

Committee on Priorities and Resources  
Meeting Minutes – March 16, 2021

In attendance: Professor Javier Corrales; Professor Andrew Dole; Professor Jill Miller, chair; Professor Monica Ringer; Library Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper Susan Bradley; Director of Compensation, Benefits, and HRIS Chris Casey, *ex officio*; Retail Dining Assistant Peter Charron; Director of Financial Planning Thomas Dwyer, *ex officio*; Provost and Dean of the Faculty Catherine Epstein, *ex officio*; Chief Financial and Administrative Officer Kevin Weinman, *ex officio*; Allie Ho '24; Sydney Ireland '23; Steven Hegarty, recorder

Not in attendance: Brooke Harrington '22, *ex officio*

The meeting came to order at 8:30 am.

Proceedings

1. Kevin & Tom updated CPR on the capital budget
  - a. Kevin began with a description and overview of the capital budget process. This runs separately from the operating budget and consists of building renovation/construction, IT equipment, and other expenses for furniture or equipment. The primary partner is Facilities, along with all of the other divisions of the college.  
Capital is defined as a non-operating, non-recurring expense of \$10k or more. The cap budget process considers projects up to \$2M.  
With larger projects the college looks for donors to provide naming gifts, and will also use borrowing, reserves and other methods of funding to reduce the burden on the operating budget.  
There is a set aside in the annual operating budget for smaller projects, through a process that gathers, considers, and selects projects to approve and fund. The capital budget has an earlier decision date to make effective use of the summer construction season.
  - b. Tom shared the FY22 capital budget memo. For the current cycle, as in the FY21 one, there is a limited allocation available. The memo begins with a request to prioritize life and safety, plus only the most essential, projects. Other projects that were submitted included programmatic enhancements to make use of available funding, and for consideration in longer-term planning cycles.
  - c. Requests were reviewed and prioritized over a series of three meetings with division representatives. There is now a tentatively approved list and select projects have been pre-approved to being work.
  - d. Tom reviewed the FY22 list of projects, showing which were funded or deferred, and what future operating costs will be, if any, arising from the project. Total from operating allocation is \$7.3M. By comparison, this figure was \$4M in FY21, and closer to \$10M in previous years. The new projects come with an additional \$500k operating commitment for ongoing costs.

- e. Among the larger projects is a replacement High Performance Computing Cluster. The college hopes to fund this through a grant, to meet the needs of multiple faculty members. The project includes staffing to manage the cluster.

2. CPR questions

- a. Jill asked about the distribution of capital budget materials. Divisions communicate within their areas to reach staff members. For example, in the provost division, academic departments submit requests through the provost office.
- b. The college plans to use gifts and borrowing for implementing the Climate Action Plan and constructing the new student center. Both qualify as major projects.
- c. Several faculty members questioned the amount of the campus sign project budget - \$680k. The project may be phased over more than one year, and it will be managed to make the best use of any funding spent. Kevin will bring the feedback on the cost to the project group.
- d. Andrew asked if the FY21 and FY22 reduction in capital spending is creating a maintenance deferral. Overall, the campus is in good shape and Amherst has been out in front of maintenance. Significant catch up has not emerged to date. However, this is a concern and is being monitored. Kevin wants to return as quickly as possible to the annual \$10M allocation goal.
- e. Allie and Sydney asked about the student voice in the capital project process. Who to contact if students have suggestions? Student affairs would be one avenue, as well as the students on CPR sharing ideas at a meeting.  
Kevin and Tom will connect with Karu to create a forum for student voices, and work with AAS to uncover needs and what students want to see at the college.  
It was further suggested that CPR could consider capital needs in the fall, to receive input from the AAS representatives.
- f. Javier highlighted the Inn at Boltwood and Emily Dickinson Museum projects. These facilities are important parts of the college and town. Matching and gift funding has been setup for the Emily Dickinson projects, and Kevin affirmed that the college will invest appropriately in the Inn work to maintain the quality of the facility.

3. Other business

- a. CPR approved the minutes from March 9.
- b. Next CPR meeting will be on March 30.

Adjourned 9:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
S Hegarty