

Here are some answers to questions submitted to Dr. Creamer and me for the Budget Symposium, including some that we were not able to answer during the event itself.

We received many questions about contingent/supplemental faculty (visiting faculty, VAPs, or adjuncts). Here is a statement we provided to clarify the situation with contingent faculty, who are valued members of our community, but by design do not have continuing appointments.

JO: Most universities employ contingent faculty in a similar manner to what is done at Miami. Contingent or supplemental faculty have fixed term appointments for a maximum of one year. Some may receive further annual appointments, up to a maximum of five years total. No contingent faculty member is entitled to expect any future appointment after their initial appointment. All contingent or supplemental faculty receive a “February 15th letter” telling them they will not be offered another contract to remind them of this reality as we can never predict what our instructional needs will be in the future.

Typically, departments begin to offer supplemental (visiting) faculty appointments for the coming academic year in April, when the fall schedule is drafted and registration begins. As the incoming class is finalized and registration continues through summer, departments will begin to adjust their schedules and may identify further supplemental instructional needs.

This year, institutions across the country, including Miami, moved their enrollment confirmation date from May 1 to June 1 in an effort to give families more time to make decisions in these uncertain times. This new confirmation date delays our ability to determine exactly what supplemental instructional support we may need for the fall. As we identify those needs, we will make offers accordingly.

Although we do not expect all visiting faculty will receive appointments for the coming year, approximately 100 visiting appointments have been approved to date by the chairs, deans, and Provost’s Office for next year to meet our anticipated needs. There are no plans to reduce the ranks of our continuing full-time faculty.

We have also received many questions about how teaching responsibilities are being assigned this year, whether asking department chairs and deans to ensure faculty are teaching in line with our long-standing teaching norms honors shared governance, etc.

JO: Department chairs and deans, in consultation with the Provost’s office, are delegated the shared governance responsibility for constituting faculty work plans. This fact, along with our [faculty workload norms](#), remains unchanged since the Senate last reviewed them in 2010. These policies state, in part:

Faculty time is the University’s most precious resource. Department chairs and program directors, working in conjunction with deans, are the key decision-makers in the allocation of faculty time taking into account general University norms and expectations as well as the unique characteristics of specific departments and disciplines....

The University norm for teaching load for tenured and tenure-track faculty--assuming research productivity, teaching and advising, and service that satisfy expectations--is either three and three or three and two (using the three credit hour course as the unit of account), depending on disciplinary standards and benchmarks and labor-intensive pedagogical practices.

We received many questions suggesting Academic Affairs is the only unit experiencing some resource reductions or limiting expenditures.

JO: The idea that only Academic Affairs is experiencing budget cuts continues to persist and is incorrect. In prior years, Academic Affairs was in large part protected while other areas carried the majority of the cuts. In the past year, other areas continued to experience higher levels of cuts. Going forward, all areas of the university will share in any necessary budget reductions while some, including Academic Affairs will receive reallocations and strategic investments. We like almost every university, will experience some form of financial disruption from this worldwide pandemic. We must be good stewards of our resources at this point until we have more clarity about what the future will hold for Miami.

There have been questions about whether faculty and shared governance is being honored in making decisions around resources.

JO: The Fiscal Priorities and Budget Planning Committee is a committee of University Senate. The function of the Committee is to “represent University Senate in the financial management of the University, in the process of setting fiscal priorities and in budget planning, and also to offer on-going advice to the administration in each of those areas.” This committee, chaired by Dr. Stacey Lowery Bretz, has deep expertise in advising on fiscal and budgetary issues, and meets frequently with university leaders, particularly our CFO, Dr. Creamer. Budget questions from faculty, staff, and students can be answered by your representatives on this committee and can be directed to Dr. Lowery Bretz.

There have been questions about whether we are continuing with promotion, awarding of tenure, and pay increments traditionally related to these processes.

JO: Yes. All these processes continue as normal.

There have been many questions about whether we should or will proceed with *Boldly Creative* and large projects like the Clinical Health Sciences building?

JO: At this point, we are proceeding with *Boldly Creative* projects that are strategic priorities such as new revenue generating programs. It would be counterproductive to halt projects that will lead to new revenue and high-demand programs. We must innovate and emerge from this pandemic a strong and attractive destination to high-performing students, faculty and staff.

Construction projects, except for a small number of projects that are in the completion phase, are currently on hold. We are hoping a future federal stimulus package will provide funding for

“shovel-ready” projects that will allow us to move forward with them. All of these investments are important to Miami’s future and financial well-being.

Will there be a salary increment pool?

DC: We will make this decision in August when the actual impact of the fall class and any state budget cuts is known.

JO: Within Academic Affairs, I have advised the deans to move forward as though we will not have a salary increment to facilitate certain academic personnel processes that would otherwise be delayed by this uncertainty. This will not prevent us from revisiting salary increments if Dr. Creamer decides differently in August.

Why did we “pause” non-essential spending?

DC: Spending has not been stopped but we have asked everyone to closely examine their spending. With so much uncertainty, we are being prudent until the future is clearer.

Why can’t we “tap into reserve funds” to offset budget issues?

DC & JO: We don’t know how serious or how long the financial fall out from the pandemic will last. We have already refunded student room and board and other fees. Reserves are used for unexpected expenses and emergency funds; having these reserves on hand has allowed us to make refunds to students; continuing to maintain reserves will prepare us for future events as well, since we do not know the length of the pandemic or what economic issues may follow.

Our philosophy as articulated by President Crawford and our Board of Trustees is that we should not typically spend down reserve funds to cover operating deficits. If we simply use reserves and fail to address the structural budget issue causing the deficit, it leaves us worse off the following year. This philosophy has left us well positioned to respond to unexpected expenses caused by events like COVID-19. All funds must be spent strategically to ensure the long-term success of Miami.

Can we put a hold on *Boldly Creative* and use those funds now for other purposes?

JO: *Boldly Creative* is a set of one-time funds. If we use them now, they are gone forever. They do not replenish. What we should be asking is what are we doing now to ensure Miami will be strong for the long run. If we invest these funds wisely in developing new programs to attract students to Miami, we benefit for the long term. If we are to come out of this crisis in a competitive position, it will require these types of investments that will continue to make Miami an institution of choice.

There is research from the last few recessions showing that companies and organizations that invest in strategic priorities in addition to realigning operations during downturns come out

stronger than those that just cut or try to continue business as usual. We must invest in our future rather than insisting on continuing business as usual.

Can the provost provide a clear snapshot comparing or showing revenues from last year, this year and we can track how 2021 tracks with this

JO and DC: We will provide these numbers when we close out the fiscal year.

Will graduate students have summer scholarships?

JO: All graduate students who were promised summer scholarships will receive them. However, it is unlikely we can continue this program in its current form given the budget challenges we face. The graduate school will have more guidance on this.

Graduate students are experiencing delays in research due to COVID-19. Is there discussion of extending funding?

JO: Graduate student funding is guided by graduate school policies, coordinated with programs and departments. I would expect that everyone will be sensitive to all COVID-19 disruptions.

What is our projection for the incoming class?

JO: Right now we are ahead of our 3yr average for commitments, but given the unique nature of this year, and with the move to June 1 deadline, it's now hard to compare to previous years. Many universities are offering more aggressive discounting this year and so our competition for students is stronger, which may lead to less net tuition revenue per student. Additionally, in this economic downturn, we expect that we will need to provide substantially more assistance to students going forward.

Where will the \$12.9 million stimulus package go?

DC: These funds are for the Oxford and the Regional campuses. One-half of the funds must go directly to students with need on a going forward basis. These funds cannot be used to reimburse the University for any costs it has already incurred. Based on the 20% budget cut announced by the State of Ohio, we expect that we will have to use the other half of the funds to partially offset the loss of state support for the last quarter of 2019-2020. The size of the state budget cuts for next year are not yet known.

With the economic challenges today, what are we doing to support students who may have more need? Are we providing more aid?

JO: Our staff in Enrollment Management and Financial Aid is continually evaluating need and how to support students. We do anticipate our students will need more aid, of different types, and obviously this is a high priority for us.

Several senators expressed concern over research productivity for faculty, particularly assistant professors

JO: We are also concerned for our faculty, especially our early-career colleagues who may be facing a variety of challenges at this moment. Fortunately, we have an existing policy allowing assistant professors to request up to two (2) additional years on their clock. This should help to offset reduced scholarly productivity by providing more time. Additionally, when we arrive at a time where there are resources, we can prioritize support for our assistant professor colleagues. This is something I hope we can work on through shared governance.

How soon will we know if we are able to hold in person classes for fall?

DC: We are optimistic and intend to be face to face for the fall. Our state leadership has been very strong and we expect a good outcome, but ultimately this will depend on the Governor and health department officials as to when Ohio returns to somewhat normal operations.

How long will current teaching responsibilities be in effect?

Teaching assignments are made by chairs well in advance so that students may register for classes. Each division should have a set of norms and oversight mechanisms that set clear, fair rules for teaching responsibilities, and making decisions about curricular offerings within the limits of budgetary constraints.

Are we looking at student credit hours or other metrics rather than the number of courses taught when looking at teaching responsibilities?

JO: This is where shared governance again comes in. As our documents state:

Faculty time is the University's most precious resource. Department chairs and program directors, working in conjunction with deans, are the key decision-makers in the allocation of faculty time taking into account general University norms and expectations as well as the unique characteristics of specific departments and disciplines....

Thus, we have looked to these leaders to help us understand the various nuances across courses, departments, and divisions, and we have relied upon their judgment and a variety of data while also striving to be fiscally responsible.

How do we rebuild trust after dismissing all our assistant professor colleagues?

JO: We are not dismissing any continuing faculty.

When will students receive fee refunds from spring?

DC: We expect these funds will be available beginning this week.

University consider waiving parking fees for staff next year?

DC: Parking fees are currently being waived for April or May.

Are non-self-sustaining academic programs being reviewed?

JO: We currently have a process in place that is built for deep collaboration and shared governance. This process, led by Dr. Stacey Lowery Bretz, is intended to provide data to help all programs improve, particularly under-enrolled programs. She provided an update during the discussion.

Will there be any retirement incentives?

DC: As the future situation becomes clearer, we will discuss this option with the Board of Trustees.

Can unclassified staff have 11-mo voluntary contracts?

DC: Like early retirement incentives, once the future is clearer, this option will be considered.

How do other universities have the money to hire our faculty while Miami University is slowing down hiring?

JO: All universities will continue hiring for important positions. We continue to hire faculty also where needs are identified.

What happens to equipment grants approved from a dean before we paused spending? What about faculty who requested new laptops or similar equipment?

JO: Essential equipment and supplies can be purchased with approval. Purchasing from external funds like grants or donor funds can continue also.

Will part-time “permanent” instructors/supervisors be eliminated or impacted by the hiring pause?

JO: Part-time instructors do not have continuing appointments. As with all faculty positions we will continue to hire to meet curricular and instructional needs.

Can professional development funds be used?

JO: Yes, currently, these funds can be accessed for important purchases.

Is conference travel cancelled?

JO: ALL travel is restricted right now. I suspect for the coming year, we will have more limited resources for travel and all travel will be dependent upon state health departments.

Can the provost tell us why construction projects (such as one going on Route 27 south of campus to beautify the walking trails or the disc-golf course???)

JO: This is a City of Oxford project and not a University project.