

University Budget Advisory Council (UBAC)

Date: May 22, 2025

Members Present:

Elisabeth Merkel, Michael Harrington, Jeffrey Paris, Shannon Burchard, Sarah Blackburn, Patrick Donahue, David Ferguson, Morgan Maich, Aaron Hahn Tapper, Chibuike Nathan Nkemere, Sonia Caamano, Ellen Ryder, Kurt Keilhacker, Will Vitagliano, Brian Young

Members Absent & Excused:

Tim Redmond, Edgar Ryan Silva, Pearci Bastiany

Opening and Introductions

Elisabeth Merkel welcomed members and confirmed attendance. The minutes from February 20, 2025 were approved with one abstention.

The meeting began with introductions and a discussion about the bar exam studying environment in the law school. Morgan Mach, the new director of budget planning and operations for the School of Nursing and Health Professions, was welcomed to the group. The meeting then moved to approve the February meeting minutes. Michael introduced Jamie Burke and Francesca MacCormack from the development team to discuss the current university campaign and fundraising efforts. The presentation was scheduled to last 20 minutes, with questions to be held until the end.

Presentation from Development and Campaign Discussion

Jayne presented an overview of the university's current campaign, highlighting its inclusive approach and alignment with university priorities. She discussed the campaign's goals, including raising \$500 million through various initiatives such as scholarships, facility improvements, and program development. Jayne also emphasized the importance of alumni engagement and the new metrics developed to track and measure it. The campaign aims to engage 50,000 unique alumni and secure 80 gifts of \$1 million or more, with a focus on transforming the university's hilltop campus and supporting academic programs.

The presentation included a focus on the campaign pipeline, which began after the last campaign in 2022, with a goal of raising \$500 million. Jayne presented the progress, noting that \$140 million has been raised, including 32 gifts of \$1 million or more, but gifts of \$5 million to \$10 million are stalled due to the presidential transition. Francesca discussed pledge fulfillment, highlighting that 91% of pledges are on track, with a small percentage

written off annually. The campaign is in the leadership phase, with plans for a public phase in 2028, and the campaign name is yet to be determined.

Navigating Restricted Donations in Politics

The team discussed their approach to handling restricted donations in light of current political climate challenges. Jayme and Francesca explained that they work closely with the legal team to vet gifts through a gift agreement process, with additional scrutiny for new funds and careful consideration of existing funds' language and administration. They emphasized that while they haven't had to turn away any gifts recently, they carefully navigate donor relationships and include clauses allowing for fund reallocation if programs become untenable, ensuring alignment with university policies while maintaining donor trust.

Office of Planning & Budget Updates and Reports

Q3 Operating Forecast Review

Michael presented the Q3 operating forecast, highlighting a revenue shortfall of \$20.9 million partially offset by \$4.4 million in compensation savings and \$7.7 million in other expense savings, resulting in projected net deficit of \$8.8 million. He explained various revenue streams, including tuition net exceptions, scholarships, and gifts, as well as expense categories like compensation, benefits, and facilities.

Preliminary FY26 Undergraduate Enrollment and Net Tuition Estimates

Joseph presented preliminary FY26 undergraduate enrollment and net tuition estimates, noting that new student populations are tracking slightly below targets, with a projected surplus of \$1.1 million for first-time, first-year students. He highlighted concerns about continuing undergraduate student enrollment, which is 2.7% below target, equivalent to a \$3 million net tuition shortfall, and expressed worry about retention issues affecting multiple cohorts, particularly international students. The summer session is also underperforming, with a \$560,000 shortfall in student credit hours, though graduate programs are expected to exceed budget.

University Financial Strategies

Michael presented updates on current fiscal year one-time budget savings which are being converted to following fiscal year base budget savings. Ellen discussed the Cabinet's work on addressing financial challenges, emphasizing recruitment and enrollment as priorities. She mentioned ongoing market research and plans to present findings to the Board in January. The group also addressed questions about budget cuts, borrowing capacity, and

contingency plans. The conversation ended with a brief discussion on the balance between increasing enrollment and right-sizing the university's operations.

Membership Updates

Academic Year Planning and Elections

The meeting focused on updates and planning for the upcoming academic year. Michael discussed membership changes, including the addition of Shirley McGuire as a faculty representative and the likely continuation of Shannon as the Law School representative. The group approved a motion to allow Shirley McGuire's faculty term to be reset so as to serve as a representative for three years thereby staggering the three USFFA representatives so that one is replaced each year. Elisabeth announced her intention to run for re-election as a staff representative and as the staff tri-chair role, emphasizing the importance of gender diversity. The meeting ended with a discussion about the upcoming election for the open staff position and the preliminary calendar for the next academic year.