

DRAC Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2021
Zoom

Attendance:

Travis Cram
Rebecca McLean
Quin Wilder
Sean Lawrence
Mary Piekarczyk
Evan Shuster
Darren McCroom
Erica Steele
Allison Mazurek
Amy Lazzell
Jeanne Gaffney
Christa Schulz
Jack Herring
Keenan Kaeming
Heather Dalberg
Shona Carter
Vanessa Blackburn
Jeff Newcomer
Jaya Flanary
Nikki Larson

April 14, 2021 Minutes
Move to approve by Jeanne Gaffney
Second by Evan Shuster
All approve

Document circulated at S&A enrollment numbers:
Preliminary numbers for May 1, 2021 deadline.
In comparison to 2019 is a decline of 1132 students which is a 7.4% drop.

How this affects what the S&A committee can do:
They decide the rate of the S&A fee charged to students per quarter.
They can vote to decrease but can only increase up to 4% cap as deemed by law.
They also divide the distribution percentages to the constituents.

The enrollment drop means there is no way there will not be a decrease in revenue even if the committee decided to vote for a maximum fee 4% increase. A maximum 4% would amount to a \$7.50 increase to the fee per quarter.

The S&A would still have a \$550,000 shortfall relative to the amount that is requested. That means that DRAC would have to eliminate about \$110,000 from its budget.

If they vote to not do an increase at all the revenue shortfall rises to approximately \$150,000 reduction in revenues.

Rebecca plans to give all of the programs a 10% carryforward as a cushion because we expect to have lower revenues. We need to bring this up again at S&A because that will take a significant chunk of our reserves. It is something we can do this year but not something we can keep on doing. This is looked at as a transition year of low enrollment and getting back to normal. Hopefully in a couple of years we will have robust enrollment again and if we keep our budgets conservative as we have been we should not need to dip into our reserves for our programming costs. This year we might need to which is why we get the 10% as a cushion. The S&A constituents need to see that we are being proactive in supporting our programs while trying to avoid rate hikes for students.

The numbers shared are the size and range of the reduction no matter what.

How likely is it that the committee will vote for an increase? No one made any firm commitments except the exception of 1 student came out strongly against any increase at all. Felt it was unconscionable to increase the fees with the financial struggles of the pandemic. A strong argument has been made that there should be no fee increase at all.

How will the committee approach reductions? We don't know if they will allocate or call for revised budgets.

Quin Wilder says increasing fees isn't something he wants to advocate for. The position we are in with the students coming in and how we want to approach going into the following year, thinks keeping fees low will allow people to go, and add up over time.

The students would pay \$7.68 per quarter meaning the total would cost \$231.66 per quarter.

Evan Shuster's reaction is hesitant to vote for or against a fee increase. We shouldn't make this only about dollars and cents. It has already stripped us of our wealth of opportunities, himself included due to the pandemic. DRAC has greatly enriched his life and engagement in intellectual conversations and learning life skills seems worth it to him. If we strip away the ability of student publications to put out great work, or theatre and dance can't make their tickets free, but still want to put out hit after hit. Athletes that brought them to college and competition. How it changes the lives of students versus online education. The less students engage in the college experience and miss these gems around campus, like racing, and theatre. We will move more and more on line and that scares him, as his little sister won't have the same college experience as he had. The benefits of \$7 a quarter for anyone to connect with any of the S&A groups is much more than \$7 per quarter.

Jaya agrees with Evan and has a hard time to have an opinion because she is going to graduate. At the same time there are a lot of people not involved in DRAC programs, versus we who are heavily involved

and care a bunch, and she would pay to stay on student publications because it is important to her. There are also students who don't pick up the Klipsun or the Western front and that makes her sad. It is hard to increase fees for all students because some of these things don't matter to other students. She supports the theatre program, but she also has not seen a single show and is about to graduate, which (not seeing a show) she regrets. Not every student goes to a show, reads a paper or knows we have a racing program. It's hard to increase fees for everyone even though it is for the greater good.

Travis's perspective: does not think that one year to another, any program faces the prospect of the lights going out. It's not a situation of funding being all there or not there. For this year, we will be ok regardless of what the committee votes for. We should be concerned if the committee falls into a pattern of either maximum increases *or* refusal to do any increases. That sort of trend would be troubling and suggest student perspectives are not being seriously considered.

Quin asked Rebecca, what are you seeing the difference of how these cuts and drops affect our situations with the buffer? Is there an average number you realize what we can cut across the constituents?

Rebecca: if your normal expenses exceed your revenues, you have a little extra there to cover your normal expenses. If there is a way to reduce your budget so you don't have to rely on the carryforward that works better for DRAC in the long run. If everyone uses the carryforward, we won't have the \$100,000 in our reserve, and that is the ideal spot for our reserves because we can handle emergencies like expensive equipment breaking down.

All total in reserves is \$275,000 but of that we have earmarked and planned earmarks around \$90,000. That is money that DRAC has agreed to set aside for specific purchases that different programs brought forth and we approved. That is untouchable since it already has a purpose designated for.

We have around \$200,000 in the equipment reserves and keep support reserves at \$25,000 a year for unexpected needs and opportunities and the rest is in the equipment reserve. Rebecca is taking \$110,000 out of the equipment reserve to help the constituents meet their probable shortfall.

Vanessa Blackburn: First reaction is not to burden the returning students coming next year. Her students want to get back to the classroom but there is still a lot of classes that are still going to be online. It feels unfair, especially if this is a one year anomaly. Many students are not sure if they should defer returning till a following year. She would choose rather to spend down reserves, keep programs and not increase fees. She would vote not to increase fees.

Travis asked: How do we want to spread out the pain of reducing the revenue? Would we want to spread it equally? It would affect some programs unequally, like IAA. Concerned about racing, their smaller budget will be affected disproportionately.

Is S&A going to ask us to reduce our budget ask? We will have a short turnaround in which to do that.

Jack said the Board of Trustees is meeting this afternoon to come to a resolution to require all students, faculty and staff to be vaccinated. This could mean moving back to a fully face-to-face curriculum. How that will affect enrollment is uncertain but there could be a bounce in enrollment if that decision is taken.

Evan welcomes guidance to go to S&A, and share everyone's wishes the best he can. It does feel like we can use the reserves, because this does feel like the rainy day fund and it is raining outside.

Darren agrees with Rebecca and is not interested in increasing fees right now. Erika Steele would not want to see a student fee increase and could adjust their activities in the coming year, and find a way to work within the budget they are given. Forensics agrees and can adapt. Is this the storm or the first stages of the new normal, then all of our programs have to look at their core programs, how they are structured and reaching students. That is more goal, vision, mission. Are we really in the storm or are we just in chapter one? It is really hard to know.

Vanessa Blackburn, If this is a ten or 15 year progress, as a University system we have much bigger problems to solve if this is the trend we are going into. She suspects it is not that and we will have a bunch of pent up demand in a year or two from students who have been delaying returning to college. Looking at this as a year to year perspective.

Please reach out to your fellow students and see where their head is at and where their peers are at? A strong case has been made that keeping the fee at no change this upcoming year and wait till we have a clear horizon.

Adjourned at 9:50