

Annual report of the Financial and Physical Planning Committee for 2023-2024

Submitted by Guillermo Rodríguez, Chair

Membership of the FFPC in AY 23-24: *Thomas Borchert (Senate President, CAS); Guillermo Rodriguez (CAS) Chair; Jane Knodell (CAS), Terry Bradshaw (CALs); Andrey Ukhov (GSB); Maureen Neumann (CESS); Greg Rowangould (CEMS); David Kaufman (RSENr); Daniel DeSanto (Libraries); Lisa McGee (LCOM); Beth Zigmund (LCOM); Krista Shea (CNHS); Chloe Elkortl (SGA).*

The Committee is staffed by Tiera Porter. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for her invaluable service and support.

Activities of the FPPC in 2023-2024:

Our committee welcomed VP for Finance, Richard Cate around the time when the decision to discontinue the “tuition-freeze” policy was made. The main reason given to the Committee for this change of policy by the administration had to do with the apparently unexpected rise in the cost of fringe benefits (healthcare) for all University employees.

In spite of our committee members’ best efforts to provide feedback to the administration ***before*** these decisions were made, we were, time and again, unsuccessful in our attempts, given that the administration does not share this kind of information in advance with the FPPC members.

In AY 22-23, the Committee had engaged in a conversation with different Deans about their budgetary processes and challenges. In 23-24, we were able to finish this series of conversations with the visit of both Prof. Noma Anderson, Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS), and Prof. Richard Page, Dean of the Larner College of Medicine (LCOM). Even though the LCOM operates differently from the rest of the colleges at UVM given its professional and outreach service to the community, the overall findings of this year-long conversation with Deans provided insight about the budgetary challenges they all still face today, including the information shared with us by Prof. Anderson concerning CNHS. Some of those commonalities are summarized below:

- Diverse spending objectives of the Fund108 monies for each college, from helping new faculty with housing costs to paying for marketing campaigns for graduate programs.
- The state and support of graduate education at UVM: housing costs for new faculty recruitment and retention, as well as grad students’ stipends and housing availability.
- The additional costs incurred by units that run accredited programs.
- The IBB model as a hindrance to the growth path of some units, for example in its treatment of endowment expenses or planning for uncertainties connected to indirect expenses.
- Severe cuts to budget and personnel in some units

Below is a list of other topics that the committee engaged with during the academic year, and the main insight garnered from the exchange with the guests invited to discuss these issues:

- **R1 status:** VP for Research, Kirk Dombrowski, shared with the committee the news that UVM had attained R1 status due to classification changes made by the status granting institution. Prof Dombrowski talked about the additional efforts implemented to support grant applications, and how this change constituted an indirect budgetary improvement to UVM given the likelihood of access to more grant monies commensurate with the new R1 status.
- **Collegiate Travel Planners' (CTP) contract:** Provost Patty Prelock, University Controller Claire Burlingham, and Disbursement Director Erin Fitzgerald visited the Committee to share details about the CTP contract. The cost of the contract as described by these university officers was \$3,000 for a 3-year period, renewable upon the provision of satisfactory service. The main reasons advocated for the change of policy were:
 - Eliminating travel authorization requirements while meeting the duty of care.
 - Best use of financial resources for the university both in academic units and procurement and travel offices.
 - Enhance infrastructure to support Catamount Global.This represents one more instance in which the faculty could have been consulted more widely before entering into this contract with CTP, but the administration chose to do little to no consultation with the main constituency affected by this change.
- **Library reorganization:** the committee heard from Dean Geffert about his plan for the structural reorganization of the Libraries. It was not clear to our members why this needed to be done and why the Dean had not sought out, at the time of our meeting, any meaningful input from our colleagues in the Libraries system. Since then, there has been more scrutiny over this reorganization and a Faculty Senate Libraries Ad Hoc Committee was formed to better understand these changes.

The committee members welcomed Shari Bergquist, University Budget Director, who provided us with an overview and update of the IBB model and its workings to bring all members of the Committee up to speed with how our budget model works.

Topics for the 24-25 Academic Year:

- The Committee has begun an information gathering exercise regarding the state of housing at UVM, given the dismal reports many of our members get directly from our students or colleagues about the cost, availability and condition of housing units offered by UVM and/or realtors in the Burlington area. We hope to build a comprehensive profile of the housing situation to help us better understand what future steps need to be taken to improve the status quo regarding housing at UVM.
- Budgetary status of UVM Athletics.
- Briefings on the University budget and budget decisions at different key points in the budget cycle.