Budget Advisory Committee Statement

For those of you who don’t know me, my name is Deborah Farro-Lynd and I am a faculty member in the Department of Mathematics, Computer Science, & Statistics. I am Chair of the Budget Advisory Committee. Some people have indicated that they didn’t know about BAC. The President announced in her budget update of July 20th that she would be convening this committee. This update went out to the entire campus community. She re-announced the formation of the committee and formally named the chair at the campus breakfast meeting on August 27th. All faculty and staff were invited to attend.

The BAC membership includes: the Chair, two Faculty-at-large, a Professional Staff member, a Classified Staff member, the Presiding Officer of the College Senate (or designee), the Chair of the Strategic Planning Council (or designee); the Student Association President (or designee), the Provost, VP for Finance and Administration, VP for Institutional Advancement, and VP for Student Development. Colleen Brannan and our Director of the Budget- Julie Roseboom serve as staff and are indispensible to us. I have heard some grumbling about the fact that there are administrators sitting on the Budget Advisory Committee. Our membership reflects a wide array of interests and constituents. I want to remind everyone that the budget situation is not a faculty issue, it is a campus issue. When I was questioned about the matter last week, I responded that having all the divisions sitting at the same table forces everyone to “play nice”.

The function and charge of the committee reads as follows.
The purpose of the Budget Advisory Committee is to recommend to the President an annual budget in a multiyear context. Working with the President and Vice Presidents, the Budget Advisory Committee shall:

1. Maintain a highly transparent, informative, and participatory operating fund budgeting process;
2. Integrate campus strategic planning with the budgeting process;
3. Analyze the budget context (e.g., state funding) and its impact on the institution;
4. Advise the president regarding the process of constructing annual divisional budgets and overall college budget;
5. Hold open meetings on the proposed budget to inform and gain input from the campus.

Since many of us are not experts in the areas of State, SUNY, or campus budgeting, BAC is an evolving work in progress. Over time, we will become more actively involved in each of the five objectives of our charge. However, at the onset, I want to make perfectly clear that we are not in the business of recommending budget cuts. That is not part of our charge. Those responsibilities rest with the President and her Cabinet. When surplus funds are available, we intend to make recommendations that support the funding of initiatives which embody the College mission, vision, and strategic plan.

When BAC was first formed, I heard the complaint that there was already a similar campus committee- APRA (Academic Planning & Resource Allocation Committee), a standing committee of Senate. However, that committee has not been active- until recently. Dan
Payne is a member of both APRA and BAC. He is serving as a liaison between the two committees. BAC is sharing budget information and updates with APRA. Renee Walker has graciously allotted this portion of time to BAC to make a short presentation and address some questions. We intend to have at least one other open forum for the campus community.

I thought that I would speak briefly about the first year experiences of BAC. The campus community is aware of our existence, and to be quite frank, they are curious and/or suspicious about our mission. We familiarized ourselves with the structure and language (terminology and acronyms) of a college/university budget. We looked at the components: the all funds budget (appropriated and non-appropriated funds), the core operating budget (state support and campus revenue), and the revenue/expenditure source categories specific to our budget. We looked at factors which influence the revenue or expenditure side of the budget, thereby impacting the bottom line. BAC members familiarized themselves with the SUNY budgeting process and timeline. We reviewed our 2010-2011 SUNY Oneonta budget supplemented with a history of trends in enrollment, spending per student AFTE, and budgeted staffing. We learned how savings, increased revenue, and reserves could contribute to closing the budget gap. We became painfully aware of the difficulties associated with planning for the future amid projected future cuts. We previewed a tentative overview of the 2011-2012 SUNY Oneonta budget. I mention these areas of study because I want the campus community to comprehend our depth of access to budgetary data. More importantly, any questions that we posed were addressed to our complete satisfaction.
In an attempt to begin meaningful dialogue and interaction with faculty, staff, and students, a web page has been created to address budgetary concerns. A search was conducted to ascertain what questions were being asked on other campuses experiencing significant budget cuts. Questions of concern to this campus (designated FAQs) are addressed on the web page. The web page also has a feature which allows campus constituents to pose questions, as well as offer constructive suggestions for decreasing expenditures or increasing revenue while continuing to maintain high quality service and support to students. Noteworthy budget information and updates will also be posted. The web page begins the dialogue and allows campus constituents to voice their ideas and suggestions.

The campus community needs to understand that the budgetary distress at the State, SUNY, and campus levels will extend beyond the current academic and fiscal year. As a campus community, we need to work together to maintain our standards of excellence, while keeping a watchful eye on cost management and effectiveness. We must distinguish “needs” from “wants” on the expenditure side of the ledger. Fortunately, our campus history of conservative fiscal management has served us well. We are weathering the budget storm better than some of the other SUNY campuses. At this time, layoffs, furloughs, and the deactivation of programs are not under consideration. Budget concerns are not impacting tenure or promotion cases. The same Board of Trustees criteria are being used to make these decisions. However, we, as a campus, must hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst in terms of the State restoration of funding.