Minutes of Oct 21 2015 Faculty Senate Budget Committee meeting
In attendance: Julia Eichelberger, William Veal, Doug Friedman, Courtney Murren, Martha Stackel, Calvin Blackwell, Tom Ross, Brian McGee, President McConnell

Main topics discussed:

At the Committee’s invitation, President McConnell attended our meeting and responded to some of the questions in our Senate report. The President assured the committee that the upcoming 1.5 M in cuts were assigned in proportion to each unit’s size in the Education and General budget. He did not have further information but said he got this information from Steve Osborne. The Interim Provost agreed that cuts were proportionate because Academic Affairs is two-thirds of E & G.

The committee asked for more detailed information and was told it would be provided at the BOT meeting the next day.

The committee asked why these cuts are made to recurring expenses and why there was not more time to assess the areas most appropriate to cut. The President said we needed to cut recurring expenses immediately, so that more money doesn’t get spent and we don’t go into more of a shortfall. No one is being fired.

The committee asked whether these cuts would be damaging to our health as an academic institution. The President said they would not. He wants C of C to “diversify its income so we don’t end up cutting muscle here”—we can’t use tuition reserve any longer. He then enumerated many things he was now asking the state legislature to fund via special appropriations: the Bachelor of Professional Studies program, increased computer security, money to renovate the Stern Center and the Simons Center and the Silcox Center, money for computer science faculty. Some of these requests could bring in new revenue, like adding facilities to Dixie Plantation so it would be more appealing as a meeting or classroom space to people who’d rent it from us. He talked about the need for other upgrades on campus like the Learning Technology Center. He said he told everyone that C of C needed to be budget conscious but we didn’t need to be “cheap.”

We asked the President about the universal athletics fee and its impact on overall fees, noting that it prevents us from assigning some of that money (~$1200 per student per year) to the E & G budget. That’s why some people think this budget should be subject to modification just like the E & G budget. We also wanted to know how shortfalls had been paid for in the past.

The President said the shortfalls had been paid for out of the Athletics budget, and that he believed that, in the future, that money should go to other things in the Athletics program, and he had told the Athletics director that they needed to become revenue-positive. We can add sports that will attract affluent students who want to come here, like lacrosse, as long as someone can help us pay for it.
Brian said that the Athletics program had many benefits, supported large numbers of scholarships, and attracted many out-of-state students who paid their way. “We’d have to think a long time before we make changes to the athletic program,” he said.

Members of the committee asked if this meant that the College’s academic mission was a lower priority than buildings or athletics, despite the fact that tuition revenues are our main source of revenue and you need academic programs for that. The President and the Interim Provost said the academic program was a high priority.

In response to another question, the president said that Institutional Advancement took cuts equal to everyone else.

In response to a question about faculty morale being low, the President said that faculty were very important, and that his classmates still talk about their professors. He said he could have retired but was doing this job because of his love for the College.

The president supplied other examples of cost reductions—the cost of labor to move chairs, for example. We should buy more chairs and keep them on site where they are needed. He said he welcomed our ideas for saving money. Committee members offered other cost-saving ideas.

We thanked the President for taking the time to meet with us.