Budget Committee Meeting  
Information and Computer Sciences  
October 6, 2020 @ 11am

ATTENDEES:

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION:

Budget Situation
We are facing a short-term and long-term budget crisis in the State and at the University. The Governor intends to borrow $750 million from the federal reserve in the current fiscal year 2020-2021 (FY21) to address the State’s current budget shortfall; this loan must be repaid by the State within three years beginning July 1, 2021. The State and unions are currently in discussions related to possible furloughs (two days per month = 9.23% pay cut) for State employees over the course of the next four years. All University E/M employees will receive a pay cut beginning November 1, 2020.

While the University has not yet received its budget allocation from the State, we are confident that we will be in a good budget position for FY21 due to the current freeze on hiring, travel freeze and strong restrictions on equipment and other expenditures. However, we must plan now to position the University to withstand the future budget cuts and move away from furloughs and the painful cuts currently in place.

Process
The University cannot continue as a premiere R1 research university with four years of pay cuts and freezes; this is not sustainable. We must start now to identify cost-saving efficiencies and increase revenue, primarily through enrollment growth. Mānoa Budget Committee members began meeting with Deans in March/April to examine budget reduction scenarios of 5%, 10% and 15%.

The Committee’s suggestions to academic units are not intended to be top-down mandates. The suggestions were based on external reports, information and data on hand, and are intended to be provocative and provoke conversations. Committee members are committed to meeting with highly impacted departments, listening to their thoughts/feedback, and working collaboratively to best position programs, departments and the University for success.

Cost-saving measures will not come on the backs solely of the academic side of the University. On the administrative end, Phase 2 of the Mānoa reorg is currently under development and identifies for elimination approximately 12 E/M positions that will result in significant cost savings for the Mānoa campus. Additionally, a blue ribbon committee is currently reviewing the Athletics program to assess the current program and identify a sustainable future. We are also looking for efficiencies in other programs such as student housing, facilities, auxiliary services, bookstore, and other areas of administration.

Review, approval and consultation with unions and affected stakeholders will continue through Spring 2021, it will take time to implement these plans. The aim is to be transparent and collaborative throughout the process as we continue to work to identify cost-saving efficiencies and increase enrollment revenue. Mānoa Staff Senate representatives will participate in these meetings as staff are also affected.
Details
The Department of Information and Computer Sciences faculty have expressed concerns around a proposal to move ICS into the Department of Electrical Engineering. The Committee would like to encourage ICS to consider alternatives and identify opportunities where computer science and engineering may work alongside one another in a way that will strengthen both programs.

ICS faculty want to ensure that their research activities will continue; an effort that directly supports the University’s premier R1 status.

ICS members underscored the importance of remaining a unified department and maintaining its autonomy. The faculty and staff would like to stay together as a unit and not be broken apart. ICS currently works with other departments within the College and across campus to offer multidisciplinary programs and internship opportunities. Many feel it will be beneficial to strengthen in place to maintain and further strengthen existing relationships and connections within the College.

The faculty indicate that maintaining articulation agreements is non-trivial, as things change frequently in the computer sciences discipline. Concerns were raised related to the adaptability of their program if they are merged with other units, as non-computer science faculty would then be voting on articulation agreements. The Committee understands this concern, yet questions the extent to which engineering or other units would negatively affect computer sciences articulation agreements. It was shared that Computer Engineering has their own successful articulation agreements and would want to protect what is already working.

Students enrolled in engineering courses are subject to engineering fees; students not enrolled in engineering courses will not be affected by College of Engineering fees. Pursuant to Board policy, fees must go directly for the purpose for which they are approved.

Software engineering and the training of software engineers is important for Hawaii’s economy. Developing an ABET accredited, software engineering degree program under Engineering would be a good idea. While computer sciences offers a broader, science-based curriculum, ICS faculty are excited about the idea of being able to work collaboratively with Engineering to offer a software engineering degree.

ICS faculty have expressed concerns about the issue of retrenchment. The Committee has shared that this effort to reposition the university is in fact to minimize pay cuts and avoid retrenchment. The current hiring freeze is in place so that we can preserve positions and jobs that are currently in place.

While many suggestions across campus are directly associated with cost savings, suggestions for this program is not focused on cost savings. The Committee’s suggestions aim to strengthen the role of computer science and computer engineering on campus and in the external community, both in terms of the type and number of graduates as well as the research and scholarship.

Outcomes:
The Committee feels it is important for the ICS department, as subject matter experts in their discipline, to weigh in on what they feel could be a successful path forward for computer sciences and share ideas on how units may better collaborate, offer degree programs, and engage in shared governance.

The Committee looks forward to discussion and feedback from ICS on how best to preserve the existing program and further enhance research and scholarship to contribute to changes in the State’s economy.