

ANNUAL REPORT
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STRATEGIC PLANNING & BUDGET STUDY

University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama

Christopher Cottingham
Committee Chair

07/27/2022
Date submitted

Submitted to: _____
Title/Committee (if applicable)

Date received

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

I. Executive Summary

During the 2021-22 AY, the SPBSC was largely inert with respect to almost all of its stated charges. The only function that we carried out was an evaluation of requests for one-time funding proposals that were received from various units across campus in response to our call for them. This basic operational pattern was carried over by the current Chair from the previous year's Chair, in the absence of any further guidance on how the Committee should operate or suggestions for additional activity from the Committee membership. In the view of the current Chair, this Committee has been allowed to atrophy to the point of becoming a vestigial organ of the university Shared Governance structure, and the SGEC should take steps to reinvigorate it.

II. The Committee's Charge (from the Shared Governance Document)

1. To participate in all aspects of strategic planning, including:
 - Reviewing procedures for university strategic planning
 - Relating the strategic planning process to annual reports
 - Reviewing progress and recommending updates to the University's Strategic Plan annually
2. To conduct systematic reviews of expenditure needs and revenue needs including:
 - Reviewing and prioritizing recommendations from all areas of the University concerning financial resource needs, based on the University's Strategic Plan
 - Reviewing links between budget requests and departmental annual reports
 - Reviewing results reported by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee to support assessment, evaluation, and improvement
 - Reviewing prioritized recommendations from the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee to monitor conformity with the University's Strategic Plan
 - Conducting systematic reviews of actual and planned expenditures
3. To communicate its deliberations and findings to the President, and after discussion with the President, to the university community

III. The Committee met on the following dates:

October 22, 2021 (see [enclosed meeting minutes](#)); additional business during the 2021-22 AY was conducted via email

IV. What were the Committee's actions and accomplishments this year relative to each of the items of the charge?

The Committee took no actions related to charge 1; at no point were we presented with any materials or other requests for action related to university annual reports or the university's Strategic Plan, and no committee members expressed interest in seeking out any role in university annual reports or the university's Strategic plan.

As related to charge 2, the Committee did request and receive, from the campus community, a set of requests for one-time funding proposals. Proposals were accepted between January and April, then reviewed, evaluated, and given priority rankings by a quorum of voting Committee members. The final results of this review/evaluation/ranking process are summarized in a spreadsheet enclosed with this report; the full proposals received from the various university units are available upon request from Chair Cottingham. We did not, however, at any point receive any reports from either the Institutional Effectiveness Committee or the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee for our review.

As related to charge 3, this annual committee report constitutes our communication with the President, to whom we report through the Provost/VPAA per the Shared Governance Document.

V. What were the Committee's formal recommendations?

As mentioned above, we have compiled a summary of priority-ranked requests for funding based on our review of all submitted proposals (see again enclosed spreadsheet).

VI. What does the Committee plan to accomplish

A. In the coming year?

Continue to request and evaluate requests for funding

B. In future years?

Continue to request and evaluate requests for funding

VII. What are the Committee's weaknesses?

The Committee currently functions as little more than a venue for evaluating and priority-ranking budgetary requests that may or may not ever actually be funded. Whether the Committee has been more wide-ranging and vigorous in the past is unclear, as Chair Cottingham has only served on it for two years, the first of which was during the height of the COVID pandemic (2020-21). In addition, the most recent set of Committee minutes available through the university website date to April 2017 (<https://www.una.edu/sharedgovernance/strategic->

committees/strategic-planning-budget/minutes-of-meetings.html). Again, as stated previously, this year's Chair merely repeated the basic operational pattern inherited from the previous year's Chair, and there was no apparent appetite from any other Committee members to do anything more than that.

A. What can the Shared Governance Committee help you do to address the weaknesses?

Unclear. Perhaps the SGEC could try to reiterate to the university administration that this Committee exists and is supposed to have a role in reviewing university budgets and strategic planning, areas in which we presently have absolutely no role. As an example, the Board of Trustees received a "Strategic Plan Update" dated June 2022 (https://una.edu/strategic-plan/docs/strategic-plan-update-final-2022_05_18.pdf) which received precisely zero input from this Committee, despite our being charged with "Reviewing progress and recommending updates to the University's Strategic Plan annually" (per the Shared Governance Document). In fact, the Committee was not given an opportunity to even review this update, much less provide meaningful input. Barring better buy-in from the administration about utilizing it, the SGEC could communicate a desire for more forceful participation by this Committee, if such a desire exists.

VIII. Comments

The severe under-utilization of this Committee is, in the opinion of the Chair (and the Chair only, who speaks only for himself here), part of a troubling pattern across campus of university administration largely shunning the existing Shared Governance structure and instead operating in an *ad hoc* manner. However, it is entirely unclear what, if anything, faculty and staff can do to reclaim their voice in campus decision-making, given the administration's apparent willingness to brush off something so clear as this Committee's charge to participate in annual Strategic Plan review. Even our sole current function of evaluating funding requests seems largely pointless, since there is no guarantee of any actual funds being available in the university budget for any such proposals, and there does not actually seem to be much awareness across campus of this funding request process.

Strategic Planning & Budget Study Committee (SPBSC)

Meeting minutes for October 22, 2021 at 10 a.m. via Zoom

Members in attendance

Dr. Ross Alexander (non-voting), Ms. Candace Arnold, Dr. Wayne Bergeron, Dr. Stephanie Clark, Dr. Chris Cottingham (Chair), Ms. Jami Flippo, Dr. Kimberly Greenway, Dr. Kevin Jacques, Dr. Katie Kinney, Dr. Molly Mathis (non-voting), Dr. Eric O'Neal, Ms. Gwen Patrick (sitting in for Mr. Kevin Haslam), Mr. Ron Patterson, Mr. Evan Thornton, Mr. Ethan Dempsey, Dr. Josh Looney

Members not in attendance

Dr. Scott Infanger

1. Call to order: SPBSC meeting was convened at 10 a.m. via Zoom with Dr. Cottingham presiding as Chair
2. Approval of agenda
 - a. Dr. Kinney motioned to approve, seconded by Dr. Jacques (approved w/o objection)
3. Approval of minutes
 - a. Dr. Bergeron motioned to approve, seconded by Ms. Flippo (approved w/o objection)
4. Remarks from the Chair
 - a. Plans for the current academic year are to primarily focus on evaluating & approving budget requests as last year
 - b. Chair is open to suggestion regarding other matters for the committee to take up
5. Remarks from Dr. Alexander
 - a. Dr. Alexander addressed continued enrollment growth at UNA & he emphasized the enrollment-sensitivity of UNA's annual operating budget
 - b. Dr. Alexander also discussed continued efforts by the UNA administration, particularly President Kitts, to increase UNA's relative share of state higher education funding
6. University budget report from Mr. Thornton
 - a. Mr. Thornton reviewed UNA's FY 21-22 budget, recently approved by the Board, with the committee
 - b. In terms of revenues:
 - ~\$75 million in tuition/fees
 - ~\$40 million in state appropriation (represents 16% increase from previous year, but should be ~\$10 million more to reach equity w/ similar-sized institutions)
 - ~\$20 million in auxiliary revenue (also enrollment-sensitive)
 - Overall, ~\$100 million of revenue (out of ~\$130 million total overall) is enrollment-sensitive
 - c. Currently we have a ~\$4 million deficit looking ahead 2022; 2022 will be a "tight year" budgetarily, contrasting with in 2021, when we had savings related to pandemic (e.g., reduced hiring and travel), allowing us to remain in the black
 - d. UNA Foundation has been able to assist with providing additional funds for proposals via this committee which will likely be necessary moving forward as well
 - e. Budget picture will hopefully come more fully into focus in early 2022, depending on when state legislature finishes education budget, but overall Mr. Thornton is more concerned this year versus last year

- f. Mr. Thornton recommended that this committee still take and rank proposals, but then we will have to take a “wait and see” approach on how much money we can actually come up with to fund the proposals later in 2022
 - g. Proposal process was delayed into spring of last AY due to pandemic-related budgetary uncertainties, but a similar timeline might still be beneficial in this AY due to the aforementioned concerns
- 7. Old business
 - a. Discussion of timeline for review of funding proposals in AY 2021-22
 - Per Dr. Jacques (2020-21 committee chair), the regular timeline for proposal submission to this committee is October 1-March 1 of an AY, but the committee approved a one-time shift to an April 1-May 1 timeline for the 2020-21 AY (due to pandemic-related budgetary uncertainties)
 - After some discussion regarding the overall budgetary situation as described by Mr. Thornton and other concerns regarding how the purchasing process might play out when (or if) proposals are actually funded, Dr. Cottingham proposed a new amended timeline of January 3-April 1 2022 for accepting proposals in AY 2021-22
 - Motion to approve the new amended timeline (January 3-April 1 2022) was made by Ms. Flippo and seconded by Dr. Bergeron (approved w/o objection)
 - Dr. Jacques volunteered to initiate the change in advertised timeline on the UNA website
- 8. New business
 - a. Nominations and election for 2021-22 committee Vice Chair
 - Eligible members: Ms. Candace Arnold (staff, term expires 2024), Dr. Stephanie Clark (faculty, term expires 2024), Ms. Jami Flippo (staff, term expires 2023), Dr. Katie Kinney (COAD, term expires 2023)
 - Dr. Clark nominated Dr. Kinney to serve as 2021-22 Vice Chair, seconded by Ms. Flippo
 - Nomination was approved w/o objection, making Dr. Kinney the 2021-22 Vice Chair and presumptive 2022-23 Chair
- 9. Adjourn
 - a. With no other business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Thornton and seconded by Dr. Clark (approved w/o objection)