

Responses to Department Chairs' Questions Ten Percent Budget Reduction Exercise

Which reductions will "count"? For instance, in planning for cuts last year we were instructed that some faculty and staff attrition did not count (basically retirements scheduled as part of the DROP program), while other attrition did count.

As we discussed at the meeting last week, we will use each unit's budget as of July 1, 2008 as a baseline. Therefore, all attrition will count.

Which revenue streams may be used to offset cuts in state funds? For example, if a department has steady income from either F&A returns or auxiliary funds, may these funds be used to offset cuts (consistent with applicable federal regulations)?

We'll need to discuss this on a case-by-case basis. If you move someone to "soft" money, you are accepting that they will need to be laid off if/when the funding ends. If we think that it would be impossible in practice to do that (if we think that, if push came to shove, the College would have to give you funding for that position) we won't count that as a recurring cut.

Can we come to an understanding of what is meant by "recurring"? For example, having a faculty colleague take a one-year leave of absence (at a reduced or zero FTE) provides some interim budget relief, but the savings are not recurring. However, such leaves might be sufficient to tide us over until a subsequent faculty or staff departure.

If a departure is imminent (meaning in the next two to three years) and certain (meaning that we have something that is signed and irrevocable), and there is an identifiable "bridge" to it, we will count that as recurring.

Assuming we're expected to offer the same number of seats next year, what flexibility will we have in managing class sizes? For instance, in principle there are caps on the class size for honors sections; will these be enforced?

We will not be able to offer the same number of seats, but we should minimize the loss wherever possible. Raising caps on courses may be one way to do that, and we cannot rule it out. We want to be careful, however, not to undermine quality where it would degrade quickly with larger class size.

Recruiting of graduate students is in full swing, and departments will soon start sending out offer letters. For planning purposes most departments will need to know their 2009/10 OPS budgets. Could provisional OPS budgets be established soon?

We have instructed everyone to make offers as though their OPS budgets will be 10 percent smaller next year as a precaution against what might come. But we have not actually made any budget decisions yet. In completing your department's 10 percent planning exercise, you may decide on any level of OPS cut you see fit (including none at all).

If a department was authorized to initiate a (differential tuition) search this year, will cancellation of this search be counted toward the department's budget reduction?

Yes.

Is the dean's office willing to help chairs implement higher teaching loads, if needed?

Yes. Refer back to the document we distributed last fall on teaching assignments. Especially for faculty who are less research active, it may make sense to have them take on additionally teaching. Also, it may be necessary to limit various kinds of teaching reductions, including where more than one faculty member gets credit for teaching the same course.

If we consolidate some of the undergraduate courses into fewer, but larger, courses, are there classrooms available to accommodate the larger classes?

It's hard to give a general answer to this question, but I'm told that there are rooms available, especially first thing in the morning and late in the day.

Do mergers "count"?

Yes. If you think a merger is a good way to save money, we'll divide the savings between the units in any way you agree is fair.

When will the Dean's office begin discussions with departments that will be listed in the plan as potentially facing closure?

In some sense, we're doing that already, by talking with all of you about what is potentially going to happen. But we will not go to any department and identify it as potentially facing closure until we release the overall plan on 19 February. There are two reasons for this. First, these will be very difficult decisions to make, and we need the maximum amount of time to make them. Second, we don't want information to come out in pieces. The schedule is set up so that we have two weeks to discuss the plan and revise it before sending it to the Provost.

You have a pretty good idea of what information is available to us. If you think there is important information that we are likely to miss, or some way we are likely to misinterpret the information, be sure to let us know.