

Senate Committee on University Finance Spring 2020 Update

Formation

The Special Committee on University Finance (SCUF) established by the Senate ([Senate Document #17-18-20](#)) and was approved by President Loh in April 2019. The Special Committee will operate until May 2022, at which time the Senate will decide whether it should be codified as a permanent body.

Charge to the Special Committee

The Special Committee on University Finance (SCUF) is charged with advising the administration on institutional priorities and with educating the Senate and the campus community on the University's budget and the budget process. Members of the committee are responsible for developing a deep understanding of the University's budget and budgeting processes. SCUF gives the Senate a role in advising the administration on short- and long-term planning, and in ensuring that academic excellence and the University's educational and research missions are key considerations when budgetary priorities are determined. SCUF also serves as a resource to the campus community to help improve understanding of the budget, and advises the Senate and Senate-related bodies on the fiscal implications of recommendations under consideration. SCUF will be integral to the Senate's ability to make informed decisions and recommendations, and will be central in demystifying the complexities of our current resource tensions.

Membership and Election Process

The committee's membership includes:

- A chair, who is a tenured faculty member;
- five tenured or tenure-track faculty members;
- one professional track faculty member;
- one exempt staff member;
- one non-exempt staff member;
- two undergraduate students;
- one graduate student;
- the immediate Past Chair of the Senate;
- the Associate Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer;
- the Associate Vice President for Finance and Personnel, Academic Affairs;
- a representative of the President;
- a representative of the Vice President for Student Affairs; and
- a representative chosen from among current and former unit-level budget officers or former department chairs, selected by the Senior Vice President and Provost.

In spring 2019, the University Senate opened a nomination period for faculty, staff, and student seats on SCUF. Senators representing each constituency submitted nominations and were encouraged to ask for nominations from their colleagues. The elected members of the Senate Executive Committee for each constituency voted to elect representatives to SCUF. The full membership of SCUF was announced in June 2019.

Fall 2019 Committee Activities

SCUF began meeting in September 2019, and decided to focus its efforts in Fall 2019 on developing a deep understanding of University finances. Working in collaboration with its ex-officio representatives from the University administration, SCUF developed a series of educational briefings for committee members. The briefings included the following topics:

- The Macro View of University Finances
- The Basics of the Governor's Budget

- Financial Improvement Initiatives
- Student Enrollments and Tuition
- Allocation of Resources across Colleges and Divisions
- Auxiliaries and Student Support Services
- Capital Budget and Facilities Renewal
- Greater College Park Investment
- Allocation of Resources to Faculty and Staff
- Overview of the Budget Request Process

Progress on Charge Elements: Educational Charge

SCUF is charged to “Develop a deep understanding of the University’s budget and budgeting processes and use that knowledge to educate the campus community on these practices.” In service of this charge element, SCUF spent the fall semester learning about the various facets of the budget. This will allow the committee to educate the campus community and advise the administration from a more informed perspective.

Progress on Charge Elements: Advisory Charge

SCUF is charged to “Consult with and advise the President, the Senior Vice President and Provost, and other University administrators on short- and long-term institutional priorities, particularly as they relate to the University’s mission and Strategic Plan.” SCUF is reviewing the priorities in the University’s Strategic Plan and developing a list of data needed to appropriately assess budget priorities. Data that show trends over time along various dimensions will help the committee better understand how the Strategic Plan is reflected in budget decisions. The committee expects to work collaboratively with the University administration to gather the appropriate data that it needs to make the budget more transparent and so the committee can be effective in its role in providing perspectives and advice on alignment of the budget with the Strategic Plan. This open exchange of information and collaboration is a critical element to ensuring the success of the committee.

As the committee works to collect the data needed to ensure the quality and accuracy of its recommendations, SCUF is also considering how to develop processes and timelines that will ensure its recommendations have an impact on the University’s budgeting process. SCUF is reviewing the budget timeline to determine whether there are specific points in the budget process where recommendations would have the most significant impact.

Plans for Future Development

SCUF plans to develop informational materials about the University's budget and share them publicly on the Senate website. This information will be updated annually so that it remains current, and it will be shared with Senators. As part of this effort, the committee plans to develop a Frequently Asked Questions list, featuring some common questions and myths about the budget process. The committee will work with the University administration to find answers to those questions and will share information about those topics in a user-friendly way.

SCUF will also begin assessing trends over time based on the data it receives from the administration. This will allow the committee to gain a deeper understanding of how the Strategic Plan has been implemented through the budget and provide opportunities for the committee to identify how best to leverage budget opportunities to further the goals identified in the Strategic Plan.

SCUF began its first year with the intention of learning and developing plans. It intended to take the time needed to develop a deep understanding of University finances among members of the

committee, and to thoughtfully develop plans on how to fulfill its charges. While the committee is at the beginning of its work, it has been laying the foundation for impactful work over the next two years. Because of the upcoming transition in leadership, the committee plans to gain additional insight from the incoming President on ways in which the committee can best advise his administration.