University Budget Advisory Council (UBAC)
Meeting Minutes

Date: October 27, 2026
Time: 11:45AM - 1:15PM
Location: Zoom

Meeting Co-chairs: Michael Harrington, Shirley McGuire, William Vitagliano

Members Attending:
Jessica Alva, Elisabeth Merkel Baghai, Sarah Blackburn, Brandon Brown, Shannon Burchard, Sonia Caamano, Tatiana Fedyk, Nahid Gardezi, Eric Groves, Brent Gustafson, Michael Harrington, Steven Lopez, Morgan Maich, Shirley McGuire, Jeff Paris, Isabela Sandoval-Duran, William Vitagliano

Members Absent & Excused: Salvador Aceves, Giselle Caratagena, Eileen Fung, Eric Groves, Nahid Gardezi, Bethia Hormoz

Attended: Joseph Henson, Katherine Edwards

I. Opening

The meeting started with announcing new graduate student representative Isabella Sandoval-Duran, and noting that Katherine Edwards would be presenting about the feedback from the summer working groups on cost savings initiatives.

Michael and Shirley discussed the WSCUC site visit that is scheduled for fall 2028. Shirley detailed the self-study process, which includes submitting the self-study to WSCUC next fall, followed by a review team's assessment of compliance with four main standards including shared governance, fiscal sustainability, curriculum, and degree integrity. The group discussed how WSCUC will generate lines of inquiry and conduct an off-site review, with the potential for commendations and recommendations.

II. University Task Force on Unit and Institutional Change

Katherine Edwards, Associate Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives, was introduced. She presented the findings of a university task force charged with evaluating faculty and staff ideas for cost containment and quality preservation within a three-year budget strategy. The group of 30+ faculty and staff members focused on four main areas: retirement strategy, academic restructuring, athletics, and facilities and space utilization. Key recommendations included developing a holistic retirement approach, supporting

program review processes with data and modeling support, having transparent discussions about D1 athletics status, and maximizing facility use including the 101 Howard and Masonic properties. The group also explored broader visioning opportunities, including leveraging the AJCU Alliance and positioning USF as the city's university, though these discussions were limited to the final two weeks of the process.

Katherine discussed the several task force recommendations, including restructuring the academic calendar to maximize summer opportunities and implement problem-based learning, allowing students to design interdisciplinary degrees addressing problems they are passionate about. The group also suggested developing an AJCU Alliance, exploring opportunities for joint degree programs, course exchanges, and residential immersion programs across member institutions. The discussion concluded with plans to move forward with pilot programs and further collaboration, while acknowledging questions about resource requirements and implementation strategies.

Katherine then presented on a working group's recommendations regarding athletics funding, noting that the President found the information helpful for strategy and decision-making. The task force discussed challenges around funding college athletics, particularly men's basketball, and considered whether to limit funding or examine athletics costs more broadly across the institution. Tatiana requested more specific information and numbers for the recommendations, particularly scenarios and potential actions, which Katherine agreed to discuss with the team and Provost regarding what to share at an upcoming town hall.

II. Budget Accountability

UBAC members asked for information on budget savings that were expected with each recommendation. Katherine agreed to check on the level of detail that will be provided during the town hall and promised to follow up with more information. Shirley asked that a member of administration return to UBAC in a year to report on savings achieved in the four identified areas to close the loop and determine the impact of implemented strategies. Katherine agreed that a member will report to UBAC in a year on the savings achieved. Shannon highlighted the need for a more structured accountability process to track the effectiveness of budget changes and prevent recurring issues, which Katherine acknowledged as an ongoing discussion with leadership about evaluating investments and strategies more effectively. UBAC agreed to discuss creating a budget accountability process in future meetings.

III. Graduate Representative

Isa, a first-year master's student in migration studies at USF, was welcomed as the new graduate student representative joining the University Budget Advisory Council (UBAC).

IV. Budget Assist Process

Michael explained the Budget Assist process, emphasizing that requests were welcome on existing contract increases, non-discretionary increases, strategic enrollment strategy initiatives, and discretionary initiatives with all to be evaluated in respect to health and safety, campus and cyber security, enrollment and revenue generation, and essential student needs. The submission deadline for budget requests is November 6, after which UBAC will have the opportunity to review all requests and with a focus on discretionary initiatives in order to provide feedback to university leadership.

Michael provided a walkthrough of the Budget Assist request form, explaining that while the front-end questions remain unchanged, the back-end system has been updated to allow linking multiple fiscal years for the same initiative. The form requires information about strategic goals, budget reallocations, and alignment with the university's mission, with all requests ultimately going through President's Office approval before being incorporated into the three-year financial plan. The group again discussed the need for better tracking of funded initiatives' outcomes and impact, with Michael suggesting the possibility of developing a follow-up form for previous year recipients, though noting this would require relying on funded groups to provide the information rather than having it in an existing central data system.

V. Action Items and Follow-Up

Katherine:

- Check with the Provost regarding the level of detail and specific scenarios/numbers that can be shared about the four significant cost-containment areas at the upcoming town hall.
- Share with the President and Provost the agreement that a member of the administration will report back to UBAC in one year on the actual savings achieved in the four identified cost-containment categories.

Michael:

- Create a bookmark PDF file of all Budget Assist requests and make it available to UBAC after the Office of Planning and Budget seeks necessary clarifications.

- Create and share an active shared Word file for a Q&A document where UBAC members can drop questions regarding the Budget Assist initiatives.
- Contact requesting groups or individuals to provide written responses to questions entered in the Q&A document.
- Conduct a survey after the November meeting to collect individual member recommendations on whether each discretionary request should be funded or advanced.
- Provide a summary of the survey results to the President, Provost, and CFO as well as UBAC.
- Consider developing a follow-up form for groups that received funds in the previous cycle to report on results and impact.

Shirley:

- Discuss with fellow tri-chair the possibility of creating a formal process or reporting tool to track the outcomes and accountability of funded Budget Assist initiatives.