

URI Strategic Budget and Planning Council

The Strategic Budget and Planning Council (SBPC) shall provide a transparent and inclusive process for the planning, budgeting, and assessment of university strategic directions, investments, and facilities. The Council shall be advisory to the President. It will ensure that the University's Strategic Plan and Mission guide resource allocation and investments. Members of the Council shall bring expertise representing various aspects of the university community, but shall make decisions based on the best interests of the university as a whole.

The Council's guiding principles shall be that: a) an open, understandable, transparent system is important to the process of defining strategic priorities and allocating the resources of the University; b) a strong linkage must exist between the budget and the strategic priorities of URI; c) budget recommendations shall be guided by the university's mission and strategic plan and shall connect financial investments, strategic priorities, and expected outcomes; d) shared governance entails shared responsibility for the health and vitality of the institution; e) members operate from a university-wide perspective and must have the capacity and inclination to both inform analyses and understand the implications of the Council's recommendations; and f) annual evaluation of plans and budgeting allocations is an important component of the planning and budgeting process.

In regard to strategic planning, the Strategic Budget and Planning Council shall oversee the development of university-wide strategic priorities and goals through a collaborative planning process. In addition, the Council shall supervise a process to devise and report key performance indicators to evaluate progress toward and accomplishment of identified goals for the University.

In regard to budgeting, the Strategic Budget and Planning Council shall a) review budget proposals by divisions of the University and make budgetary recommendations for developing the University's yearly budgets that address strategic priorities, obligations, and other initiatives; b) develop and implement a budget planning cycle for decision-making that corresponds with State budget cycles; c) ensure that within each Division and Athletics there are guidelines and processes for planning and budgeting that facilitate collaboration and transparency and ensure effective use of resources; d) ensure that internal priorities identified through divisional planning are aligned with the overall University Strategic Plan and the Academic Plan and that potential resource allocations and reallocations within the divisions are recommended using a set of budget guidelines, principles, and procedures; these processes shall lead to a set of priorities from each division; e) conduct evidence-based analysis of the priorities and allocations emerging from the divisions, vetting priorities within divisions through the lens of institutional needs and directions and establishing indicators to assess outcomes; and f) recommend to the President a proposed University budget including potential institutional investments, funding recommendations (allocations and re-allocations), and rationale for proposed actions.

The Council shall conduct an annual retrospective assessment of previous investments in the context of the Strategic Plan and Academic Plan and make related recommendations for modification for future budgeting and planning. In addition, the Council shall make recommendations as appropriate for modifications of the Strategic Plan and Academic Plan that reflect emerging priorities and opportunities.

The membership of the Strategic Budget and Planning Council shall have balanced representation from the University community, while maintaining a functional size. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs shall serve as Chair and the Vice President for Administration as Vice Chair. Other members shall include two academic Deans elected by the Council of Deans, at least four faculty members appointed jointly by the Senate and the President to two year staggered terms, and additional members chosen and appointed by the President from, but not limited to, representatives of the Student Senate and Graduate Student Association, athletics, university staff, external friends of the university, or other administrators. The Directors of Planning Services and the Office of Budget and Financial Planning shall provide staff support services to the Council. Other university offices, including but not limited to Institutional Research and Enrollment Services, may provide services and advice as requested by the Council.

Notes for Consideration

1. While it is clear that the allocation of general funds will be examined through the proposed process, it is also possible that aspects of the utilization of other funds, such as overhead, fee-based, and some auxiliary funds, could be considered as well.
2. The State's ever changing budget situation presents a challenge to effective planning. The Council will need to address the vagaries and constant changes within the State's budget cycle and will need to be responsive to immediate budget requests.

To address this challenge, the Council should work to develop a multi-year budget planning horizon that continuously looks ahead. Also, a set of clearly articulated budget principles that guides the budget process and decisions will help focus the Council's work and create predictable expectations.

3. Given the financial climate, it is likely that there will be relatively little new money for investment in the short-term. As such, reallocation may be more likely than new allocations as a mechanism to support emerging priorities.

Fundamental to the work of the Council will be consistency of process between Divisional budgeting and planning and university-wide planning and budgeting, including open lines of communication within and between Divisions. It will be helpful to have established a set of financial efficiency guidelines that enhances the quality and efficiency of functions.