To: Brian McGee, Interim Provost  
From: Faculty Senate Budget Committee  
About: Recommendations for the 2015-2016 Budget  
21 January 2015

At the January 12 hearing, we heard many compelling requests from Deans, the Vice-Provost, and heads of IRP, Admissions & Enrollment Management, & Office for the Academic Experience. Many of these requests cannot be funded, according to the Provost’s estimate of funds he’ll have available.

Rather than rank-ordering a priority list of specific requests, this committee wishes to offer comments and recommendations for the choices the Provost (and later the President) will make. We’ll first comment on requests that are revenue-neutral, then on requests requiring new funds that we’ve classified as investments in growth and investments in quality. We’ll also comment on school-based fees and the Faculty Compensation Committee’s report.

I. Revenue-neutral requests, mostly to make non-recurring expenses into recurring expenses.

As a general principle, the committee thinks any non-recurring expense should be converted to recurring if we’ve been funding it for several years and plan to continue. This would appear to be a better accounting practice and will facilitate financial planning.

That said, making something a non-recurring expense can be appropriate, not only for short-term expenses (seed money for a new program, a short-term consultant fee, etc). It may also be a prudent way to monitor a new expense for a few years, figuring out how successful it is before making the expense a recurring item.

The Vice Provost’s request for increased Summer School funding also appears to be in effect an accounting change, since the Summer School already generates significant revenue, most of which goes into the College’s general fund. Summer School’s operating costs have increased, so it has exceeded its operating budget recently, yet its revenue has increased as well, so its increased operating budget should not be regarded as a new expense. Our summer school programs should be supported and therefore costs should be incorporated into the budget as a recurring expense.

II. Regarding the proposed investments in growth, the committee’s not in a position to assess which of the proposed increases is most likely to achieve its goal, but can offer the following observations.

Without question, the College must maintain current levels of tuition revenue and bring in new revenue if possible. We must respond to our changing market: birth rates in the US have fallen slightly, as have the number of high-quality student that accept our offers of admission. Even a small drop in enrollments by out-of-state students can influence the College’s budget. These trends do not warrant immediate panic, but we cannot delay responding to them.
We could increase spending on advertising and other efforts to recruit new students (international students, graduate students, undergraduates from other areas of the US where we are less well known, transfers from Trident, area residents who do not yet know about our BPS program). More advertising may well yield us more students, but the committee cannot make this determination. (For example, in the BPS program it’s possible that this may not help—the problem may not only be that people don’t understand a BPS degree, but also that the degree’s content may not be what students want, or it may be too costly because our tuition’s higher and we require more hours & higher GPA than our competitors.)

Regarding funds for personnel to recruit international or graduate students or to manage targeted undergrad recruitment programs (Connect 2 and iChoice), we note that the Provost is unlikely to be able to provide new money for all these worthy programs. Each proposal seems to us to offer different advantages: most bang for the buck, greatest contribution to diversity, most important long-term investment.

Some requests were for development officers dedicated to a particular school. Presumably any development officer would be expected to raise more money than the salary and benefits we would invest in that person.

We applaud all efforts to find new donor revenue, but we find ourselves wondering why such officers have not already been assigned to schools by Institutional Advancement.

We also have no information on agreements or Memorandums Of Understanding about where and how the donations are spent. These questions make it even more difficult for us to make a guess as to whether money Academic Affairs might invest in development is likely to yield donations that will closely align with Ac Affairs’ needs and priorities

A little more transparency on fundraising may be hard to come by, but it could be useful. We would like to help faculty/staff understand why requests for development officers might get priority over needs that most of us understand better (lines and salary increases).

We would like to see some assurance that all investments in growth will not continue if they don’t yield revenue. Some suggestions:

Increases in marketing budgets could be provided as non-recurring funds for a period of years, with the understanding that the department or unit would need to provide evidence of the effectiveness of these marketing efforts. A Memo of Understanding might be appropriate in these cases so that all parties agree on what would establish that this investment in revenue had paid off.

It’s harder to make personnel costs non-recurring, but perhaps there could be an MOU indicating that the department or unit would make different use of a line if enrollments/revenue did not increase after a certain period of time.
III. Other requests were for **investments in quality**—to fund academic programs and improve students’ academic performance, better prepare them for work or graduate study, & improve infrastructure related to curriculum and instruction. Many requests seemed worthy.

Some requests for lines or other program initiatives were extremely expensive, particularly when compared with the amounts other departments and divisions requested for other lines and critical needs. It seems difficult to justify extremely high costs considering how little money Academic Affairs will have to work with.

In trying to determine which changes would deliver the greatest impact for the lowest costs, we suggest the following:

In requests by non-academic departments, prioritize improvements that will have a ripple effect of improvements elsewhere.

For example, improved functionality of Degree Works could, at least in theory, make advising easier, which could free up faculty time to enrich instruction or make progress in research. If Cognos could help department chairs and program directors to automate more tasks, they could spend less time on the technical side of scheduling and course enrollments, for example, and would have more time to be academic leaders. Cognos will also enhance IR and the operations of several offices or divisions across campus. More or better assistance from Academic Advising and the Center for Student Learning could enable students to be more successful, perhaps decreasing the time faculty must spend responding to problems and improving our retention rates.

Many **new lines for academic departments** are requested; the Provost must make hard choices about which lines seem likely to meet critical needs or supply the greatest benefit.

The Provost should not rely simply on the number of declared majors to establish need. Need can be better assessed by a combination of data on number of majors and minors, number and kind of service courses, credit hour production, and research productivity. Needs at the very top of strategic planning priorities should also receive priority.

The College has already committed to funding several faculty lines that were requested. We must honor these commitments. In the future, we all should be cognizant of commitments tied to new program proposals we support or to donor gifts we accept in return for our promise to support a future line. We also must be judicious about new curricular initiatives and carefully assess the instructional staffing required to support any new programs and the degree of expected growth. In particular, the impact of interdisciplinary programs on other departments providing service courses must be carefully studied. Several faculty line requests were made to address directly (and indirectly) the growth of programs recently developed.

Many requests for staff lines and temp-to-perm conversions are also compelling: staff who can help overworked departments better carry out their instructional mission, temp-to-
perm conversions that enable us to make a big impact on productive employees at a relatively low cost.

Additional Graduate Assistantships can enable departments to provide additional support to entry-level classes that are critical to students’ success in later semesters.

Adjunct faculty salaries were not addressed as a separate item, but LCWA proposed money to make full-time adjunct appointments at a slightly higher salary, so that a department with high adjunct reliance can attract newly minted PhDs as full-time adjuncts. The title LCWA proposed for such a position was “post-doc,” which might be misleading unless the position comes with a commitment to mentor and support the research programs of all post-docs. Perhaps these faculty should be called “teaching fellows.” In any case, we think this is a creative approach to improving instruction at a modest cost, especially when FTE lines are so hard to come by. We assume departments will make the short-term nature of the appointment very clear and will be sure to allocate adequate support for these faculty’s professional development.

We urge the Provost to consider which departments have been under-resourced for many years and which departments have received new lines and increased funding in recent years.

We recognize that different disciplines have different instructional costs, but even taking these into account, we believe that over the years, some academic departments have been starved for resources while others have been very well supported. Some departments exhibiting all the measures of productivity (credit hour production, research productivity, number of majors, minors, co-requisites and service courses supported) have nonetheless been under-resourced for many years. It’s unwise as well as unjust to expect any department to provide stellar products while being treated as the poor stepchild of the institution. The Provost may wish to consider some sort of audit or review process to identify departments that may be overfunded due to declining programs.

Two other, related, budget requests should be institutional priorities: (1) the operating budget of URCA and (2) the graduate schools’ budget to support the Faculty R&D internal granting mechanism. These items represent modest amounts of money relative to other requests made by campus leaders, yet these investments (in our estimation) would yield benefits that far exceed the cost.

We emphatically support increases to the operating budgets of these items which we believe are of great importance to the mission of our institution. As you know, the URCA and Faculty R&D funding mechanisms support student and faculty research and creative activities. We firmly believe the modest awards granted to students and faculty are perhaps the best dollars spend in terms of yielding dividends (i.e., high-impact experiences). We acknowledge that it is difficult to measure tangibly the impact of student research and the benefits of getting our students into outstanding graduate programs or job positions, etc., but these experiences are at the core of providing a high quality and personalized higher education for students. Moreover, it is these “high impact” experiences that keep the College of Charleston
within reach (at last ideologically) of our aspirations of functioning like a “premier” liberal arts and sciences institution.

IV. SSM and SOBE have proposed school-based fees. These are different from lab fees or fees for individual courses such as we now charge; these fees would be paid by all students taking courses in that school.

To the committee, such fees have several virtues.

They’d enable the College to increase revenue beyond the limit almost sure to be imposed upon us by the legislature (approximately the rate of inflation, 3.5%).

They’d be a mechanism whereby schools with higher instructional costs could require students bear more of that higher cost, so that students in schools with lower instructional costs would no longer be subsidizing the higher costs of students in these schools.

Other SC public universities already have school-based fees, giving us a precedent as well some good ideas for administering them with maximum benefit to students.

Despite state precedents, additional fees here could meet with resistance by faculty & even more by students & their families, the Board, and news media. Fees could potentially provide a school with a “black box” of funds, with no assurance that they’d support our primary mission.

We therefore recommend the following parameters for school-based fees.

• Fees cannot be used to fund capital projects.
• At least 25% of the fees go back to the College’s general fund and should be used to benefit students’ academic success and enrichment.
• The remainder must be used by the School for endeavors that will clearly benefit students taking courses in that school (e.g., supplemental instruction, scholarships for study abroad or undergraduate research, more seats in courses with high demand and a backlog that slows progress toward the degree).
• The School and College must publicize the programs & opportunities that the fees will support and cannot spend the fees for other needs that are not disclosed. A report should also detail how the money added to the general fund was spent.
• The Faculty Senate Budget Committee should receive an annual report of how fees have been spent.
• A school-based review board, made up of elected faculty representatives from the school, should share in deciding how to spend the fees.
• We support pro-rated fees on a per-course basis, reaching a cap after a certain number of hours. Majors should pay a per-semester fee (the same as the cap) as should minors or other students eligible for school-based student benefits that extend beyond particular courses (e.g, undergraduate research or study abroad grants for majors in that school).
• Students in Gen Ed courses should not pay school-based fees
• Students for whom school-based fees are an extreme hardship should be able to petition the school for a fee waiver.
• Students paying school-based fees must be eligible for a correspondingly higher level of student financial aid. Adding this new fee will therefore add to the workload of financial aid staff, especially at first. This increase should be recognized in the funds made available to Admissions & Enrollment Management.
• School-based fees must be phased in over several years, charging a portion of the planned fee at first and gradually increasing.
• A process must be devised to phase in the fees and to form a School review board. The Budget Committee and the Faculty Senate must be informed of this process.

Without these conditions in place, the Budget Committee cannot endorse school-based fees, and we predict there'd be pushback from other faculty as well.

V. Finally, the Faculty Compensation Committee reminded us that C of C’s mean faculty salaries at Associate and Full Professor levels are below our peers.
   When we factor in the cost of living, C of C faculty are ranked “at the bottom 20% of their institutional peers.”
   In March 2013, the Faculty Senate endorsed a resolution for the College to bring these levels to “meet or exceed the mean salaries of the CUPA-HR salary peers institutionally and at each rank and discipline.”

Although we can hardly be proud of a plan for the College to be average among its institutional peers, reaching the average level of salaries is better than remaining below it as we have been for many years.

   Most associate and full professors have dedicated most of their career to the College, some of them having served twice or three times as long as most assistant professors. We do not believe that associate and full professors, as a group, are less productive or less effective than their untenured colleagues, and yet this is the way their work is now being valued by the College.

   We also recognize that finding new money for new lines reduces the College’s ability to mitigate these salary problems, and vice versa.