

**Questions/Suggestions that Arose after the Formal Meetings
or that were e-mailed to Senators**
(Updated December 17, 2008)

I do have a comment for you, from Foreign Languages.

The problem we have in our department, especially in the area of Spanish, is the class size. In the meeting we had with the Chair about the issue of retaining students, most of the faculty members agreed that having a smaller class size in the beginning and intermediate levels (20 students, instead of 30), would help a lot in retention, since many students need a more "one on one" relationship with the instructor so as not to be discouraged in a class that tends to be difficult for them.

Many of our classrooms in Dunn Hall are overcrowded and some students withdraw at the beginning of the semester because they tend to be stuck in a corner with not enough space to really be comfortable. A class of 30 tends to come down to at least 25. Some classrooms are bigger but most of them are really made for 20 students.

If the university goes through budget cuts, and we are not able to reduce the class sizes, this will also impact on the quality of teaching. Moreover, if the team of instructors is also reduced, this will also mean that they have to teach more classes, also diminishing the quality of the teaching in general.

Not that it's a question but a comment as a colleague and I walked back to our department he noted that the printed handout (how many at the various meetings) could have been eliminated with one PowerPoint slide. Upon return to my department I check my mail and found that every mail slot had a university phonebook (it's all online) Who knows, save a buck here and there and the next thing you know you may have saved someone's job!

Here is some feedback that came after the administrators had left:

Some were upset that they didn't have more of a chance to ask questions of Raines and Faudree.

One suggested charging more of students who have to retake a class, rather than penalize the good students who are trying to get out in 4 years.

Another said that the 12-hour max plan will add a year to a student's time in college and harm our graduation rate.

Someone suggested the Hope scholarship, which has a surplus, should be expanded to be available to older students, so that we can get more of them back in college.

A number of people are puzzled about how cutting back summer offerings will help. They think you throw a wide net, and cancel the classes that don't make. Also more adjuncts could be used in the summer since they are so much cheaper than full-time faculty in the summer.

A number of people don't understand how consolidating classes into a few buildings will save money unless the other buildings are totally closed and utilities turned off. You can't just air condition professor's offices.

From my personal experience with my son, who is a grad student in special ed at the U of M, I am puzzled about why at a time when we need more students and every student counts that we are not

making more classes available to those grad students. Most education grad students pay their own way because they are teachers and can't be full-time students/GA's. We have a lot of those grad students in journalism, too -- professionals taking one or two classes a semester. My son wants to take two classes for spring, but can only find one not full. He says about everyone he's talked to in his current class of 60 people wants to take a certain class, but it is capped at 30. People like that won't just take another course like a freshman or sophomore would. Grad students and seniors, if they can't get what they need will just not take an additional course. Which got me to thinking — does our vast computer system have a way to keep up with how many people try unsuccessfully to get into a given course. If we could track that info. and sufficient number of people want a given course, a new section could be opened up.

Cost Savings

1. All the hefty administrative salaries need to be cut dramatically.
 2. Administrative posts need to be drastically cut.
 3. Any administrative retreats should be held on campus, and meals should be potlucks to give these people an idea of how the faculty and low-tier staff get by.
 4. No more wasteful campus construction, e.g., pretentious fountains and clock towers. Let's get real.
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1. I note that there are a lot of vice presidents over in Academic Affairs. I suggest we examine the work each of them is doing, and determine which jobs are redundant or not important, and furlough those VPs whose jobs are not directly related to the education of our students.
 2. My understanding is that there is at least one assistant coach whose salary is greater than that of any faculty member. If we are all about education, why is this so? And what is to be done about it?
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Cost Savings

1. I for one would be willing to accept a pay cut rather than firing people. It would be better in the long run to keep the work load even and to reduce the level of fear and resentment that may accompany the process of contraction. The only condition under which I would happily do this, however, was if it happened across the board.
 2. If such a pay cut were to occur, would Dr. Raines and her administrative team be willing to take an equal or greater percent pay cut as well? It would be wonderful for morale if your answer was "yes."
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Cost Savings / Possible Revenue Generation

A true urban university would recognize that the fixed costs of operation occur during every month. The agrarian version of the university seems to ignore these fixed costs because of a historical schedule set by the timing of the seasons – spring break is for planting, fall break is for the harvest, and winter break is a societal tradition spanning millennia.

The downsizing of a standing structure, including the faculty groups whose primary effort lies in direct instruction and maintenance of their currency in an individual area of learning (so called scholarship, which needs to be differentiated from 'research' when fixed costs are discussed).

The research enterprise requires a 12-month effort and extramurally supported efforts are posed to

provide a return on the fixed costs needed to provide items like animal care, precision instrumentation, and continuing efforts of graduate students and post-doc's. Note that some portion of our faculty and students remain in an agrarian format – they find sound ways to profess their arts with summer festivals or other efforts that do not need the campus.

Has this restructuring of our University been considered carefully? It does not appear to have been, probably because internal and TBR procedures expect that the block called “summer” be accounted for in a separate way.

Furloughing people to accomplish a change-over to the new pattern may offer a sound means for operation of UM on a basis that is more economically efficient, has a larger annual production of credit hours (and thus supports more faculty than its current business model / operational format. The distinct place for research in any semester may also lead to a simpler view of how to obtain and maintain a research program among laboratories and across departments.

Such a one time “hiccup” in the operational format may impose much less pain for our people and provide a means toward the shared goal of community, students, faculty, and administration – a better UM and a modern, efficient format. The hiccup is likely to require several semesters to implement in a full and effective fashion. So the pattern of furloughs / partial semesters of teaching and reformatting of programs offered will need to be developed with care to maintain throughput.

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1. We have heard there might be furloughs. How is the state defining this term?
 2. What is known and unknown about possible furloughs and how their use might affect faculty?
 3. Has there been any discussion of consolidating or “doing away with” Student Health and LSON faculty assuming nursing responsibility?
 4. Do we know of have a pretty good idea of the number of students who actually take more than 12 hours and would, thus, be affected by the removal of the tuition cap?
 5. In light of departments being required to submit revised reversion plans by December 29, 2008, can each Dean identify how their respective departments will be affected?
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Dear Shirley & Ralph;

Thanks for taking the time to meet with our faculty yesterday. It was good to receive direct information, even if it is subject to regular change! One thought that has struck me following the meeting with regards to summer school. I understand that it is being scaled back, but it strikes me that this may be a retrograde step. With the removal of the cap on 12 hours of tuition, many students are likely to spread their load, and summer school seems a popular option for many of them. Increasing our summer offerings could also help those students who are trying to accelerate graduation, without forcing them to take extensive course loads during the semester, by giving them more course scheduling combinations. Further, this would seem to help achieve the apparent objective of maximizing the use of our facilities (your point Shirley about keeping buildings open for longer rather than going to a four day week). Finally, at a time when staff raises are unlikely for the foreseeable future, this protects a source of income that is valued by many. The teaching load could be reduced to a maximum of 6 credit hours from 8 as a way to put some control on expenditure if that was desired. Thus, it seems that emphasizing summer school – and even marketing to attract students not enrolled at the UofM – might be a significant income generator, help with the timely graduation of students at a time when some in-semester flexibility of course offerings may be curtailed with the non-replacement of lost faculty, and help faculty morale.

I know that you are both very busy – particularly at the moment – so please do not worry about replying to this. I just wanted to throw it out as an idea. I have cc'd our faculty senator, as it may be more appropriate to raise this idea through that forum.

How does starting classes at 7 a.m. save money or energy? Are we not offering some classes now that are in demand because of classroom shortages?

How does teaching more classes in fewer buildings save money? Don't we have to keep the heat or cooling on for the staff in the lesser used buildings? Or do we just move the department offices into other buildings?

Invest a few dollars in locks for the wheels of cars in violations for parking in no parking zones, no parking decals, etc and that way they have to come to police department to pay for their fine. Cars can't be moved with locks and police only people who can remove tire locks. Fines are not left on hold for months and dollars are generated on the spot.

Questions raised by the faculty in one of the colleges following the meeting with the President.
Answers provided by the college Dean.

Q: Can you give us more information on the impact of the crisis on other areas of the University such as ITD and research support?

A: All will be asked to reduce by 15% - All areas are affected.

Q: Is the 12 hour cap negotiable? Can it be 15 or some other number?

A: The Cap hasn't passed yet, but it probably will stay at 15. The difference may be able to be covered somehow by scholarship funds.

Q: How does quality of classes affect any choices?

A: All things are considered. We will be looking at classes with a high dropout rate or low GPAs. The tuition cap will have an impact on all classes, but especially these.

Q: Can we rebuild flexibility into Summer sessions as we had 20 years ago?

A: We have a set amount of money for the Summer and that may change, but the idea can be passed on.

Q: Can we equalize tuition with surrounding colleges?

A: This is a TBR issue. Instructors at local schools are paid less than the U of Memphis. Tuition becomes all the more important when state funds are at issue.

Q: What can you say about furloughs? And department cuts?

A: There is no indication of any plans for furloughs or cutting any program. But all is in flux right now. All discussions are very recent and communication has been very open. We are also waiting on sales tax issues and how they effect state budget.

Q: In some parts of the nation, students are said to be considering an education closer to home. Is this also the case for us in Memphis? Are we capitalizing on this tendency?

A: Yes, recruitment is on the table for increasing enrollment. However, many of the local students are not qualified to attend our University.

Q: Is there any hope of loosening up the Hope scholarship requirements?

A: Yes, Scholarship surplus has been managed very conservatively, and this may be in question in the future.

Q: Is state income tax an issue on the table.

A: No. In fact state government is making moves to solidify the position of not having income tax.

Q: With the tuition cap removed, is there any consideration for the students who retake classes? Why are only the students who are taking a heavier load in order to graduate in a timely manner penalized by increasing tuition?

A: Both will be paying more with the removal of the cap. If you use a product you need to pay for it. State legislation is not giving us any more money, and we don't want to raise tuition any more than we have.

Q: Has there been any thought of the worst case scenario of laying people off and the timing of them finding another job in time for next school year?

A: It is not in the cards for us to lose faculty positions. The President and Provost are committed to keeping the positions we now have, but anything can happen at this point.

Q: The AP released a statement saying the governor is now looking at a 20% decrease. Is this true for us?

A: We are still operating under the request of a 15% cut, but anything can happen.

Q: How would the removal of the tuition cap affect retention of students?

A: Advise them to graduate quickly. But we know that it is not realistic to expect students to graduate in 4 years at 12 hours a semester.

Q: There are many other financial considerations for students beyond tuition. Can the University financial coordinators give us a plan on the effect of the proposed tuition cap removal on student finances? And the impact on retention?

A: Yes. We can ask them to.
