

WWCC Budget Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Title	Budget Council	Date/Time	11/13/2024, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm
In Attendance	Lori Peterson, Pat Sisneros, Rachel Warren, Magdalena Moulton, Michael Boogaard, Lori Loseth, Chad Miltenberger, KT Peterson, David Johnson, Tyler Cox, Allen Sutton, Mike Stocke, Natalie Wade		
Facilitator	Lori Peterson	Meeting Location	Zoom Only
		Zoom Link	https://wwcc-edu.zoom.us/j/88398976761

Meeting recap

The meeting covered various aspects of budgeting and financial planning, including discussions on expense categorization, budget requests, and the implementation of a zero-based budgeting approach. Participants addressed challenges in creating usable expense reports, the importance of prioritizing and communicating budget requests, and the need for better tracking of recurring expenses. The group also touched on potential issues with AI in meetings, adjustments to student registration dates, and planned future discussions on sensitive information sharing and upcoming panel discussions.

Next steps

- Lori to distribute last year's prioritized budget request list to department heads for review and potential resubmission.
- Chad and Doreen to resolve scheduling conflict between panel discussion and College Council meeting.
- Lori to schedule weekly Budget Council meetings through March for budget deliberations, as well as follow-up meetings after panels to discuss while information is fresh in council-members' minds.

Meeting Summary

College Council Updates

Chad discussed the potential issues of AI logging into meetings and dispersing sensitive information through social media, which is a topic of ongoing discussion. He also mentioned a task force working on the Innovation Fund, and a proposed adjustment to the new student registration date in the spring quarter to improve access to high school students. Additionally, Chad hinted at a discussion next week regarding text messaging and the potential for providing information that shouldn't be common knowledge.

Budgeting and Work Study Match

Lori and Rachel addressed the topic of work study match, which has been a significant issue due to recent transitions. They clarified that departments will need to budget for the match when they have a Federal or State work studies student. Rachel added that the college will still cover the match, but the expenses will be tracked. Lori emphasized the importance of visibility in budgeting to track spending and trends over time. Chad raised a question about unforeseen expenses in a 0-based budget, to which Lori responded that these expenses are often covered by vacancy savings. She also suggested that while it's not a bad idea to budget for unforeseen expenses, those non-specific types of budget line are often ranked low in favor of more specific funding requests.

Improving Expense Reports for Zero-Based Budget Creation

Lori discussed the challenges of creating usable expense reports from their system. She explained that she had added several columns to the report, including an expense type column, a department type column, and a vendor column, to make the data more usable. Lori also mentioned that she was working on adding converted costs from FY 2022 to the report, which would help in comparing data from 2022. She emphasized the need for a report that is easier to read/use, with one line per vendor to make the data more manageable. Lori also explained the process of categorizing expenses into buckets like goods and services, travel, and advertising, and how this information can be used to inform budget requests. She suggested using prior year data to estimate typical expenses, excluding one-time or unusual expenses. Lori also emphasized the importance of scrutinizing new requests and program expansions more closely than regular ongoing expenses. She demonstrated how to input this information into a report, including selecting the division, department, expense type, and strategic objective.

Budgeting Equipment and Recurring Expenses

David and Lori discussed the budgeting process for equipment and subscriptions. They agreed that one-off purchases should be treated as new requests, not recurring expenses. Lori emphasized the importance of itemizing subscriptions and other recurring expenses for better tracking and transparency. She also suggested that general buckets like 'travel' should be avoided in favor of specific lines for known expenses, such as regular trips between Clarkson and Walla Walla or annual membership dues. Best guesses from previous years can be used to estimate these recurring expenses.

Budget Review and Ranking Process

Lori discussed the process of reviewing and ranking budget requests. She emphasized the importance of specificity in requests to facilitate better understanding and decision-making. Lori also outlined the involvement of the team in the budget review process, which includes scoring requests based on strategic impact and providing feedback. She noted that the team would have access to more information this time around, which should aid in the decision-making process. Chad asked about the potential impact of knowing the budget allocation on the approach of budget managers, to which Lori responded that it would be beneficial to provide assumptions, but the exact allocation would depend on the legislature.

Budget Request Process and Communication

Lori clarified that the VP's should review the budget requests with their departments before submitting them to Budget. Lori L expressed concern about the lack of communication about the budget process, which led to missed requests. Mike emphasized the importance of prioritizing requests and the need for a second year of request for certain needs. David questioned the level of involvement in the process. Lori agreed to send out a list of remaining requests from the previous year for further consideration. The team agreed on the need for better communication and prioritization in the budget request process.

Panel Discussions and Meeting Schedule

The meeting schedule and the upcoming panel discussions in January and February were discussed. Lori mentioned that the February 26, 2025 panel session will be moved due to conflict with Clarkston board meeting. They agreed to continue meeting weekly through March to prepare for the panel discussions and deliberation. Lori L asked about the timing of deliberation, to which Lori clarified that the panel discussions would be for gathering information, not for deliberation. It was agreed that Budget Council should convene following each panel discussion to discuss what was presented while it is fresh in everyone's minds.