

Q&A Lunch with Executive Associate Dean Weber
October 24, 2018

1. Can you discuss the newly formed Diversity Council?

A little background: With Dr. Tonya Peeples leaving over the summer, we needed to consider the position as well as our efforts and goals in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Jan Waterhouse was charged with researching what other UI colleges, and other Big 10 colleges of engineering were doing to provide DEI leadership. We recognize that DEI is part of all of our jobs rather than just the job of one person, so we decided that a Council would be a really good option. We didn't want it to be left in the hands of just one person, we wanted it to be representative of our larger commitment in the college to shift the culture in our College. The first sessions of the Council will start look at what we can do to shift this culture. They will use the campus climate survey results, which will be released in the next few weeks (update: Jan gave an update that the campus-wide survey results will be released in the spring.) to help drive initiatives that the council will do. (Since the lunch forum, UI administration has indicated that the campus survey results will be released in the spring 2019.) We want all facets of the College to be represented in this Council.

2. Can we discuss updates to the budget and the College outlook?

When this budget was first planned, we expected a \$1 million budget shortfall due to the projections. With work over the summer and efforts of staff and leadership, the CEA was rerun with new fall enrollment numbers. As a college, our budget is just about even, if not a little short. The CEA will be run again in the spring with spring enrollment data, we have been cautioned that we might have to be giving back a little money given what enrollment changes happen in the spring.

One thing to note, this budget is a much more fluid budget than we've been used to having, which is an adjustment. However, we have set our target for salary raises in January as being around 1.5%. Departments should know in December of the numbers for a January 1 increase. We will be going to a January 1 salary increase from here into the future for most staff. This means that going forward our regular staff performance review cycle will be in October.

There could be a risk of confusion across campus about pay raises and review processes, but April assured us that we are in the majority who have adopted this new review and raise schedule. On this note, promotions for faculty will remain July 1.

Jan can take questions on benefits enrollment one on one with staff members who are interested, but also work with department leaders to determine answers to those specific questions.

3. What is your plan to develop a sustainable budget model for the college of engineering? (e.g. explain success measurements and implementation)?

The transition to the CEA budget model has been difficult for some Colleges, mostly because the time that the snapshot was taken was in a time when our enrollment was our highest and this is the enrollment that the budget is based on. Dean Scranton and Executive Associate Dean Weber are working with UI leadership to note that this baseline should change so we aren't held to the snapshot of our highest enrollment ever. If we can find a way in the CEA that's fair to all colleges for this, that would be the best outcome. A benefit of this model is that it is very transparent.

4. Can we do other things in our college that isn't dependent on state appropriations for funding?

Yes. We are looking at several ways to improve our budget situation. An element is how student financial aid has been allocated. This is a performance-based funding model which incentivizes resident students, which then became codified in our CEA. So, this can mean students enter with heavily discounted tuition, which might have an effect on our budgets. We have to take all of these into consideration.

5. Do you see any changes to enrollment or retention of our students? Attracting new students and keeping those who are here?

We don't want to drive our decisions based on budget, but we want to start developing strategies that work. We can utilize strategies with resident vs. nonresident recruiting, for example, and we can look at student financial aids as a strategy for leveraging funds. Since this model is new, we're working on figuring out what an ideal undergrad enrollment is for our College.

We do want to focus on retention because we don't want to lose too many students, but we don't want to jeopardize the integrity of our programs or diminish their standards. We will continue to participate in the ASCE retention survey and have conversations around culture and retention based on these results.

6. Can you discuss the status of the Strategic Plan?

We started the progress in committees talking about the College's role in engagement, advancement, research, and student success. The College did a SWOT assessment that was presented in the spring advisory board meeting. We took the feedback from advisory board and drafted early drafts. Over the summer, the Dean's office worked on it - including a mission statement - which went back out to the chairs in fall and then the final plan was presented to the Advisory Board on Friday, 10/19. Currently, we have a version of the draft with the suggestions, including measurements for success.

Executive Associate Dean Weber will present the strategic plan to the Faculty Council on Nov. 6 and will come back to the staff council by end of semester with the version. The College will then publish a version online for all to see after Jason Kosovski's marketing/communications team makes an engaging version of the strategic plan that's better than just a pdf on a website.

Executive Associate Dean Weber introduced the structures of the plan that will be released in a few weeks.