University of Baltimore Staff Senate

MEMO

TO: Kurt Schmoke, President; Darlene Brannigan-Smith, Provost; Beth Amyot, CFO
FROM: UB Staff Senate
CC: Governance Steering Council
DATE: September 10, 2018
RE: UB Strategic Budget Decisions

Morale is a primary concern of the UBSS, and upcoming strategic decisions will continue to affect morale and the work culture of UB, which in turn have an impact on productivity and retention. As is evident by the included feedback (see Appendix A), staff morale is low, given the uncertainty of UB’s budget and enrollment situation. The UBSS wishes to share this feedback in order to 1) fulfill our role as the voice of our constituents and 2) ensure that this voice is heard by UB leadership. Our constituents are concerned with recent turnover (at all levels of staffing), perceive themselves as under-supported and overworked, and worry whether they will continue to be employed at UB, by choice or otherwise.

The UBSS and its constituents believe that cutting staffing levels will contribute to a further decline in morale and an increase in workload, along with the risk of diminished services vital to the success of our students. In light of another likely budget shortfall, UB leadership has stated there would be no furloughs. However, if leadership must choose between reducing staff levels through layoffs or implementing furloughs, it is the position and request of the UBSS that furloughs be given priority over a further reduction in staffing levels.

Lastly, the UBSS requests that a UBSS representative be included in executive team and governing bodies discussions regarding strategic budget priorities at UB, particularly as they pertain to staff issues of deep concern such as furloughs, layoffs, or other budget-based adjustments that have a direct or indirect impact on UB staff and student success.

We thank you for your cooperation and look forward to your response.

With regard,

UB Staff Senate

APPROVED by UBSS vote 9/10/18
Appendix A: UBSS constituent feedback on budget, morale, and related concerns

“The University needs direction. We need to have a singular focus. When are strategic decisions about the future of the university going to be made? And are they being made in a vacuum? Which groups are a part of the discussion?”

“When will we know more about the revenue generating ideas? We also need to strategically allocate resources. For example, why don't we take the $1.032 million dedicated to Travel Expenses in 2018 and re-allocate to admissions to help attract more students or to advisors to help retain students.”

“There are way too many work-groups, committees, task forces, initiatives, etc. It needs to end. We are extremely inefficient and unproductive. We are doing 100 things poorly. We need to do 10 things and be GREAT at them.”

“As reorganizations and increased turnover create more work for remaining staff, what discussions are being had regarding staff morale?”

“Year after year, staff takes the hit whenever there’s a budget shortfall. Positions are eliminated yet the amount of work increases, with my position now responsible for two positions of work. Has faculty contributed their share of the belt tightening? With so many fewer students is there a plan for faculty reduction beyond doing this through retirement or attrition?”

“My employees come to work every day wondering whether they’ll have a job.”

“Can we stop over-hiring and overpaying for senior positions? A quick analysis of the salaries (in 2017) for the Deans, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, and their reporting line (only directors and above) will show that the directors make on average 57% of their supervisors. We need to attract good talent, but that can be done w/out overpaying. Likewise can we please stop the practice of rewarding failed Provost and Deans. As of 2017, there were 3 Deans/Provost making on average 35% (or almost $49,000) more than the highest paid faculty member in that school.”

“Where is the leadership in admissions? How is this not a priority?”
“If UB truly believes we are going to make a turnaround, then the president and provost should bet on it with a cash/furlough reduction instead of reducing base budget by laying off staff.”

“As a manager, whenever budget updates come out the first question I get is "is my job safe?" from my employees. As I am not privy to those kinds of decisions, I never know how to really address this concern. Ideally, the answer is yes but there is always uncertainty, especially since in recent years there have been numerous layoffs. The instability of job safety is concern that leads to consistently lower morale. I know that there is no way to ensure that positions will not be eliminated but there has to be some way to mitigate this ever present fear.”

“What enrollment/operating scenario would trigger additional staff/faculty reductions? What are the operational measures that would be taken to prevent staff reductions?”

“Are the schedule changes in departments such as CRW and housing directly related to budget constraints? Diminished services affect employees and students and at some point there is a negative opportunity cost associated with service changes.”

“What are the University’s plans to boost the morale of its employees? We have been striving to do more with less for a few years now. How will the University retain current employees when the work environment has become so stagnant?”