

AAUP Budget Recommendations

December 2017

The American Association of University Professors chapter at Fort Lewis College is committed to supporting the educational mission of the College. We believe that the current enrollment crisis is temporary and that solutions to next year's budget shortfall include both increased revenue and reduced expenditures. This document offers recommendations for the latter. Specifically, the document recommends guidelines for budget reductions (§A), options that should *not* be considered for reductions (§B), and options that should be considered for reductions (§C).

A. Guidelines for making budget reduction decisions.

These guidelines are aimed at preserving the long-term capacity for FLC to achieve its educational and research mission, affirmed only one year ago.ⁱ The point of a mission is to live by it in a time of crisis, not sidestep it. Furthermore, these guidelines align with the national guidelines of the AAUP which state that "financial considerations should not be allowed to obscure the fact that instruction and research constitute the essential reason for the existence of the university. Among various considerations, difficult and often competing, that have to be taken into account in deciding upon particular reductions, the retention of viable academic programs necessarily come first."ⁱⁱ

1. The reduction should take effect in the upcoming, 18-19 academic year.

Rationale: A reduction that takes more than one academic year to implement will not relieve the stress of the 18-19 budget shortfall.

2. The reduction should be easily reversible or temporary.

Rationale: Given the hard work of the Summit Project and the important ideas coming online soon (from new programs to a name change), it is likely that enrollment numbers will stabilize or rise after the 18-19 academic year.

3. The reduction should not affect the educational and research mission of the college.

Rationale: The point of a college is to educate and research, and therefore budget reductions should be aimed at non-mission areas of the college. Furthermore, there is ample evidence that FLC already spends relatively less on education and research than other Colorado colleges.ⁱⁱⁱ This is additional reason to focus the short-term cuts at other areas.

B. Options that should *not* be considered for reductions.

1. The elimination of academic programs.

Rationale: Eliminating an academic program runs counter to all three guidelines. Re A1, it will not affect the next year's budget as we will have to maintain faculty in the eliminated programs to teach out current majors. Re A2, the creation of a program and cultivation of students is a long-term endeavor, and hence not easily reversed. Finally, regarding guideline A3, eliminating a program obviously harms educational and research capacity.

2. The elimination of permanent faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and lecturers).

Rationale: Eliminating permanent faculty runs counter to all three guidelines. Re A1, it will not have a strong impact on next year's budget since only first or second year faculty can be dismissed by the end of the current fiscal year (e.g. the faculty handbook requires that faculty in 3rd year or more be given a one-year, terminal contract after a reduction.) Re A2, tenure-track faculty are difficult and expensive to attract and retain, and such faculty could not be easily added back once enrollment stabilizes. Finally, regarding A3, eliminating the research-active, highly specialized core of the teaching faculty hurts academic quality.

C. Options that should be considered for reductions.

The following recommendations are in line with the guidelines from section (A) concerning speed, permanency, and mission-critical functions. Further, they are well supported by the national AAUP policy which states, "Before any proposals for program discontinuance on financial grounds are made or entertained, the faculty should have the opportunity to render an assessment in writing on the institution's financial condition... The faculty should determine whether 'all feasible alternatives to termination of appointments have been pursued,' including expenditure of one-time money or reserves as bridge funding, furloughs, pay cuts, deferred-compensation plans, early-retirement packages, deferral of nonessential capital expenditures, and cuts to noneducational programs and services, including expenses for administration."^{iv} The Fort Lewis College Chapter of the AAUP recommends that the administration consider the following options for budget reductions in order:

1. The freezing of vacant exempt and classified staff positions.

Rationale: The 17-18 staffing pattern shows approximately \$1.3M in vacant positions in exempt and classified staff across campus. Some of those have now been filled (e.g. Admissions Director) and others that were filled are now vacant (e.g. VP of Enrollment Management). Freezing hires for the 18-19 budget allows us to make temporary reductions that take effect immediately without directly harming the educational and research mission of campus. For example, just leaving the two currently vacant VP positions frozen for next year would save almost \$400k. In the long-run, many of these positions will need to be filled, but a one-year freeze allows the new president the opportunity to fill or eliminate these positions as the new president sees fit.

Approximate savings: \$1M

2. The elimination of the professional advising department (with advising to be assumed by faculty)

Rationale: Approximately 80% of departments rely on professional advising staff. Eliminating this department meets all three guidelines as it would be a salary change that would take effect immediately without harming academic quality or the mission of the school. Note that this program was initially proposed because it was supposed to make a difference to the college's retention rate and graduation rate. While the latter has improved, the former has not. And it's plausible that the improvement in graduation rate has to do with the newly-created maps to graduation, etc. As evidence of this, note that

professional advisors didn't require students earning a 2.4 or better to get advised this last term. Faculty could do the same if they were to take back over advising.

Approximate savings: \$625k^v

3. The reorganization of exempt staff in academic affairs

Rationale: The overall number and cost of exempt staff in Academic Affairs has grown steeply over the last 5 years despite the fact that enrollment has not. For example, in 2012-13 the Center for Academic Effectiveness & Digital Innovation did not yet exist, but its counterpart had only one position at a cost of \$68k for salary and benefits.^{vi} Five years later the same division includes four positions at a total approximate cost of \$360k for salary and benefits.^{vii} A reduction in some of these positions in concurrence with the shrinking enrollment and faculty numbers is a good option. For another example, we could eliminate one dean's position (and go from three to two) or eliminate the provost's position in favor of the "strong chairs, strong deans" model. This has been done productively in Colorado. For instance, both Colorado Mesa and Adams State have vice presidents for academic affairs but no deans, allowing for a much cheaper and efficient faculty management system. Other colleges, like the College of Idaho, have a head dean but no provost.

Approximate savings: \$65k-\$400k (depending on option)^{viii}

4. The elimination of adjunct instructor positions (except those for certain departments that would impair mission-critical issues) with courses to be assumed by permanent faculty

Rationale: Currently FLC staffs some courses with adjuncts (defined as part-time, non-TT teachers). The elimination of these teachers—while not as ideal as shrinking non-teaching staff—is preferable to dismissing permanent faculty. This reduction meets all three guidelines as it is the least harmful way to affect academic quality while making a dramatic impact on next year's budget in a way that's easily reversed.

Approximate savings: \$900k^{ix}

5. The elimination of chairs stipends

Rationale: Currently about 20 department chairs receive stipends of anywhere from \$3k-\$8k per year for chairing. Eliminating this stipend would be a small help, but one that would be immediate, temporary, and not mission-critical.

Approximate savings: \$90k

6. A salary reduction for faculty and exempt staff

Rationale: One way that businesses and colleges handle snap budget crises is by reducing employee salaries across the board. This could be done through mandated furloughs or

through an across-the-board salary reduction. Note that this could be done without harming our financially most vulnerable employees by directing the reduction only to those earning above the living wage for a family of four in La Plata County. Such a reduction would be quick, equitable, and easily reversible. Further, faculty have expressed a willingness to make this sacrifice for the sake of the College. If further cuts are required next academic year, we would have ample time to do a thorough program reduction process.

Approximate savings: up to \$2M

Total savings: \$4.68M to \$5.01M

ⁱ “Fort Lewis College provides an integrated and formative liberal arts and professional education to a diverse student population, preparing global citizens to work in and contribute to a complex world.”

(<https://www.fortlewis.edu/president/MissionCoreValues.aspx>)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.aaup.org/report/role-faculty-budgetary-and-salary-matters>

ⁱⁱⁱ See June 2016 report to the board of trustees here: <https://www.fortlewis.edu/Portals/129/June%20-2016-Board-Report.pdf>

^{iv} The AAUP [Statement on The Role of Faculty in Conditions of Financial Exigency](#)

^v This number was calculated assuming that 12 professional advisor positions could be eliminated with a salary of \$39k per year plus benefits at 30% and a similar reduction in the salary of the supervising Assistant Dean from \$80k plus benefits to \$50k plus benefits.

^{vi} This number is based on ORG 20180 from the 12-13 staffing pattern.

^{vii} This number is based on ORG 20113, 20180, and 20185 in the 17-18 staffing pattern.

^{viii} Range is based on salary figures from the 17-18 staffing pattern. Provost salary and benefits is approximately \$225k, dean salary plus benefits ranges from approximately \$140k-\$200k, assessment specialist salary and benefits is approximately \$65k, etc.

^{ix} This number is based on ORG 29030 from the 17-18 staffing pattern.