

LSU

Faculty Senate

Executive Summary of Faculty Feedback on the Zero-Based Budget Proposal

On Thursday 27 October 2022, following the broadcast announcement from the Office of Academic Affairs, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee sent an email to Faculty Senators to collect feedback from their respective units regarding the newly announced zero-based budget, which would go into effect as early as Fall 2023. We heard back from seventeen departments (Chemical Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Coastal Science, Communication Studies, English, Foreign Languages, Geography and Anthropology, Geology, History, Mechanical Engineering, Philosophy, Physics, Psychology, School of Education, School of Music, School of Nutrition and Food Science, and Sociology). This is our summary of responses that we received.

While faculty unequivocally agreed that student stipends need to be raised to be more competitive with peer institutions, the feedback included a wide variety of questions and concerns.

Some of the broad-based feedback from STEM to the Humanities included:

- (1) Concerns about whether the rapid pace at which this new budget model is being developed and implemented will lead to a host of unintended consequences;
- (2) Inquiries about peer institutions that have successfully implemented such a budget model;
- (3) Questions about how and if the university's mission is being prioritized in the new budget model;
- (4) Suggestions to gradually phase-in the new stipend model (over a three-year period);
- (5) The possibility that disparities between current and future graduate students may arise depending on how the new guidelines are implemented and result in low student morale;
- (6) A perception that there was inadequate faculty input in this process, especially when it came to the stipend increase, as it deals with educational policy affecting graduate programs; and
- (7) A concern that the decision to only fund "terminal" degrees reflects a misunderstanding of the intricacies within individual academic (master's) programs and their value to the University, the community, and the State of Louisiana.

Some of the more unit-specific questions dealt with:

- (1) Potential hidden costs with grant-funded students and lack of clarity on how the new budget model will affect 12-month GAs;
- (2) The extent to which this new budget model will affect restricted (grant) funds;
- (3) The possibility that LSU may be less competitive for grants because other universities can do more with less funding, incentivizing faculty to hire research associates rather than utilize graduate students in their research;
- (4) The impact the proposed changes will have on the Office of Students Services as the Master's stipends cover the costs of their Master's program; and
- (5) Questions regarding the steps the University will take to ensure that units remain competitive with their peer institutions without sacrificing the integrity, quality, and

mission of their units, particularly for units whose benefits to the university and community are more difficult to quantify but no less important.

We thank all the Senators and faculty who participated in this process which we believe has helped to advance the discussion surrounding these important initiatives on campus.

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee

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