announcement of a proposed large cut to the education budget which is anticipated to impact the CSU in the amount of $500M.

As the discussion proceeded, Carol Reese was able to join the committee, having been in a meeting with the provost earlier. She reported that the provost will visit ExCom on Tuesday, Jan. 25 to discuss this matter; however, there were discussions at the provost meeting about how to fill the anticipated gap in funding. These included pay cuts, a greater employee share in health insurance, and reduced release time. Furloughs are currently not under discussion.

The C.O. held approx. $160M back last year, including $60M to cover possible issues in meeting target. All these numbers are contingent on approval of the 10% tuition increase. The provost and his team, however, still plan to hire approximately 30 faculty a year for the next 5 years, a move that is considered essential to the provost’s vision. Newly hired faculty would be unlikely to be on campus before 2012. The timeline for the state is that Jerry Brown will submit this budget by the end of January and the legislature is supposed to make a decision by March 1. A statewide vote is anticipated for tax increases in May.

The provost is meeting with the deans to discuss various related issues. FTES must be generated or money will need to be returned to the C.O. Deans are also being advised to put aside $ to roll over to next year. A couple of years ago, a faculty committee made recommendations related to the 2008 budget cut and the various committees will review the faculty recommendations that were made at that time.

The provost intends to keep his vision in sight, in spite of the looming budget crisis—areas such as the STEM campus initiative, for example.

Following this report, the committee members discussed various issues and concerns. One concern related to the communication to and involvement of faculty in the decision-making process. There is a strong sense that the new provost is not carrying through on such events as quarterly meetings with department chairs and other meeting venues that would afford faculty an opportunity to provide input. As a result, information is provided to faculty too late and they can only react rather than be pro-active.
Further, there was discussion of the increase in administrators over the last couple of years. The actual numbers are unclear, but there is a sense that this is the case. The recently announced reorganization was also discussed, both in terms of moving faculty further out of the decision-making process (e.g., the dissolution of UIT and other groups) as well as apparent promotions for some current administrators.

The committee members then discussed the difficulty of forming a clear picture of the budget because what is conveyed is the Academic Affairs budget, but not the whole university budget, in spite of the fact that there are representatives on the committee from both the administrative and academic areas of the university. COBRA should look at the whole budget and there should be a routine annual process of supplying COBRA with a complete budget in a manner that makes the budget transparent so that COBRA can evaluate it and make recommendations. Ideally, the committee needs both last year’s and this year’s budget in order to see what is transpiring. One member will look on the www.calstate.edu site to try to find what is submitted to the C.O. and share that with the committee.

There was further discussion about University Advancement, which took a big cut in the last crisis; however, no one is quite sure how many of the raised $ actually go to the primary mission of the university—teaching students. There needs to be a discussion of the future of the budget. If state funds are drying up, what alternative possibilities for funding exist? These could come from research dollars, if grants do not also dry up, but they could be raised through U.A.

Summary of Proposed Actions

1. The chair plans to send out the email survey to department chairs next week. This survey has been in preparation for some time.
2. Carol Reese will provide a link to the document that was prepared a couple of years ago. Members should read that document, taking note of the recommendations that were made about a year and a half ago.
3. COBRA will also prepare a list of suggestions for the provost and ExCom, summarizing key points in that document to provide the provost with a clear direction as envisioned by faculty at that time. This work will be done by email.
4. COBRA will further provide suggestions for the provost and ExCom regarding what information COBRA needs in order to work effectively and complete its charge appropriately.
5. COBRA will consider ways in which the committee can be further involved with faculty governance as there is a current sense that it is not appropriately embedded in the process.
6. The link on the Cal State website that lists the budget submissions to the C.O. will be identified and members will review what CSUEB submits.
7. Longer term, COBRA will seek to require more information on the whole budget, not just the portion specific to Academic Affairs

Submitted

Aline Soules, COBRA member