

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN IDEAL MEMBER OF UBAC

by Jeff Hamrick

- UBAC members are, first and foremost, committed to the four purposes of UBAC, which are:
 - **Education.** UBAC members will be expected to educate themselves about the University's operating and capital budgets, as well as the University's business model.
 - **Transparency.** UBAC members will have the opportunity to better understand how resources are allocated at the University, as well as how resources are allocated in ways that comport with the University's mission, vision, and values.
 - **Advice.** The higher education industry is currently beset by serious structural challenges that will likely substantially change the competitive landscape for colleges and universities over the next decade. In this tumultuous environment, the President and his Cabinet must make tough decisions about tuition and fee increases, enrollment targets, and resource reallocation. In order to do so, they must discern between multiple goods in alignment with the University's core values. UBAC members will provide related advice to the President and his Cabinet.
 - **Communication.** Because approximately a third of UBAC membership consists of vice presidents and vice provosts who play key roles in the University's operations, UBAC will be a natural venue for communication between administration and various stakeholders. UBAC members will be expected to make regular budget-related reports (or participate in town halls) to educate members of the community about the University's operating and capital budgets and the work of UBAC.

- UBAC members are expected to participate in meetings at least monthly, if not more frequently. Some of these meetings will be centered around providing advice to the President's Cabinet. Other meetings will be centered around educating UBAC membership.

- UBAC is, for all intents and purposes, new to the University (though it has historical antecedents). Some aspects of UBAC's inner workings will have to be determined on the fly, or ultimately determined by properly-constituted subcommittees (e.g., there are no bylaws yet and so a bylaws subcommittee may have to be formed).

- Most UBAC meetings will have "homework assignments" (e.g., materials to read and to review) prior to each meeting. These homework assignments cannot be neglected if discussions are to be informed and productive.

- UBAC members are charged with thinking about the common good of the University in the context of its mission, vision, and values. UBAC members must be willing to consider the needs and resources of the constituents with which they identify within this context.

- An ideal UBAC member:
 - Is committed to the University’s mission, vision, and values;
 - Is inquisitive;
 - Is conscientious;
 - Is hard-working;
 - Listens actively;
 - Does not speak simply to be heard;
 - Is willing to engage with technical materials (e.g., charts, graphs, spreadsheets, Tableau dashboards, etc.);
 - Asks thoughtful questions;
 - Asks hard questions;
 - Is willing to ask for help;
 - Is practical;
 - Is collegial;
 - Has a sense of humor;
 - Understands that some questions are easy to answer, and others not;
 - Is willing to challenge authority;
 - Is willing to compromise for the good of the whole project;
 - Actively learns about the higher education industry through consumption of publications like *Inside Higher Ed* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*;
 - Trusts that most University stakeholders are laboring in the spirit of *cura apostolica*, i.e., with attention and concern to the longer-term success of our Jesuit Catholic educational enterprise;
 - Understands that budgets are expressions of values and planning priorities, and that these values and planning priorities include both the atmospheric (e.g., “produce persons for others”) and the concrete (e.g., “pay our utility bills” and “make payroll”).
 - Understands that any resource allocation process must be well-defined and equitable, even if it does not always result in outcomes that please some constituency;
 - Understands that wholesale revision of the University’s implied or explicit budgetary policies is unlikely to happen quickly, and that incrementalism is sometimes necessary;
 - Understands that the University must sometimes respond nimbly in order to mitigate risks and take advantage of opportunities;
 - Understands that other key groups (e.g., the deans, the vice provosts, the Council of Deans, the President’s Cabinet, the CFO, the Provost, the President, etc.) properly play important roles in resource allocation decisions at a well-functioning university;
 - Understands that the University faces financial and human resource constraints that are exceeded by the hopes and dreams of its constituents;
 - Understands that alignment of revenues and expenses is necessary for the University to function effectively and remain financially sustainable;
 - Understands that any budget relies on models which, in turn, rely on assumptions and historical data – both of which are sometimes imperfect;

- Recognizes that the University is a vibrant and complex ecology with multiple overlapping functions – academics, co-curricular activities, athletics, dining services, housing and facilities management, marketing, enrollment management, fundraising, etc. – which must all work together effectively for the University to achieve its greatest potential;
- Understands that in our highly-constrained environment, resource allocation decisions must ultimately be owned by the President;
- Understands that the University must have a balanced budget that must be completed on time and submitted to its Board of Trustees for approval; and
- Understands that if budgeted expenses exceed budgeted revenues, budget reallocations must be made to construct a balanced operating budget.