Committee members in attendance: Michael Martinez (chair), David Foster, Ata Sarajedini, Rori Bloom, Whitney Sanford, Philip Boyland, Robert D’Amico, Susan Gillespie. Also present: Uma Sethuram, CLAS Budget Director.

1. Martinez called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm and circulated copies of a brief agenda together with the minutes of the Oct. 31 committee meeting. Foster moved to adopt the minutes of the Oct. 31 meeting, seconded by Boyland. The motion was approved by acclamation.

2. It was decided to combine the last two items on the agenda--to review CLAS and department budgets with the Budget Director, and for members to generate ideas for cost-saving or revenue enhancement from those budgets—together in a common discussion.

3. Uma Sethuram reviewed the basic figures from the 2012-13 CLAS budget in terms of the projected shortfall (over $3,000,000) and areas of anticipated savings (for example, by adopting the shared services model). Even with the latter, a shortfall of $2.2 million is still anticipated, which may require a 3% cut in budgets across the college. Although the Dean has asked the Provost for relief, the college still should anticipate and prepare for cuts and continue to look for cost savings. Some ideas for the latter that have already been suggested include drastic cuts to OPS (which would threaten graduate programs in the college, thereby reducing revenue), eliminating adjunct instructors (resulting in a savings of only about $500,000 and a loss of the SCH they contribute), and conscious efforts to increase class sizes, as some instructors have relatively small classes. This last would have to be the responsibility of departments.

4. The discussion among committee members then widened to more general issues having to do with the difficulties and frustrations of dealing with the constraints of RCM. For example, RCM is always behind, its numbers based on the previous year, and they continue to be “tweaked” and inconsistent. This makes it difficult for departments to plan ahead as they are required to do. Although there is internal variation, the CLAS faculty largely feels ineffectacious in contributing solutions to the current budget situation. The committee discussed partially addressing that problem by resurrecting and updating the old Powerpoint slides used a couple of years ago to introduce the CLAS faculty to RCM. A decision was made for the committee members to meet with Shari Austin to get updated ourselves, and then take the show on the road again to Departments or other venues to update faculty.

Two related factors emerged from the discussion that account for feelings of faculty inefficacy.

a. The first is a lack of understanding about the sources and magnitude of the budget crisis that we face next year and those following. Some committee members discussed how at the Nov. 15 department chairs meeting there was talking of a possible ~3% cut based just on RCM budget estimates, not taking into account the possible effects of the upcoming legislative session in the spring on UF’s overall budget. The Dean’s Nov. 18 email to chairs following his meeting with the Provost supposedly put that discussion on hold until there was further clarification from the administration. Nevertheless, the Budget Director reiterated the 3% number as an estimated cut for planning purposes, based on a projection of the university's budget to come out of the legislature. Thus there is the notion of a 3% cut, but as deriving from two different underlying budgetary problems. If Department Chairs and Finance Committee
members are uncertain about the cuts and where they are coming from, then other faculty are likely to be confused.

b. The second factor contributing to feelings of faculty inefficacy is a lack of understanding of the RCM model itself and its (non-)relation to state funding levels for the University. There are different levels of understanding among the faculty, ranging from none or little (generating cynicism) to understanding the basic mechanisms but not knowing how the coefficients were generated or adjusted, or what faculty should do with this (uneven) knowledge of the impacts of RCM. The planned meeting with Shari Austin should help to disseminate useful knowledge among the committee members that could help to allay the cynicism.

5. A larger issue that emanated from the discussion was a question about what CLAS should look like under a (or the) RCM model. Changes to the college due to the implementation of RCM and state cuts in funding have largely been unplanned, such as the drastic loss of faculty and support staff due to attrition. Furthermore, CLAS is unlike the other colleges because much of its instruction supports students in other colleges. In its functions CLAS is not isolated from the other colleges, but the RCM model treats it as if it were. Rethinking the CLAS mission under the assumptions of RCM will have one of two possible outcomes: (1) it could help us plan better, allowing the leadership to make choices that will get us to a particular goal, or (2) it will help the Dean convince the Provost and President that the implications of RCM for CLAS are so dire that they need to fundamentally re-think the model. The committee discussed examining how RCM has been implemented at other universities comparable to UF.

6. The committee also discussed the possibility of looking at the implications of RCM within the college, rather than at the level of the college as a whole, but not at the micro-level of individual departments, which are too varied. The perception is that part of the problem that RCM poses for CLAS in particular stems from the heterogeneity of its units. Just as there is variation across colleges in the cost of teaching, there may also be variation within CLAS. There is a medial level for examining possible variation, that of the three divisions. This might provide finer and more useful detail of the internal complexity of the college than taking an average across CLAS, and could help stave off unforeseen consequences of the latter. Adding that information to an image of what CLAS should look like under an RCM model may help in allocating future cuts more strategically. Some members did voice a note of caution about opening a “Pandora's Box,” as a division-level review may be perceived as a step toward applying RCM at the department level, something the Dean has consistently said he would try to avoid.

7. The committee decided to forward these recommendations to the Dean for his reaction.

8. The meeting adjourned at 5:10 pm.

Minutes prepared by Gillespie and Martinez
December 7, 2011