Guiding Principles for Budget Reductions in Academic Affairs

As you know, Academic Affairs must quickly develop plans for a budget that represents a significant reduction over our FY25 allocations. The amount we must plan to reduce is high and will require considerable changes to our operating approach and practices, even in academic areas. These reductions should be thought of as *permanent cuts*, as current projections indicate that state-level deficits will continue and likely even get worse over the coming years. Through at least 2030, the outlook is that we will need a substantially reduced budget, so we should shy away from one-time or short-term solutions as we prepare for FY26 and beyond.

The work you are being asked to do now is to substantially **reduce spending in the 02 and 03 budget lines for FY26**. The Deans Council has met to determine some consistent guiding principles that will be used for Academic Affairs as you do this work. As a unit leader, Department Chair/School Director, Associate Dean, or Dean/AVP, you will be accountable for a full review of your budgets using these principles, as well as a plan to maximize the savings you can create using them. You should not take the "we will do a little now and see if it is enough" approach. Instead, **you should develop your most aggressive budget reduction plan using these guidelines**. Together, we will address the budget shortfall by respecting each unit's unique needs, and avoid reductions in our PIN budgets.

Note that we want to pair revenue generation and strategic investments for growth with these cuts, so we are looking for ideas you may have that would offset the kinds of cuts we are likely to make, especially those that will drive enrollments. Please pass along any such ideas you have so they can be fully considered alongside our plan to cut our budgets. THIS SITE has been set up to gather your ideas.

Definition of Terms

To utilize the principles outlined below, you will need to understand how particular terms should be interpreted:
1. **Essential =** It is necessary to conduct a required job function. Without it the job cannot be completed at all.
2. **High priority** or **Important** = It has high strategic value and/or leads to preferred consequences/outcomes.
3. **Non-essential** or **Optional =** It is something that we could discontinue or do without, even if it is of some value or was deemed to have value in the past. Cutting these expenses might not be popular, but our most important/essential work could continue without it.

Principles
1. **Travel**
    A.   Essential and grant-funded travel may continue and should be budgeted.
    B.   Travel for study abroad is allowed but should be conducted with minimum expense and coordinated through the Center for International Education.
    C.   Non-essential/optional travel should be cut from the budget.
    D.   Other travel categorized as high priority/important may be considered on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the Dean/AVP. Every effort should be made to minimize costs.
    -   It should not be assumed that the travel will be fully funded, nor that typical allocations will be provided.
    -   Recruitment-related travel should be prioritized when considering requests.
    -   Instructional travel necessary to achieve required student learning outcomes may be approved, but plans should minimize costs of such travel. Travel associated with high impact practices also may be prioritized.
    -   For faculty, scholarly travel for those on the tenure track, as well as required accreditation-related travel, should be prioritized when considering requests. Virtual conferences or meetings should be encouraged whenever they are available as alternatives to travel. Funding should be prioritized for those presenting over those who are not.
    -   Deans/AVPs are encouraged be judicious and thrifty with their approvals of high-priority requests, and to use foundation or F&A funding to facilitate travel where possible.

1. **Events and Activities**
   A.   All events and activities should be evaluated to determine impact or value added.
   B.   Essential and high-priority/important events and activities may continue and should be budgeted. Costs should be minimized, shared, or covered through sponsorships or other external sources when possible.
   C.   Events related to recruitment, student success/retention, fundraising or other revenue generation, or high-impact practices should be prioritized.
   D.   Essential instructional events and activities may continue but with minimal cost.
   E.   Food/beverages, giveaways/gifts, table linens, delivery charges, etc. should be minimized or cut from event budgets where possible. You are encouraged to combine events to reduce costs, for example at the school or college level, and/or share setup charges, as appropriate.
   F.   Non-essential/optional events and activities should be planned as no-cost, sponsored or funded through external sources, or they should be cut from the budget.

2. **Initiatives, Practices, and Processes**
   A.   All initiatives, practices, and processes should be evaluated to determine impact or value added. Essential and high-priority/important initiatives, practices, and processes may continue and should be reflected in the budget.
   B.   For initiatives, practices, and processes that will continue, each should be evaluated to determine how to maximize cost savings. If there is a less expensive way to conduct business and still accomplish the same goals, it should be adopted in the budget.
   C.   Non-essential initiatives, practices, and processes should be stopped and not included in the budget.
   D.   Unless otherwise covered via external funding sources, non-essential/optional contracts and consulting partnerships should be evaluated for immediate cancellation, if possible, or non-renewal as soon as they expire. In such cases, plans should be made to backfill services through low- or no-cost means.
   E.   Specific guidance is provided for the following:
      - Departments/units may not pay for personal memberships. Unit-level memberships, if essential or high-priority/important, may be budgeted. Grant-funded memberships are allowable.
      - Centers and Institutes may not charge other SU units for services (i.e., services will be provided to SU units at no cost).
      - Although only a temporary solution, F&A or grant funding may be used to fund high-priority/important initiatives, practices, or processes.
3. **Equipment and materials**
   A.   Essential equipment or materials should be budgeted for purchase/replacement/repair.
   B.   High-priority/important equipment or materials purchases/replacements/repairs should be budgeted with minimized costs or using a staggered multi-year schedule.
   C.   Duplication of equipment or materials is strongly discouraged; however, sharing of equipment or materials within or across units is encouraged.
   D.   Non-essential equipment or materials should be cut from the budget.
   E.   Purchase/replacement/repair of equipment or materials via grant or other external funding is allowable.

4. **Structural Changes**
   A.   Units are encouraged to consider consolidations (e.g., mergers, etc.) that can reduce operational, administrative, or instructional costs.
   B.   Units are encouraged to consolidate to share administrative or other types of support, especially to backfill for support vacancies.

C. Units are encouraged to consolidate to facilitate new revenue generation opportunities. Academic units (departments, programs, etc.), in particular, are encouraged to consider synergistic consolidations that:
- Facilitate shared instruction, especially to backfill for vacancies.
- Facilitate the development of new programs for increased enrollment at SU.
- Allow for reconfiguration of existing programs to enhance enrollment.
- Facilitate a refocusing of research expertise to enhance grant funding opportunities.

5. **Release time**
   A. Grant-funded downloads are allowable, but should be discussed with supervisors well in advance so a plan can be developed to address the release.
   - Where possible, the backfill plan should be zero-cost. Low-cost plans should be prioritized in cases where zero-cost is not possible.
   B. Administrative downloads and other course releases
   - Administrative downloads for Department Chairs/School Directors, Graduate Program Directors, Associate Deans, and Honors Program Directors in each school or college are approved and should be budgeted.
   - For all other cases, we will begin with the assumption that no instructional downloads are automatically approved. On a case-by-case basis, historical arrangements for downloads should be evaluated to determine impact or value added. In cases that are determined to be essential or high-priority/important, individuals may request a download with justification to their Dean/AVP and the Provost. Deans/AVPs and the Provost are encouraged to be judicious and thrifty with their approvals of such download requests. Very few downloads are expected to be approved.
     o Administrative downloads (or other compensations) for Associate Chairs will not be approved, but Associate Chair duties may count as service contributions.
     o Essential or high-priority/important tasks previously covered by downloads may be accomplished through committee work or service contributions, or even as a student internship opportunity, where possible.
     o Downloads required by accrediting agencies should be prioritized.
     o Faculty shall not be allowed to have both a course download and overload pay in the same term.
   C. Sabbatical Leave
   - Fall 2025 sabbatical (already awarded) will be honored and should be budgeted as initially approved.
   - Spring 2026 sabbatical applications will be postponed until such time that we have the budget flexibility to consider them.
   - Fall 2026 and beyond – calls for applications will be paused until such time that we have the budget flexibility to consider new sabbatical applications.
   - Individuals who meet eligibility criteria and obtain external funding for sabbatical leave may be approved in cases in which it does not undermine the instructional needs of the department. Arrangements should be discussed with upline supervisors in advance of any application for external funding.
     o Where possible, the backfill plan should be zero-cost. Low-cost plans should be prioritized in cases where zero-cost is not possible.

6. **Supplemental payments/stipends**
   A. Project payments
   - We begin with the assumption that no supplemental payments/stipends are approved. On a case-by-case basis, individuals or departments/schools may apply for consideration of supplemental payments/stipends to the Dean/AVP and the Provost. Deans/AVPs and the Provost are encouraged

to be judicious and thrifty with their approvals of such requests. Very few supplemental payments/stipends for projects are expected to be approved.

- o Supplemental payments or stipends should be offered only in extraordinary circumstances, such as to complete an essential or high-priority/important task that cannot be done any other way. All efforts should be made to find alternatives to paying stipends for such work (e.g., faculty could complete the work as a service contribution, staff could be assigned the project or task, students could complete the project or task as an internship activity or course assignment, etc.)
- o Supplemental payments/stipends should not be paid for low-impact or non-essential activities.
- o Supplemental payments/stipends should not be paid for tasks already part of an individual's job description or expected duties.

B. Overload pay

- We begin with the assumption that no overload pay is approved. On a case-by-case basis, requests for overload pay for faculty may be considered by Deans and the Provost for essential or high-priority course needs. Deans and the Provost are encouraged to be judicious and thrifty with their approvals of such requests. Very few overloads are expected to be approved, so every effort to optimize the course schedule such that overload pay is not necessary (see below) should be made.
    - o Overload pay should be paid only once it can be verified that a faculty will exceed the expected annual teaching load.
    - o No overload pay is allowed for faculty receiving course download(s) in the same term.
    - o No overload pay is allowed for non-essential courses.
    - o Overload pay may only be approved if all of the full-time permanent and contractual faculty in the unit are fully deployed.
    - o Standard overload pay rates should be used unless otherwise approved by the Provost.
    - o Additional guidance related to overload pay may be provided as necessary.

C. Overtime pay

- Overtime for staff should be approved only in extreme and rare situations. Every effort should be made to reduce non-essential tasks from staff workloads such that the remaining work can be accomplished during regular work hours. Alternatively, or perhaps in addition, processes should be refined to create efficiencies within the staff workload that will eliminate the need for overtime work. Our goal is no overtime pay in any unit.

7. **Course Schedule Optimization**

A. Reduced sections

- Departments/Schools should reduce the number of sections offered wherever possible without impeding student progression. Necessary changes should be made to the schedule to reflect this approach.
- Strategies that should be implemented include:
    - o Combine sections of multi-section courses so students are funneled to a single (larger) section or a few (larger) sections. To do so, consider moving some remaining sections to a late afternoon or evening timeslot when larger classrooms are available or moving a section online so a larger classroom is not necessary. Each school has a different strategic approach for delivery of academic programs, so consultation about potential changes should occur with the Dean.
    - o Consultation with Deans about potential changes is encouraged.

- o   Offer a limited number of elective courses. In such cases electives can be rotated on a schedule to allow variety and choice; however, each term only a small number of electives should be offered. Students are funneled to the electives that are on the schedule.
  - o   Cancel non-essential courses

B. Caps
- Departments/Schools should raise course caps to facilitate increased enrollment in each course. The target for minimum enrollment in courses is 18 students; however, course caps should be set higher where possible (e.g., if the content, student outcomes, and pedagogical practices can support doing so). Exceptions may be made for directed study/internship/clinicals/field placement/private lessons/etc.
- Necessary changes should be made to the schedule to reflect this approach.
- Faculty should expect to adapt pedagogical practices to their course size and utilize faculty development support as needed to facilitate positive student outcomes. CAFE and ID&D will assist as needed with preparations and techniques to promote success.

C. Full deployment of permanent full-time faculty and full-time contractual faculty
- After employing the principles of reduced sections and higher caps to create a schedule of offerings, permanent full-time faculty should be assigned to courses in the following priority order: required (essential) program courses first, then to a limited set of program electives (especially those that double as general education courses), additional general education courses that have been requested, and Honors courses. Next, you should do the same with full-time contractual faculty for any of these types of courses that have not yet been assigned. Full deployment in this way leads to program courses taught almost exclusively by FT faculty. This model typically leaves little to no need for adjunct-based instruction. Necessary changes should be made to the schedule to reflect this approach.
- Permanent and contractual full-time faculty are expected to teach a full workload every term. With rare exceptions, downloads will not be granted.
- If all program, elective, general education, and Honors courses can be fully covered with permanent full-time faculty, full-time contractual faculty contracts should be discontinued and removed from the budget.
- Permanent full-time faculty and full-time contractual faculty should be scheduled to meet the needs of the students, with course assignments and timeslots that align with the advertised rotation of program requirements, student success needs, and strategic growth initiatives in mind.
- Faculty should not be allowed to make external teaching commitments (e.g., teaching for other institutions, etc.) unless they are fully deployed at SU. *Note: All faculty seeking permission for external teaching commitments must apply and have their applications approved by their Chair/School Director, Dean, and the Provost before they commit.*

D. Part-time faculty and adjuncts
- We begin with the assumption that no adjunct and part-time faculty requests are approved. On a case-by-case basis, departments/schools may request approval from their Dean and the Provost to hire an adjunct or part-time faculty to cover courses that are essential or high-priority/important and cannot be covered any other way.   Deans and the Provost are encouraged to be judicious and thrifty with their approvals of such requests. Very few adjunct or part-time faculty requests are expected to be approved, so every effort to optimize the course schedule such that adjuncts/part-time faculty are not necessary (see above) should be made.
- No adjunct or part-time faculty hires will be approved for non-essential courses.

- Adjunct or part-time faculty hires may only be approved if all full-time permanent and contractual faculty in the unit are fully deployed.
- Standard adjunct pay rates should be used unless otherwise approved by the Provost.

Note: In cases of multi-section courses, departments/schools are encouraged to offer at least one online section and/or move sections to timeslots between 3-9pm to promote transfer enrollment or enrollments of students from new markets. We will develop plans for increased student services that will compliment such changes.

8. **Space**
   A. To reduce utility and repair/maintenance costs, units that utilize space in areas off the main campus or around the periphery of campus should prepare to move to the core portion of campus. Departments/units should discuss such plans with Deans/AVPs immediately to plan moves during low peak periods.
   B. Departments/units should consolidate space (i.e., so members utilize continguous space) to make room for others to move to the core of campus.
   C. Departments/units should consolidate space to facilitate synergistic partnerships or mergers that will lead to enhanced enrollment, instructional collaborations, enhanced research funding opportunities, etc.
   D. Departments/units should employ aggressive conservation tactics to reduce energy usage.

9. **Curriculum and Enrollment**
   A. Tracks/Concentrations
      - Tracks/Concentrations that require courses not used by other programs/tracks/concentrations should be evaluated to determine whether the additional courses reach a minimum enrollment threshold (18 students per course). In cases in which the threshold is not met, the track/concentration should be considered for closure or restructure. Proposals should be submitted to change or cut such tracks/concentrations.
      - If the track/concentration cannot be taught without additional hires, and/or course substitutions or staggered course offerings don't provide a remedy to high costs of delivery, the track/concentration should be considered for closure or restructure. Proposals should be submitted to change or cut such tracks/concentrations.
      - Tracks/concentrations in which no new courses are required beyond those used in other programs/tracks/concentrations should continue only if they have healthy enrollments.
   B. Programs
      - All programs should be evaluated for sufficient enrollment to offset costs. Programs with low enrollments should be considered for closure or restructuring, especially in cases where unique courses must be taught to complete the program and enrollments in those courses are well below the threshold of 18 students per course. In many cases, faculty in programs that are closed may be redeployed to teach service courses, general education, or Honors courses.
   C. Winter/Summer enrollment
      - Increasing winter and summer enrollments is a high-priority strategy for revenue generation. Departments/schools are encouraged to implement creative or best-practice strategies to grow enrollment in summer and winter sessions as quickly as possible. Some strategies include:
        o Offer a strategic slate of courses with enrollment in mind. It may help to select the offerings first, then determine who will teach them.
        o Offer second-chance course options for classes with high DFW rates
        o Offer in-demand general education courses
        o Offer high-draw courses or specialty courses that you expect to have high enrollment due to interest
        o Prioritize online offerings, particularly short-term courses

- o Market/advertise summer/winter offerings prior to and during registration, especially with messages about getting ahead, retake/repair GPA, speed up progression, get a "cool" class while you can, complete a course fast, get a prerequisite out of the way before next semester, etc.
  - o Consider ways to offer accelerated year-round programs (e.g., 3-year programs
  D. Graduate program enrollment
  - Increasing graduate program enrollment is a high-priority strategy for revenue generation. Departments/schools are encouraged to implement creative or best-practice strategies to grow enrollment in existing programs immediately. Such strategies include:
    - o Direct admissions
    - o Cohort recruitment
    - o Fully online delivery (asynchronous or an asynchronous/synchronous combination)
    - o Night and/or weekend programs
    - o Programs/courses that utilize 7-week terms
    - o Year-round programs
    - o Accelerated programs (e.g., 4+1 programs, 3+2 programs, etc.)
    - o Rolling admissions and/or frequent entry points throughout the year
  - Departments/schools are encouraged to develop new post-baccalaureate/graduate certificate programs, masters, and doctoral programs that will drive enrollment at low cost. Such programs must align with market demand. Discuss program ideas with your Dean immediately.

10. **Hiring Freeze, Delayed hiring, and Delay on Reclassifications**
   A. We will continue our current hiring freeze and delayed hiring/reclassification practices until further notice. Doing so is one of our most potent strategies for reducing the budget.
   B. On a case-by case basis, exceptions may be considered:
   - If an essential vacancy occurs, every effort should be made to backfill the function of the position via creative, low-cost solutions. If it is determined that the *only* option for backfill of an essential function is to hire, a proposal may be made to the Dean/AVP and Provost through the position request form process. Justification must be provided, and requests should be prepared with every effort to minimize expense. Deans/AVPs and the Provost are encouraged to be judicious and thrifty with their approvals of such requests. Only rare requests are expected to be approved.
     - o Priority consideration will be given to proposals that lead to new revenue generation or proposals that stabilize high-revenue generating areas.
     - o If an essential vacancy occurs, the strategic value of the function it fulfills should be considered before proposing backfill. Priority will be given to requests that drive enrollment driver, retention, or new direct revenue generation.
   - High-priority/important vacancies may be considered for backfill in rare cases, but proposals to the Dean/AVP and Provost should clearly articulate a compelling and specific rationale.
   - If a new position or a reclassification is necessary to realize a plan that will save money, requests may be made to the Dean/AVP and Provost through the position request form process. Justification must be provided, and requests should be prepared with every effort made to minimize expense. Deans/AVPs and the Provost are encouraged to be judicious and thrifty with their approvals of such requests. Only rare (if any) requests are expected to be approved.

Additional strategies and guiding principles are under consideration and may be communicated in the near future. Through the shared governance process, the Provost is seeking new ideas for how to approach reducing the budget and or generating additional revenue. As such ideas emerge and are evaluated, they too will be communicated.