

May 5, 2015

Dear President Oertli:

Thank you for giving the College Council the opportunity to provide you with feedback regarding the 2015-2016 budget proposals.

We would like to start off by acknowledging that resources are very scarce this budget cycle, and our recommendations may be more than can be covered in the budget.  Our approach will be to pass on our best interpretation of the priorities of the College community, rather than to determine the actual financial feasibility of the recommendations.  The mandatory funding items clearly need to be given the first allocation of resources and we know that anything which is not vital will only be considered if resources to pay for it can be found.  With this in mind, these recommendations are meant to prioritize the proposals in terms of importance to the campus community.

Out of the four presentations this year, two departments (VP of Instruction and VP of Student Services) requested additional line items, while the VP of Administrative Services and the President’s Office did not request any non-mandatory additional funds.

When providing feedback for the Budget Hearings, attendees were asked to rate each proposal on whether it was essential to the College (ETC) and give their level of overall support (OS.)  With each proposal, we have noted the percents of those who gave the highest rating in each category in their feedback. We used this data to inform our recommendations, but did not have a strict threshold for support as has been used in previous years.

**Administrative Services**

* Mandatory Funding - **Strongly Recommend**

Even though this is mandatory, the Council felt it was worth commenting on.  The feedback was overwhelmingly supportive of this funding, both in terms of COLAs for employees and upkeep of the facilities in general.  The Council highly supports finding the funding for these items first and foremost.

**Student Services**

* Hourly Support:  Financial aid, Loans, Advising Front Desk Support

ETC:  82%; OS:  84% - **Recommend**

This proposal garnered the most overall support from the campus community of all the non-mandatory proposals.  In particular, all the students who gave feedback rated this as highly important.  The Council would recommend funding this proposal if money can be found.

* Maxient: Incident and Conduct Reporting System

ETC:  45%; OS:  44% - **Do Not Recommend**

Although the Council feels that a system like this will be important long term, and the proposal did get a strong majority of attendees giving at least partial support, we do not recommend it for this budget.  Given the current state of the budget we believe that this money would be better spent elsewhere at this time.  The college council doesn’t feel this will directly improve enrollment which is factored into this recommendation.

* Hourly Support: Outreach

ETC:  64%; OS:  69% - **Recommend Contingently**

The Council gives this a lower recommendation than many of the other proposals, but we do recognize that outreach is important to increasing enrollment. The College Council would like to see more information regarding the effectiveness of our outreach efforts in the future. If funding can be found, we recommend investing in this resource.

**Instruction**

* Increase Program Coordination

ETC:  62%; OS: 70% - **Recommend**

The Council believes that this would be a more efficient use of resources in Academic Programs than the current system and recommends funding this proposal.

* College Navigator Vigor Welding Program

ETC:  54%; OS:  65% - **Recommend Contingently**

The Council recognizes that this isn’t the ideal time to add new permanent positions, but in this case, Vigor is an innovative program which generates FTEs, has excellent completion rates and places the overwhelming majority of its students directly into the workplace.  The College Navigator plays an important role in guiding students through the program, supporting them with physical resources and providing lines of communication.  The Vigor program is better off having someone filling this role in an official capacity.  This position has shown a good return on investment in terms of the students’ experiences in Vigor and is recommended if funding can be found.

In addition to comments and feedback directly concerning the proposals, another group of comments was concerned with efficiency, and ensuring that there are no duplicative functions being proposed. This might be addressed within the divisions for future budget hearings with an additional slide where the departments would explain how the position/funding not only aligned with the core themes but also how it will complement already existing structures.  Ideally this is being taken into account as final decisions are being made.

We wish that we could recommend fully funding all the proposals that were made this year.  All the divisions worked hard to keep their requests to a minimum, and it showed.  There is clear evidence that throughout the campuses we are trying to do more with less.  We know that the next decisions will not be easy ones to make, but hopefully these recommendations will help make it clearer where the priorities of the faculty, staff and students lie at this time.  Thank you for this opportunity to give you our recommendations.

With great respect,

SSC College Council