

REPORT for the Budget & Finance Committee Meeting of 3 April 2025

The Budget & Finance Committee last met on 6 March 2025.

1. Meeting called to order: E. Kondratieff (3:45 pm).

Attending Committee Members (Voting):

Eric Kondratieff, Chair (PCAL, History)
Daniel Boamah (CHHS, Social Work)
Greg Ellis-Griffith (At-large, CHHS, Public Health)
Sean Kinder (Libraries)
Blair Thomas (At-Large, PCAL)
Jeremy Maddox (OCSE, Chemistry)
Kurt Neelly (At-Large, CHHS, Physical Therapy)
Jim Lindsey (GFCB, Alt. for J. Erickson, GFCB, AIS)

Attending Committee Members (Ex-Officio)

Shane Spiller (Faculty Regent)
Bud Fischer (Provost) (at 4:10 pm due to prior mtg).

Absent:

John Erickson, GFCB (on leave)

Positions currently unfilled:

CEBS and SGA; Alternates for CEBS, PCAL, SGA

2. Chair Report – E. Kondratieff

- A. Minutes from 03/06/2025 meeting – approved. Chair report below in New Business.

3. New Business (3:55-4:50 pm)

- A. **BEC Rep Selection Process:** Discussion of BEC and B&F committee Member Kurt Neelly's question about process for choosing faculty members to Serve on BEC. Per Corrinne Murphy, CEBS Dean and BEC Chair, the committee sends out invitations to governing bodies to choose and send reps to BEC.

Neelly noted the process is not covered in the Senate Charter. [Background: Neelly volunteered to serve when the Senate needed a new Senate rep for BEC; because he was already on the B&F committee, this provided B&F a direct line to BEC (for items that can be reported) and an intermediary through whom B&F could send inquiries to BEC].

Neelly also suggested that, were the process to be formalized, that it would be helpful if the Senate Rep to BEC were also (and required to be?) a member of the Senate's Budget and Finance Committee (as is currently the case).

- B. **New / Old Business:** Discussion of B&F Chair Kondratieff's second guest attendance at Faculty Welfare Committee meeting on 3/14 to discuss information prepared by Eric Reed on the current state of WKU faculty salaries and a pathway forward with a "Statement On Salaries" (SOS) requesting that Admin prioritize this ongoing problem; it is proposed that they bring forward this resolution in conjunction with B&F. Since the last meeting (in Feb.), Faculty Welfare has considered newly updated salary data provided by Eric Reed.

- C. **SEC Agenda** was discussed, because it includes several potential resolutions, one of which requests that the Board of Regents review the RAMP model. The main premise is that many elements of the RAMP model are not working as intended (along with several other concerns).

Maddox asked whether it should be the job of Budget & Finance Committee to review such resolutions before they are brought forward? Kondratieff responded that any senator may bring forward a resolution, and it is up to the Chair or SEC to refer a resolution to one or more committees if deemed necessary.

Some objections were brought up regarding some of the points made in the "Ramp Review" resolution. Kondratieff asked committee members to look at the resolution closely before the SEC meeting (held on the Monday following the present meeting) and to email him any feedback or concerns so he could bring them forward before or during the SEC meeting (Neelly responded; Kondratieff brought his concerns forward).

- D. **Schedule:** Discussion of moving the May 1 B&F meeting forward to April 24 so a report could be submitted in time (10 days in advance) for the last SEC meeting to be held on May 5. Change approved.

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4. Faculty Regent – Shane Spiller 4:50-5:00 PM

- A. Spiller had nothing to report (between BOR meetings) but brought up the recent switch to course fees in the colleges. Provost Fischer responded that this has been under discussion for some time and had been mentioned in the Senate but, ultimately, his main task was to follow proper procedures and channels to reduce what had been hundreds of different fees to a handful of homogenized fees. He noted there had been a Fee Committee with representation from all stakeholders at WKU, but that it was not an item to be voted on or approved by shared governance bodies.

5. Provost Bud Fischer:

- A. Next year's budget is in process. All Academic Affairs budgets have been duly submitted. "As far as I know, we balanced everything out and met all the demands that were associated with it. So, we'll see where we are as we move forward."
- B. **Overspending units:** Kondratieff asked if the book-keeping discrepancy that resulted in an apparent (but not actual) overspend by CEBS had been resolved.

Fischer affirmed that it had been fixed (see B&F Committee's February report for context and details).

Kondratieff asked if Athletics has sorted out their budget (see B&F Committee's January report for context and details).

Fischer replied that Athletics is not under his purview, so he doesn't know.

- C. **Budget restrictions:** Lindsey asked if there would be another mandate to only spend 90% of budgeted moneys? F

Fischer responded that the budget is now "zero-based" and 100% of the allotted dollars may be spent.

- D. **VSIP:** Maddox asked whether VSIP savings would be redirected to other initiatives or hiring in certain areas?

Fischer: "we gave back 30%. It went back to the colleges in proportion to how many people they lost and the amount of money they lost... almost a month ago, and it went back into the Dean's coffers to use strategically, as they see fit."

Kondratieff asked whether the Deans will be using these funds to hire (replace) new lines?

Fischer reported that some hiring of faculty lines is taking place, and that he already had some waiting for his approval.

- F. **Course fees:** Lindsey asked whether the new course fees were going to the university or to the colleges.

Fischer responded that there had been over 700 disparate course fees; now there will be only 5 to track (by college, course, and hour). The fees will first pay for courses that previously had fees to provide materials needed that had been covered by those original fees (in, e.g., labs, etc.); the next chunk will be divided among other courses according to need (depts. will consult with their deans on this). Fischer envisions that the allocation and use of the remainder, to promote overall student success, will be determined in each college by college-level committees of students and faculty.

Kondratieff asked if there is data, or if number-crunching has been done, to indicate the impact of these fees on students who previously had few or no course fees and will now be paying fees for the first time (or more fees than they had been paying)? Will there be overall savings for students who had been taking a large proportion of courses that were previously fee-heavy? In other words, will this work as a "leveler" or "redistribution" of burden like the Big Red Backpack system?

Fischer responded that there had been some very high fees in surprising places (e.g., PCAL with materials-heavy art courses) and yes, the fees will be distributed across everybody rather than just a small group of students, "But in that distribution it's not a huge amount of money, and it's also why the extra money [will be used] for student success, because it can be used for other kinds of things that go towards students as a whole." He mentioned that, e.g., computers or lab equipment or furniture for student use could be purchased with left-over fees.

Spiller noted that it looks like the moneys will be going to the Deans who will determine how to use them.

Fischer affirmed that, as in the RAMP model, the course fee money will go to the Deans in whose colleges the course fees are generated; also, as the moneys are not "permanent sources" of funding, they aren't viable for permanent hires.

6) Open Discussion N/A

7) Motion to adjourn: Maddox; adjourned @ 4:25 p.m.