

REPORT for the Budget & Finance Committee Meeting of 2 Oct. 2025

The Budget & Finance Committee last met on 24 April 2025.

1. Meeting called to order: S. Spiller subbing for E. Kondratieff (3:48 pm).

Attending Committee Members (Voting):

Sophia Arjana (PCAL, History, At-Large)
Gordon Baylis (At-Large, OCSE, Psych. Sci.)
Daniel Boamah (Alt., CHHS, Social Work)
Greg Ellis-Griffith (At-large, CHHS, Public Health)
Said Ghezal (At-Large, CEBS)
Todd Seguin (Libraries)
Blair Thomas (PCAL, Poli-Sci)
Rui Zhang (OCSE, Chem. & Biochemistry)

Attending Committee Members (Ex-Officio)

Jakob Barker (SGA)
Bud Fischer (Provost, Ex-Officio).
Shane Spiller (GFCB, Faculty Regent)

Absent (Voting and Ex-Officio)

Palav Bera (Alt., At-Large, OCSE)
Eric Kondratieff, Chair (PCAL, History)
Jim Lindsey (GFCB)

2. Chair Report – (E. Kondratieff absent)

- A. **Approval of Minutes:** 09/04/2025 meeting; approved (motion by Ellis-Griffith; unanimous vote).
- B. **Chair Report:** None (Kondratieff absent on family emergency).

3. New/Old Business

- A. No new business.

4. Faculty Regent – Shane Spiller

- A. **Discussion RE: Athletic Director Todd Stewart coming to a B&F meeting:** this is dependent on whether he is visiting Faculty Senate (no need to double up).
- B. **Board of Regents** had special-call meeting for naming acknowledgment for Hilltopper Fieldhouse (based on \$3.5m donation toward costs). BOR attending many events.
- C. **Nov. 14 BOR meeting** to cover recently updated audits; there will also be a Dec. meeting.
- D. **BOR and President's contract:** Contract language from 2017 had a stipulation to put him at median of benchmark institutions (KY schools, Conf. USA schools, aspirant schools), including multiple forms of compensation. Exec. Committee of BOR negotiated with president on renewal & compensation package (FYI, Fac. Regent never part of Exec. Comm., so has no input).
- E. **This Fiscal Year: WKU's first "structurally balanced budget"** (without carry-forward) in more than two decades, approved in June. Notable in the present budget is the elimination of the 10% "tax" on revenue-generating units.
- F. **BOR approved naming gifts and President Caboni's contract** renewal and raise to the middle range of salaries of presidents at benchmark institutions.

5. Provost – Bud Fischer

- A. **Three things happening re: Budget and RAMP Model:**
 - a. Old budget will be finalized once they complete the audit; should be fine.
 - b. Schedule for new budget is being developed (timeline Jan.-May)
 - c. A committee is being put together to discuss RAMP model (names submitted, committee to start by end of Oct. looking at metrics). Three staff, three faculty, Deans, Susan Howarth, Bud Fischer, Renaldo Domoney as Chair).
- B. **Spiller:** This year's budget is being developed under old RAMP; recommendations from new committee for next year?
 - C. **Fischer:** New revised model (TBD) to be developed by 2027, implemented by 2028.

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6. Open Discussion

A. Baylis: question on progress re: inviting Deans to discuss their experience with RAMP model.

B. Spiller: progress uncertain, Dean Basta likely to agree to speak with us (Bud concurs)

C. Boamah: Question on whether WKU headed toward financial stability.

D. Fischer: "...we are in much better shape than we were 3 years ago, and we continue to move in the right direction". When RAMP started, we were \$28m in the hole with \$19m carryforward that didn't exist as permanent money. That's all been taken care of (with cuts, VSIPS, etc.). The challenge now is to get more students on campus and increase Net Tuition Revenue. Subvention money to colleges has increased somewhat, so things are looking better than they have.

E. Spiller: At start of his regentship there used to be "mystery debts" and "mystery piles of money" (accounting tricks); we are no longer operating on this basis; it's been painful, but WKU is in a better financial position now than before. Pres. Caboni was genuinely sincere in his appreciation of all the work faculty and staff have done to help make this work. We are probably too lean right now, but we are in a much better position financially than we were before. Budgeting based on "hope" is no longer part of the process.

F. Ellis-Griffith: Question about the dorms situation as reported in the Herald. Projections on impact?

G. Fischer: We're in for some struggles. We'll be repairing Regents and Normal Hall for the next year or so. Hilltopper won't be repaired (to be demolished). Freshman LLCs have been moved, living in suites now. We've reduced the numbers of students lost, but we still lost some because of the dorm situation. The competition among schools to attract students to the living situation is tremendous (UK revamped dorms to look like Hyatt Regency hotels; another campus has a lazy river through the entire campus). We have to do better to get students to come here.

H. Spiller: Three additional things:

- a. Student Life Foundation demonstrated to BOR efforts to upgrade existing dorms.
- b. Students in Center Hall seem to be happy with that living facility.
- c. Part of WKU's attraction is the overall experience. We get students out of the dorms. UK students are stuck in buses or in traffic, and in huge classes. We have a different (better) experience to offer here.

I. Arjana (has two children attending UK): UK has beautiful dorms but a really bad housing shortage. My oldest daughter says UK parking and parking fees are astronomical. Lots of UK students complaining about these issues.

J. Seguin: Brought up last month's discussions, suggests we create a document / survey that "we could write a series of maybe 5 to 10 questions and ask all the Deans to answer. And we'd get a little flavor of their responses to compare them, because that was part of the problem. We saw some Deans doing certain things, and others doing other things, and we wondered, how can they do that? Our Dean says they can't..." **(general approval to move forward on this idea)**

K. Barker (SGA): Question about new College Fees. Barker and other SGA members have been asked by many students about the new college fees: "...right now, it definitely just feels like an additional cost that's being incurred upon us." What kind of transparency or messaging is there to explain to students what the money is going toward? How can the purpose of the fees be explained in a positive way?

L. Fischer: The Fee Committee discussed this over several years. GFCB pioneered the college fee. It was deemed better to have college fees than the nearly 800 individual course fees across campus. The single-class fees were eliminated (charged by course, now one fee). Each college is supposed to have a committee to determine how their college fees are spent and to report on that spending back to Provost at year's end. Fees are to be spent on student success.

M. Barker: Will the Fee Committee reports be shared with students?

N. Fischer: Will ask the Fee Committee to do an analysis and give an overview report that can be shared with students so that everybody knows how the money was spent (in generalized terms, apparently).

O. Baylis: "Can this committee see that report?"

P. Fischer: "...It won't be until a year from now, but yeah."

Q. Baylis: "Okay. I think we'd like to see it, wouldn't we?"

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- R. **Fischer:** "Sure. You might even ask them, as you bring the Deans in, what they're going to spend the money on."
- S. **Baylis:** "Oh, we plan to, yeah."
- T. **Fischer:** "It (fee spending) just can't be willy-nilly. It has to be towards students, because that's what it was meant to be."
- U. **Spiller:** Had conversations with the Provost back in June (25) "about tracking what the deans are doing over the course of this first year, ... what bucket is that money going into as it's being spent? Student success, faculty support, which can still be towards student success. If you're training faculty, developing faculty, supporting faculty" or administrative efforts that assist students. If things are being tracked or "measured" for reports that will go to the BOR, to committees (like ours) and to students, people will be more careful about how they spend the money.
- When GFCB started college fees, their Fee Committee was very careful about how the money was spent toward student success on initiatives like "the clothes closet," "hiring a person to do student internships," a person to work with students "on job interviews and negotiations", and "student trips"... GFCB were very tight on controlling the spending of fees only on student-success initiatives. This is what we want to be monitoring with the colleges.
- V. **Fischer:** With new college fees, 99% of old course fees went away. Some specific areas of learning that had course fees related to the quality of education in that area were allowed to maintain those course fees. Any new course fee requests have to have justification and be approved before they can be implemented.
- W. **Baylis:** "Can I ask if that's going to be indefinite, or just for one or two years? I ask because I teach a lot of labs, which had course fees... which I need for the equipment and the chemicals and stuff."
- X. **Fischer:** " No, that was a given when we moved it that way, that it's for the future."
- Y. **Baylis:** "Forever?"
- Z. **Fischer:** "Yes."
7. Motion to adjourn, Baylis; second, Seguin. Meeting adjourned @ 4:20 p.m.