

Dear Colleagues:

Since I arrived on campus one of the important things that I have heard is that straightforward information delivered in a timely fashion is paramount. To that end, I would like to address issues that have become subjects of conversation and speculation of late. That these subjects are of concern is understandable as they involve matters that are of great significance to all faculty and staff.

One of the concerns is that all academic units will be required to reduce their budgets by 10% and that this requirement will not apply to academic support units. This is not the case. Let me explain.

In partnership with entities such as the Budget Planning Council (BPC), constituent senates, the deans, and the executive staff, a process is currently being developed to find a way to deal with budget shortfalls across multiple years and to establish a means of finding additional resources to invest in university academic priorities.

We set out to create a process whereby reductions could be distributed strategically in light of the contributions that units make in fulfilling the fundamental academic mission of the university. That mission is the intellectual and personal development of our students through exemplary curricular and co-curricular experiences and faculty achievement in creative activity, research, and service.

In the process as it now stands, each academic and non-academic unit would be asked to identify a 5% and a 10% base-budget reduction scenario. There was never any presumption that academic support units would be exempt or that all units would be required to implement a 10% base-budget reduction. The process envisioned a prioritization of unit contributions with the assignment of a corresponding reduction from 0% to 10%.

Strategic decisions, using the budget reduction scenarios, were to be evidence-based and in accord with a set of guiding principles centered on protecting the university's academic mission, the health and safety of members of the university community, and key assets such as our distinguished faculty and the beauty of our campuses. As outlined, the process seeks to involve the deans, constituent senates, the executive staff, and BPC in shaping a set of recommendations to be presented to the President.

Information about the extent and nature of this process has not been widely distributed yet because it is still under discussion. BPC has been meeting weekly to talk about the process and I have asked for and received input from the deans and the executive staff.

I am committed to transparency and have pursued that commitment since my arrival. If there are ways that I can improve on making information available to the university community, particularly in circumstances such as the one at hand, I would appreciate your suggestions.

I am also committed to fostering a sense of the university as an indivisible whole. We are on the verge of an important university-wide conversation and to the greatest extent possible we should avoid throwing up barricades at the outset. As we face the difficult challenges that confront us, we should be as willing to examine objectively our own centrality, as we are eager to comment on the centrality of others.

Perhaps it is the relentless optimist in me, but I've had a chance to meet a lot of people over the course of the past three months and I've been impressed with the depth of commitment to serving our students that exists in all quarters of the university. It is the sum of our efforts that makes for the type of exceptional education that students receive at Ohio University.

Hard choices lie ahead, but I hope that we can make them with the generosity of spirit that has made this institution the remarkable place that it is.

Sincerely,

Pam Benoit  
Executive Vice President and Provost