

Annual Report to the University Senate

Academic Year 2024-2025

Senate University Budget Committee

Committee Charge: This committee shall review the planning, and allocation of the University operating, capital, and other budgets, the process of making budgetary and financial decisions and the determination of priorities among academic and other programs having financial implications.

2024/2025 University Budget Committee Members:

- ***Lisa Park Boush, Co-Chair, CLAS, Earth Sciences**
- ***Michael Morrell, Co-Chair, CLAS, Political Science**
- *Eleni Coundouriotis, CLAS
- *Carrie Fernandes, Office of Financial Aid
- *Timothy Folta, Business
- *Sandy Grande, CLAS
- *Bryan Huey, Engineering
- *Jeffrey McCutcheon, Engineering
- *Michael White, Dining Services
- *Sydney Whittaker, Undergraduate Student
- Jessica Chrabaszcz, Executive Associate Athletic Director for Competitive Excellence, UConn Athletics
- Elena Dormidontova, CLAS
- Jeffrey Geoghegan, EVP for Finance & CFO UConn and UConn Health (Ex-Officio Member)
- Mannat Kadian, Undergraduate Student
- Anne Langley, UConn Library
- Steve Marchillo, SSW, Director of Finance
- Dave Weber, School of Business
- Reka Wrynn, AVP for Budget, Planning and Institutional Research

*Senate Member 2024/2025

2024/2025 University Budget Committee Meetings:

We meet from 2:00-3:30PM on 9/8, 10/7, 11/4, 12/2, 2/3, 3/3, 4/7, 4/21, and 5/1. We averaged 82.4% of committee members present; several members had unavoidable conflicts with some of our meetings to attend to University duties and business, including teaching and research obligations.

Summary:

The Committee engaged in information gathering and discussions of a range of issues related to the University's budget, including, but not limited to, state funding, the 5-Year Fiscal Sustainability Plan, program planning, research, and athletics. Issues affecting the University's budget are complex, involve a wide array of actors, evolve frequently, and usually do not lend themselves to simple solutions. We have communicated our findings and thoughts on a regular basis with the Senate Executive Committee. Overall, we recommend that the University administration communicate early with this Committee and the Senate policies or initiatives that may result in changes that have significant budget and other ramifications so that we have a chance to positively contribute to such efforts. The Committee is grateful for the work, transparency, and responsiveness of Reka Wrynn, Kelly Wihbey, and the rest of the team in the Office of Budget, Planning and Institutional Research, as well as Executive Vice-President for Finance & Chief Financial Officer of UConn and UConn Health Jeffrey Geoghegan, without which we would not have been able to successfully meet our charge.

Specific Topics Addressed:

- I) *University Budget*: Reka Wrynn, Associate Vice President for Budget, Planning and Institutional Research, updated the committee throughout the year on the structure and roles of the Budget, Planning, & Institutional Research (BPIR) Office, the final FY24 Budget, the FY25 Budget the Board of Trustees passed in the summer of 2024, the FY26 Budget Timeline and Processes, and fund balances at the University. We engaged in several discussions throughout the year about the University's current budget process, especially regarding 2-Ledger funds. The Committee recognizes that the budget process at the University is complex, we appreciate this complexity, and that the University relies upon state support. While we discussed these issues at length, we were not able to make recommendations in this area at this time.
- II) *State Budget*: We received updates throughout the year from Reka Wrynn on the University's budget request to the state, the state's response, and the proceedings of the Higher Education Financial Sustainability Advisory Board (HEFSAB). We discussed the issue of the state budget and the best approach the University can take to its request throughout the year.
- III) *Provost Planning*: We met with Daniel Schwartz, Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs, and Kate Clark, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Finance and Administration, to discuss the Provost Office's approach to budgeting, its priorities, and the current situation regarding self-funded programs. We met with Sarah Croucher, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, to discuss the Provost's review of low enrollment programs. We recommend that in the future, the Provost engage with the Senate earlier in any process that reviews University programs to avoid misunderstanding, misinformation, and poor public reception.
- IV) *Five-Year Fiscal Plan*: We analyzed and discussed the effects of the first year of the University's Five-Year Fiscal Plan regarding 2-Ledger funding. Co-chairs Michael Morrell and Lisa Park Boush met with Deans Ofer Harel (CLAS), Eboni Nelson (Law), Jason Irizarry (NEAG), and Philip Hritcko (Pharmacy) to discuss the process, how it is affecting their units, and the approaches they have taken to meet the required rescissions. We presented our analysis to the Senate Executive Committee. The complexity of the data made it challenging to summarize effectively for wider dissemination.

- V) *Research*: Co-chairs Michael Morrell and Lisa Park Boush met with Pamir Alpay, Vice-President of Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship (VPRIE), to discuss the OVPR Office's budget, priorities, and planning process. At several meetings throughout the year, we discussed the University's current policies concerning Indirect Costs (IDCs). In response to events happening at the Federal Government, we met with Julie Schwager, Executive Director for Operations and Associate Vice President for Research Finance, and Lindsay DiStefano, Associate Vice President for Research Development, from the Office of the Vice President for Research to get updates and discuss the ongoing situation regarding federal research funding. We received an update from Reka Wryn on the forecast for research funding in the next few fiscal years.
- VI) *Athletics*: We met with Jessica Chrabaszcz, Executive Associate Athletic Director for Competitive Excellence, and Maureen O'Connor, Associate Director of Athletics/Business Services, to discuss the Athletics budget and the effects of the pending settlement of the *House v. NCAA* lawsuit on the University's budget.
- VII) *Other Items*: Other items we discussed briefly during the year included Capital Costs and Travel Reimbursements.

Suggestions for Next Year's Committee:

We recommend that next year's Committee:

- I) Consider creating sub-committees for certain issues to increase the Committee's efficiency and develop recommendations for the Committee's consideration.
- II) Continue to assess and reflect upon the effects of the University's Five-Year Fiscal Sustainability Plan to determine if the Committee wants to make any recommendations. Evaluate the University's Strategic Enrollment Plan and its possible effects on the University, especially in the area of student housing.
- III) Monitor the continued effects of changes in the Federal Government on the University's budget and report, as necessary, on this to the Senate.
- IV) Continue to assess the University's research revenues, expenditures, and policies and make any recommendations it has in this area.
- V) Investigate ways to increase areas of budget revenue such as philanthropy via the UConn Foundation and partnerships and contracts with industry.
- VI) Continued to monitor the state appropriation. Evaluate the University's presentations to state officials and make suggestions, as appropriate, for improvement.
- VII) Investigate efficiency metrics used by the state and the University and how we compare with our peer and aspirant institutions.
- VIII) Continue to monitor the Athletics budget and the changing environment regarding Athletics funding.
- IX) Investigate capital spending and the University-state relationship on capital projects.