

From: Argus Today [today@uwf.edu]
Sent: Monday, January 05, 2009 1:34 PM
To: FacStaff Group
Subject: Message from the President: Budget Assessment



UWF Faculty and Staff:

Happy New Year! I hope each and every one of you had a happy, restful and renewing winter break. I had a wonderful break myself spending time on the family farm completing many projects and enjoying time with family and friends. I am ready to begin a new year at UWF, and as our Board of Trustees has extended my presidency an additional year through July 2010, I look forward to helping our university move forward for a longer period of time. With your help and support, we will weather the economic storm and come out of it stronger and wiser. I know UWF is already a good university and, together, we can make it a great one!

I want to take this opportunity to update you on a couple of budget-related issues as we reassemble for the spring 2009 semester: the current budget assessment and the outlook for budget reductions at the state level.

Budget Assessment: In October 2008, I initiated an assessment of our financial condition. After discovering that an assessment made by an external accountant would cost us at least \$40,000, I looked internally for a qualified accountant who was out of the university financial management mainstream in any of our five divisions, and I found Dr. Susan Stephenson, executive director of the UWF Foundation. Dr. Stephenson agreed to take on the project and set a date of Nov. 30, 2008 for completing a report to me.

Dr. Stephenson has been working steadily, including nights and weekends, but the comprehensiveness of the task requires great detail, diligence and is very time consuming. In mid-November, we realized that it would take longer than originally planned. We discussed the situation at length and decided to complete the project without reducing the scope, but rather by extending the report due date to sometime in February.

As you are all members of a research-related community, I think that the best way to understand the Budget Assessment is that it is essentially a research project. As you know, there are basically six steps in any research project and they are applied to the Budget Assessment below along with an update on progress thus far.

- 1) Develop Research Questions/Areas (completed)
 - a. Budget reductions from last year, common definitions and impact
 - b. Carry forward balances and commitments
 - c. Cash and Hurricane funds
 - d. Review and compare the FY2000-08 Budget to the FY2008-09 Budget
 - e. Student Fee Trust Fund estimates/models and Summer
 - f. Division Sources and Uses of Funds

2) Develop Research Methods to produce data to address the Research Questions (completed). This step took much longer than expected because each of our five divisions (Academic Affairs, University Affairs, University Advancement, Student Affairs and President's Office) has slightly different accounting procedures to meet its needs. In order to gather

comparable data, common definitions had to be established and agreed on by the financial managers in each division. Now, when Dr. Stephenson gathers data from each division, she will be comparing “apples to apples” instead of “apples to oranges.” We all know this is a crucial element in any research study and until it is satisfactorily completed gathering useful data is impossible.

3) Data Gathering (partially completed). Data is gathered to address each question.

4) Data Analysis (partially completed). The data for each research question is analyzed to identify quantities, trends, correlations and connections.

5) Results (partially completed). The data analysis is interpreted and the Research Questions/Areas are answered/addressed.

6) Conclusions and Recommendations (not started). The results are integrated and correlated to identify patterns, trends, correlations and concerns of the UWF financial condition. Recommendations are also made on the strategy of future budget philosophies.

Sincerely,

Judy Bense
President, University of West Florida