

Faculty Senate Budget & Resources Committee Annual Report

April 2021

Membership: Alok Berry (VSE), James Conant (Schar), Timothy Gibson (CHSS), Timothy Leslie (COS, chair), Matthew Theeke (SBus)

Overview

The Budget and Resources committee met monthly throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, we considered topics that were brought up by committee members, suggested by outside individuals, and items carried forward from previous years. Our agenda covered a broad variety of topics, and we engaged a variety of officers and offices throughout the university as part of our charge to oversee the distribution and usage of resources by the institution. Our efforts and progress were notably hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited our engagement to electronic forms.

The Budget and Resources committee has found that it is difficult to be involved in the formative phase of budget discussions across the institution. While there are several opportunities for disclosure of budget information, there are very few opportunities to provide input early in the decision-making process. We are hopeful that this changes in the coming years.

In July 2021, the institution will achieve 'Tier 3' status with regards to institutional management autonomy granted to Virginia public colleges and universities. This allows the institution much greater autonomy in financial operations, including salaries, capital projects, procurement, and information technology. This change in status follows 5 years in a pilot 'Tier 2.5' status.

Response to COVID-19

The negative effects the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to affect Virginia's state budget and, therefore, on GMU's budget. Projected negative budget effects were mitigated by several efforts made by GMU's administration, colleges, and schools, which included lobbying and engagement efforts, a subsidized retirement program, and the decision to deliver most courses online through the Fall of 2021. The University did report a severe reduction in auxiliary and residential income for the year, which will subside in the coming year as greater numbers of students return for on-campus courses.

Salary Requests

An annual task for our committee is the collection and publication of faculty salaries to enable informed discussion about compensation and compensation equity across the University. We asked for the same data that Human Resources provided to the Committee last year, such as rank, tenure status, and stipends. As there was not a standard raise in 2020-2021, values were similar from the previous year, and the posting process followed previous years.

We did ask the Provost's office to change the phrase "Granted Tenure" to "Tenured" within the Banner system (and our derived dataset). We have not yet had a response to this request.

We submitted a secondary request that was focused on mid-cycle raises. The data we received showed that only three colleges made a substantial number of mid-cycle raises for faculty. Specifically, CHSS completed its 3-year salary adjustment process, which in this cycle adjusted the salaries of 40 tenured and tenure-track faculty and 16 term faculty. CEHD completed the third compression and equity set of adjustments it made over the past five years. During this process, salary adjustments were given to 25 CEHD tenured and tenure-track faculty and 19 term faculty. Finally, COS leadership received several salary adjustment suggestions from HR and then increased the salaries of 17 tenured and tenure-track faculty members, and 11 term faculty. Overall, within GMU mid-cycle raises were given to 87 tenured and tenure-track faculty and 50 term faculty. The total cost of these adjustments was over half a million in 9-month base pay increases. These raises seem to show that there is a stark difference in the extent to which colleges are addressing potential salary variances within their salary structure.

We want to thank HRIS Director Patricia Coray and her team, who were responsive and collaborative with our requests.

Promotion Pay

A faculty member sent a communication to the Budget and Resources Committee expressing the view that the raises in base pay with the same values for 9-month and 12-month faculty were unfair. After raising the issue with the Provost, a new base raise structure was put in place that scaled 12-month promotion raises by 11/9s, resulting in identical changes to base 9-month pay rates for both groups.

We are thankful to Provost Ginsberg for his quick and generous attention to this matter.

Budget Planning and Allocation Tracking

Academic year 2020-21 marks the fifth year of the incentive-based budget model implementation.

Last year, The Budget Office put together the University Budget Planning Advisory Council (UBPAC), a group combined of most of the Vice Presidents, two deans, and several Associate Deans, with the charge of aligning the various plans (from semester to 6-year, to strategic 10-year) and their budgetary needs. In October 2021, the UBPAC was disbanded after several recommendations from its 6 working groups were put forward. Three implementation groups were later created with little faculty membership.

A Budget and Resource member is participating in the Revenue and Cost Allocation Model Project. The project sponsors include Rene Stewart O'Neal, Renate Guilford, and Martin Ford. The goal of this initiative is to "Develop, communicate, and plan the rollout of a revenue and cost allocation model that transparently and fairly collects funds from the 11 GMU colleges and other revenue generating units to pay for shared services and central operations."

The target implementation date for the new revenue and cost allocation model is FY2024. The project teams are currently focused on process documentation and external benchmarking.

Library Elsevier Contract

The Sustainable Research Collections Group (SRCG) met for the first time in November 2020 to develop plans for informing Mason faculty about ongoing negotiations with Elsevier, a large commercial academic publisher specializing in academic journals in the sciences. For the past two years, the Virginia Research Libraries consortium, of which GMU is a member, has been [preparing to transform](#) its relationships with major academic publishers, citing the excessive costs of subscriptions and the publishers' unwillingness to embrace open access models of publishing. In Virginia, this rethinking has been driven primarily by the rising costs of "big deal" agreements with the five largest academic journal publishers, including SAGE, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, Springer-Nature, and Elsevier. These "big deal" agreements provide unlimited access to the entire catalog of a publisher's journals. In this respect, "big deals" function much like a cable television subscription. The subscriber pays a fee to access to the entire roster of journals, even those journals that get little or no use. Together, the [costs](#) of these five "big deals" have increased steadily over the past six years, while Mason libraries' Research Materials Budget has declined during the same period. In FY2020, the costs of these five "big deals" consumed nearly one-third of the Libraries' total research materials budget.

To reduce these costs, the VRL met with Elsevier in January 2021 to renegotiate the terms of their contract. Soon after, the parties came to an interim, one-year agreement. In this agreement, Mason reduced its subscriptions to a core of 223 journals that faculty and students use most. Faculty access to the remaining Elsevier journals would be maintained through a variety of [alternative access](#) methods, including inter-library loan. Overall, University Libraries' estimated that wait times for journal articles not included in the "core" subscriptions would be one or two days, at most. Overall, the Libraries found that this renegotiation [reduced the cost](#) of Elsevier subscriptions by 45%, freeing up resources for other priorities—a welcome savings given the tight budget outlook for 2021-2022.

Beginning in November 2020, a B&R member has served as the Faculty Senate representative on the Sustainable Research Collections Group. Over this period, the SRCG's main goal has been to inform faculty about these negotiations and solicit feedback on the efficacy of the interim deal that reduced subscriptions to a core set of Elsevier journals. It must be said that this effort began late in the Academic Year. For example, the B&R member learned early on that Library leadership at other VRL institutions (e.g., UVA) have kept faculty informed and involved from the very beginning of the process, back in 2019. By contrast, Mason's Library leadership waited until just two months before beginning negotiations with Elsevier to communicate with faculty about this issue.

This said, the SRCG, and particularly its excellent chair, has worked hard to inform faculty and solicit feedback. In December 2020, the B&R's representative updated the Faculty Senate about the upcoming renegotiation with Elsevier. The SRCG also created an [online feedback form](#) for faculty to share their perspectives on the renegotiation, and to alert the Libraries of any problems with accessing needed Elsevier journal articles. SRCG members also gave updates on the status of the Elsevier contract and changes in how to access Elsevier journals to CHSS faculty, with subject librarians reaching out to the other Colleges and Schools across the University. Finally, the SRCG developed a survey designed to assess faculty perspectives on the impact of the new interim Elsevier contract on their ability to quickly access needed journal articles. The survey will be launched in April 2021, and the findings will inform a

new round of VRL negotiations with Elsevier, set to begin at the end of 2021, with the goal of establishing a longer-term contract between the parties.

Graduate Lecturers

We advocated for modifications to policies regarding graduate lecturers. Mason Policy 3009 allows units to hire ‘Graduate Lecturers’ in addition to traditional Graduate Assistants. This category has been used by a small number of units to pay graduate students at the Adjunct matrix rate for teaching support without the tuition waiver available to Graduate Assistants or even the tuition benefit available Adjunct faculty. Working with the Provost’s office and representatives from GAPSA, BGSA, and the graduate committee of GMU-AAUP, we advocated for more clearly defined tuition support for these students. During these meetings, we have learned that the Provost’s office has been successful in persuading units to move some GLs into part-time GA positions, which offer some measure of tuition support. Still, some graduate students still teach as GLs, especially if they have “timed out” of their Assistantships.

The Provost’s office seems committed to addressing this issue. Their preferred solution is to persuade Colleges and Schools to move GLs into other categories, college-by-college. By contrast, we believe that this is an issue that should be addressed at the University policy level so that faculty, units, and graduate students are operating on the same expectations across the University, rather than uneven answers from College to college.

In the meantime, we are working together to gather data from Colleges and Schools regarding the continuing use of the GL category for students who qualify for GTAs or GRAs. With this data, we will then re-enter discussions with the Provost’s Office regarding how best to solve the problem. We believe this process could be completed by Spring 2022.

Course Caps

Several faculty members told the B&R Committee chair that they were being asked to teach larger classes without additional instructional support, co-occurring with the shift to online (and thus the removal of any physical room capacity limitations). We did investigate the possibility of building a ‘course size cap’ into the curriculum inventory manager so that it could be set as a pedagogical limit, but the Registrar reported that any rules or policies could be overridden by the same supervisors that were being accused of increasing the cap sizes arbitrarily. After being raised to the Faculty Senate Executive committee, this challenge was reframed with the Chair of Faculty Matters and referred to the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development, as well as being an intra-Unit discussion for unit-specific workload policies.

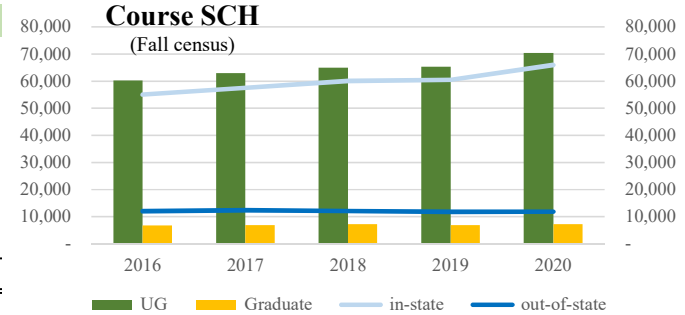
Financial Profile Data

With the full onboarding of Vice President O’Neal, the Budget Office completed its work in creating budget summaries and a single document that covers elements in revenue, expenses, and annual

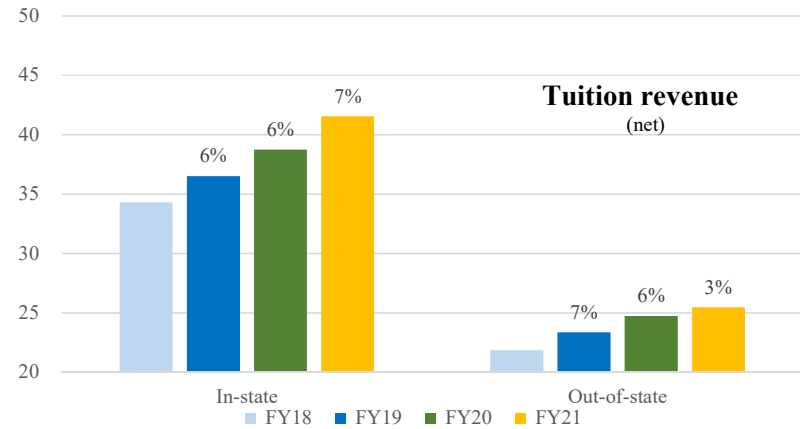
carryover (including that which is allocated versus that which is unencumbered). The data is included with this report to show the format used and to demonstrate the progress made by the Budget Office. College-specific versions of this document will be released to the committee in Fall 2021 after the committee affords each Dean an opportunity to engage with the Faculty and explain the important context elements of their particularly financial situations and approach.

The committee looks forward to actively engaging the Deans and Directors of the Units this Fall in order to assemble a full set of comparable data. We thank VP O'Neal and her team for their work in communicating budgetary and financial status.

Student Credit Hours	Fall				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
UG	60,256	62,953	65,025	65,298	70,464
in-state	50,747	53,327	55,678	56,438	61,522
out-of-state	9,509	9,626	9,347	8,860	8,942
Graduate	6,736	6,891	7,121	6,864	7,243
in-state	4,263	4,175	4,441	3,995	4,423
out-of-state	2,473	2,716	2,680	2,869	2,820
Total	66,992	69,844	72,146	72,162	77,707
in-state	55,010	57,502	60,119	60,433	65,945
out-of-state	11,982	12,342	12,027	11,729	11,762



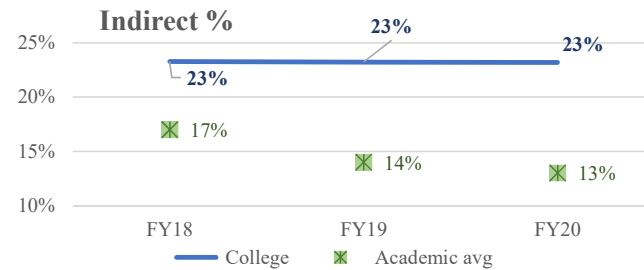
E&G	Actual			FY21 Budget
	FY18	FY19	FY20	
Revenue (per budget incentive model)				
State appropriation	21.5	21.8	25.1	25.4
Net tuition IS	34.3	36.5	38.8	41.6
Net tuition OS	21.9	23.4	24.7	25.5
Direct	7.6	8.8	7.9	7.5
UG fin aid +other	(5.5)	(6.2)	(10.0)	(9.1)
Net revenue	79.8	84.3	86.4	90.8
Expense				
Compensation	(39.5)	(40.6)	(44.6)	(43.5)
Direct +transfers	(6.0)	(9.4)	(9.5)	(9.2)
Net expense	(45.4)	(50.0)	(54.0)	(52.7)
Contribution to central	28.0	30.17	31.7	36.1
as % revenue	35%	36%	37%	40%
Fund balance (7/01)	8.6	14.5	17.9	16.3



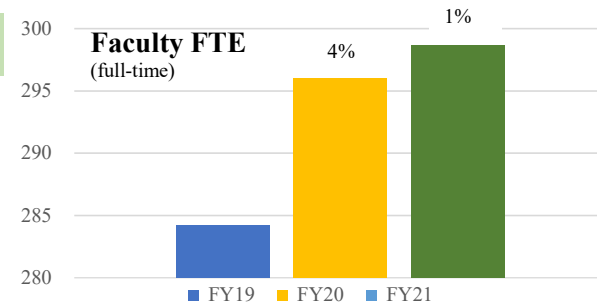
Fund balance planning	
Planned use:	11.4
Contingency funds:	5.3
Available (uncommitted):	-

Sponsored Research	Actual		
	FY18	FY19	FY20
Proposals	183.2	184.5	256.0
Awards	35.5	37.1	34.7
Direct expense	25.8	25.9	24.6
Indirect expense	7.8	7.8	7.4
indirect %	23%	23%	23%
State funded expense	0.6	0.6	0.6

Indirect	Actual		
	FY18	FY19	FY20
Revenue	3.6	3.6	3.4
Expense			
Compensation	(0.9)	(0.8)	(0.9)
Direct +transfers	(2.2)	(1.2)	(1.7)
Net indirect	0.6	1.7	0.7
<i>Yr-end balance</i>	8.2	10.1	11.0



Employment Profile (full-time, only)	Actual				Projection FY21	
	FY19		FY20		FTE	Salary
Faculty	FTE: 284.3	Salary: 27.0	FTE: 296.1	Salary: 28.9	298.7	29.7
Faculty Admin	20.8	2.7	22.0	2.6	20.1	2.7
Classified	73.3	4.2	76.9	4.6	77.1	4.6
Total	378.3	33.9	395.0	36.1	395.9	37.1
<i>Yr-over-yr change</i>			4%		0%	
Tenured/on-track/term, FT FTE (Fall)			2018	2019	2020	
Instructional			211	223	222	
Research			85	82	98	



Sources:

- Student credit hours: OIEP > Enrollment > HRS (all reportable hours)
- E&G revenue, contribution to central, fund balance: FY18 -20 Budget Incentive Model YE Close, FY21 Budget Incentive Model (budget)
- E&G expense & Indirect: MSTR as of Jan 2021
- Sponsored research: Office of Sponsored Programs
- Employment Profile: MSTR Administrative >Shared Reports > Human Resources > Roster > Permanent Roster (filled positions, only) as of Sep; all funds
- Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty: OIEP > Human Resources > Faculty & Staff Dashboard; projection assumes no change in employment status through yr-end (currently occupied positions remain filled; vacant remain vacant)

Notes:

- Indirect Revenue FY21 Budget updated each month for actual revenue received
- FY21 Budget Revenue (per budget incentive model) as of Jan 7, 2021
- FY21 Budget for E&G Expense + transfers does not include available fund balance
- FY21 Budget for Indirect Expense + transfers does include prior yr carryforward; carryforward is reported in the current year as budget authorization