The University of Rhode Island  
Strategic Budget and Planning Council  
June 22, 2012  
9:00 am – 12:00 pm  
Thomson Board Room, Ballentine Hall  

Members in Attendance:  
Chair Don DeHayes, Vice Chair Bob Weygand, Peter Alfonso, Faye Boudreaux-Bartels, Ray Wright, Peter Larson, Nancy Eaton, Cheryl Foster, Patricia Morokoff, Thorr Bjorn, Trish Casey, Ron Jordan, Winnie Brownell, Linda Barrett, Ann Morrissey, Tom Dougan, Abu Bakr, Steve D’Hondt  

Members Absent:  
Bob Beagle, Ken Kermes, Jeff Johnson, Stephanie Segal, Scott Martin, Michael Smith  

See the complete list of member information at the Strategic Budget and Planning Council website at  

Meeting Minutes  
1. Chair called meeting to order at 9:12 am:  
   a. During the process themes and patterns surfaced. A benefit of the process is that in addition to the budget recommendations, suggestions could be forwarded to the President regarding issues to explore. One such item was exploration of combining the various legal expertise at the University.  
   b. The President's new Ad Hoc committee on streamlining the University could have liaisons from the Council.  
2. Minutes from 5/30/2012 meeting were approved as distributed.  
3. Results of Likert-Scale votes & Development of Recommendations to President for FY2014 budget  
   a. Chair: 34 items were evaluated by the Council on aspects of strategic alignment and benefits. From this, four scores were derived. The Council decided to discuss the top 12 items, which were then rated on a Likert scale. Discussion ensued, and the Council urged the further use of a Likert scale to separate the top 12 items.  
   b. Linda Barrett presented the results from this round of voting.  
   c. Discussion focused on whether there should be a limit as to how many times a voter can assign the same priority to each item and whether or not the Likert scale used next year should be "1-3" or "1-5". No formal decision was made on this topic.  
   d. Discussion on new legal counsel and associated expenses item:  
      i. Contract review by Legal Office is not done in a timely manner due to lack of staff. Some examples cited were dining contracts that have taken a year and delays in drug testing contracts up to three years. Exploration of a different structure for contract review was mentioned.  
      ii. It is hard to argue against the need for more help in the legal counsel. The question was asked whether adding a lawyer was the most important need in strengthening the University?  
      iii. Many Universities have 5-6 lawyers on staff. We learned that URI also has five or six lawyers; however, they are located throughout the
institution. The incremental mindset plagues this University and others. Revisiting the legal process and staffing is an important issue.

iv. The recommendation to the President will include a rationale and a recommendation about the need to explore increased efficiency in the delivery of legal services to the University.

v. The cost of adding legal counsel is relatively small compared to other items and the workload for the Legal Office is relentless.

vi. As a way to increase the efficient use of legal resources and to help move documents, such as contracts, along, the Council could recommend that the process of contract review be revisited.

vii. The Chair reminded the Council that they have typically provided the President with an unranked list of top priorities and allowed him room to make decisions with his more specific knowledge of funding and personnel resources.

e. Discussion on Fitness & Wellness Center:

i. $300,000 of this request is earmarked for equipment; remainder funds employees (2 full time equivalents and students as needed).

ii. The equipment should be viewed as a one-time only expense. It will need to be replaced, but it will not be a base budget item.

iii. VP Dougan: $500,000 is in the Wellness Center construction budget for equipment. The total equipment cost for Center will end up being $1 million. Capital Projects is trying to access $250,000 from the construction budget; however, VP Dougan indicated that he will not let this happen.

iv. VP Dougan: The total project cost is still at $11M. The split of the funding is projected to be $2M from private fundraising and $9M from auxiliaries. If construction funds remain they would be used for equipment.

v. A Council member noted that at the last meeting, VP Weygand said the bid for construction came in at just under the estimated bid for construction.

vi. VP Dougan: The facility is projected to open sometime during the summer of 2013.

vii. In answer to a question from a Council member, VP Dougan responded that there is no staff to do fundraising for Student Affairs in Foundation. There is no fundraising effort currently ongoing for funding the equipment of the center.

viii. The Council agreed that a recommendation be noted that fundraising be undertaken to assist student services' areas, including ongoing funds to replace equipment in the new Center.

ix. There will be two columns for the Fitness-Wellness Center recommendation: "one-time only" and "base budget".

f. As the Council considered balancing requests between divisions, the Chair reminded the Council of its role in this process to identify the most important new University priorities rather than rationing priorities based on divisional lines. Cultivating a University perspective is an important challenge related to the Council's charge. The narrative sent to the President will include the themes we have noted in our discussion along with a set of priorities.

g. Discussion ensued about whether to narrow the list of 12 priorities or not. The Chair reminded the Council that the President charged it with determining the top priorities. Sending him 12 items would essentially be the Council deciding not to
decide. Chair indicated that he would personally apologize to the President if this ended up as the final recommendation.

h. Ray Wright made a motion to cutoff the discussion on the final recommendation to just the top 8 items. This motion was seconded by Tom Dougan and then defeated.

i. Nancy Eaton made a motion to cutoff at the top 7 items. This was seconded by Winnie Brownell.

j. There was a vote on whether the top 7 or 8 should be discussed in the final recommendation. The final vote was 10-2 that the top 8 be in the final recommendation. They are:

1. New legal counsel and associated expenses – Total cost $169,828 (President's request).
2. Faculty cluster hires - Total cost of $1,029,000 with AA cost share of $103,000, new investment request total of $927,000 (Academic Affairs request)
3. New Fitness-Wellness Center staff, operating & equipment – Total cost $635,000 (Student Affairs)
4. Graduate Research Assistant Tuition Differential – Total cost $150,000 (Academic Affairs and Research & Economic Development)
5. Internal Auditor with legal expertise – Total cost $110,000 (Administration and Finance)
6. Office of Experiential Learning Liaisons – Total cost $255,000 (colleges are sharing 50% of total cost of 6 positions)
7. Assistant to the Provost for Global Strategies – Total cost $200,000 with AA cost share of $16,500, new investment request total of $183,500 (Academic Affairs)
8. 2 Coordinators Disability Services – Total cost $145,000 (Student Affairs)

k. Discussion moved away from the formatting of the rationale and back to the priorities to be presented in the rationale:

i. Reallocation is the first mechanism for funding anything. Only when this is not possible should new funding be sought out.

ii. Disability Service coordinators help with retention and compliance and are relatively inexpensive.

iii. Consensus on the main points to be emphasized in the content of the narrative: there needs to be a review of how legal resources are employed. The draft recommendations will be distributed to the Council in advance of submission to the President for their review and comment.

iv. The President will also be given the respective ranking information of the items as background.

4. The Council then moved to de brief its budget submission and allocation process:

i. A recommendation was made for FY15: A forced ranking (1-12) for the top 12 University priorities should be a part of the Council's ranking process.

ii. Discussion should focus on three areas: the division submission process, the presentation/critique process, Council's handling of the voting, rating, and ranking.

iii. Recommendation: There could be a limit on the number of requests brought before the Council or a financial threshold on requests that come before the Council.

1. A financial threshold could limit discussion on certain positions, which should come before the Council.
iv. Chair noted the real benefit of the SBPC is not solely the final recommendation, but getting divisions to truly organize their priorities for the future.

v. Perhaps the process for next year should focus on recommendations for broad institutional changes and not incremental changes?

vi. Vetting each request in relation to each criterion took a lot of time and produced a great deal of written material. Perhaps having one page to justify a request is better, or maybe the time spent was absolutely necessary and time well spent.

1. Reading and reviewing all of the written text was felt to be cumbersome by some for the review teams.

vii. VP Dougan expressed his concerns with the process relating that the budgeting process deals with only 8% of the overall URI budget. He expressed concerns about the degree of time spent on preparing his division’s submission.

viii. Other members expressed that they learned a great deal from the process and that the submission process promotes transparency and reflects a thoughtful approach in conjunction with important resources.

ix. The Chair reminded the Council that this year’s process was brought before them for their review and consideration on three separate occasions and they approved it. Concerns might have been expressed at that time.

x. Chair: The budget is an important representation of the strategic priorities. This new process is far more transparent than the budgeting process prior to the establishment of the SBPC. We need to continue to evolve the budget process to align with overall University strategic goals, which include the Academic Plan, at its core, but goes beyond those to encompass the various other divisions.

xi. There is a need for the Council to evolve to be more forward thinking in its budgeting and planning process. Currently, the work of the Council reflects a yearly cycle. Some VP’s expressed a frustration in the lack of emphasis on non-academic items as funding priorities. Other members expressed a desire to develop processes that look at multi-year budgets not just the coming year.

xii. Although the process required detailed information, various faculty members validated the need for detailed background information in order to be able to truly evaluate all requests. This may be tedious for VPs, but was felt, by some members, to have value. Retaining uniformity in submission formatting needs to remain in the request process to promote equity and fair consideration.

xiii. The Chair reaffirmed the intentions of the President in assembling the Council to allow for broader consideration for strategic budgetary decisions than had been in the past.

xiv. Discussion ensued about whether the Academic Plan itself should continue to drive the budgetary decisions, or whether a broader University-wide strategic planning document should be the foundation. Currently, the Academic Plan along with a set of University-wide strategically derived benefits, as defined by the Council (such as branding, value, enrollment value, fiscal efficiency/effectiveness as per the rating rubric), is encompassed in the process of ranking items. The Council was reminded that the divisions are invited per the template
submission criteria to relate how submitted items connect to their division's strategic priorities. The current SBPC charge states that the Academic Plan, in concert with the divisional plans, shall serve as the University's overall strategic plan, as per instructed by the President at one of the first SBPC meetings. We also since have the President's transformational goals. The Council might consider whether any of these are not reflected in the aspects currently emphasized in the rubric and submission process.

xv. If there was a way to simplify the process, it would allow less strain to be placed on the Budget & Financial Planning Office including submission of requests in a timely and explicit manner.

xvi. Feedback relative to the review teams consisted of suggestions for them to emphasize objectivity as opposed to advocacy and that critiquing is an important aspect. A balance between benefits and shortcomings should be reflected in the critiques. The critiques should be derived from comparing the items to the rubric, which was comprised of strategic alignment and benefits criteria.

xvii. In assessing whether all the efforts in submission and review were worthwhile, it was noted that many members of the Council learned valuable information relative to each request from this process. This is good for the University as it reflects greater community awareness and knowledge about the important strategic funding issues and budgeting process that exists. Also, the President had previously noted to the Council that their job would be challenging and difficult. To fulfill its charge, items need to be highly scrutinized in order for the Council to make thoughtful and strategic recommendations.

xviii. Chair (reflecting on the FY13 request process vs. FY14 request process): Last year we invented a process as we went along. That was not optimal. This year, a process was laid out by our subcommittee, endorsed by the full Council, and then adhered to. Other comments relative to the process: Avoid weekend deadlines and work for Council; Likert scale ranking portion of the process can be useful in the future, if it is more standardized.

xix. The Chair noted that the process is still subjective. The results were predictable. There needs to be more discussion on the individual items themselves as opposed to the process. He suggested the Council may be too sensitive and concerned about offending people, however, it's important to be as honest and direct as possible. He expressed a desire for the Council to arrive at a place where we each realize we are working together primarily for the good of the whole organization.

xx. There are still Council members concerned that the Council is not voting on the right (most strategic) things (i.e. year-to-year request items). Frustration was expressed about not doing enough. A next step to the process could be to make additional recommendations to the President, which do not relate to budget items but are more systemic changes.

xxi. The charge of the Council is two-fold: Budgetary and Planning. A Council member noted that the Council is improving greatly on the budget charge of the Council, however, the planning part may require greater attention. The Chair added that the budget is the embodiment of the planning priorities.
xxii. The financial planning aspect is troubling to some. The Council does not forecast how much is going to be available to fund requested items prior to submissions. The top items should not be the ones that fall to the wayside if funding is short. Funding must be ensured for items of strategic importance – those deemed to be in the best interest of the University – that add the most value overall. The Council’s energies need to focus on what it can control relative to building a great university. We can’t really control the funding, but we have all the ingredients for a great university and we are making progress.

xxiii. The Chair informed the Council that the President would be revisiting the membership given terms and time of Council’s work to date. Statutory slots exist, although no specific terms were identified. Deans, faculty, students and staff can be rotated and the President will give this issue consideration before the start of the Council’s work in September.

xxiv. The Chair thanked the members for their time and work over the year.

Meeting adjourned.

Request for Information:

None

Minutes by: John Olerio