

Question Period

1. Question submitted by Senator Christie (Submitted for the November 26, 2009 Senate Meeting)

Principal Woolf has indicated to us that academic planning takes precedence over financial. Yet, in our departments we are making academic decisions now that are driven by financial constraints.

For example, all departments in Arts & Science have been told to construct 3-year budgets that include only full-time and continuing adjunct faculty. This means that courses taught by term adjuncts might be at risk. Some departments already "owe" Arts & Science thousands of dollars; however, most departments will be in debt to the Arts & Science Faculty by the third year.

Does Principal Woolf know what departments are being told by their deans? If yes, how can Principal Woolf claim that academic planning has priority?

Response from Principal Woolf

On receiving Senator Christie's question, I forwarded it to the Deans for their responses. As might be expected, there has been variation across Faculties. However, a number of core commonalities became clear.

First, it is clear that in all Faculties, as has always been the case, academic planning and financial planning are proceeding hand in hand. There are clear budgetary constraints, but Faculties are seeking, as far as possible in this context, to adhere to their academic goals and values. Based on the materials submitted, it would appear that these twin constraints have been transmitted to departments, again with variation across Faculties. Strategies used by Faculties show considerable variation but typically include both cost-cutting and revenue-generation initiatives.

The introduction of a three-year budget cycle has allowed for better longer-term planning and for the exploration of the consequences of particular courses of action. The transition between this year's planning and that which will occur as part of the Academic Planning process has also been smoothed this year by the introduction of a one-time \$1 million Transition Fund to which Deans are eligible to apply as part of their budget submissions.

As I have noted elsewhere, as we move forward in the context of Academic Planning, we will have to be strategic and clear-sighted. We will face some tough choices as we seek to reach our academic goals while recognizing the financial context in which we will function. There will be some things we will want to do more of, but some others we may be obliged to cease doing. The challenge for all of us will be to arrive, as far as possible, at a shared understanding of what these choices entail.