

**Tuition Advisory Council**  
Monday, February 10, 2020

**Council Members (✓ indicates the member was present)**

Stephen Battaglia – Student

- ✓ Katie Carr – Student
- ✓ Leslie Eldridge – Faculty Member
- ✓ Sarah Guenther – Student
- ✓ Johanna Pardo – Student
- ✓ Dennis Slattery – Faculty Member
- ✓ Matt Stillman – Administrator
- ✓ Susan Walsh – (Chair) Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Guests Present**

Josh Lovern

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The meeting started at 1:34pm.

**Introductions**

**Tuition Advisory Council Website**

Walsh showed the Tuition Advisory Council (TAC) website from last year, which was located on the President’s page, and said there will be a similar site for the TAC this year. She discussed the various links and materials that were available so people could track the Council’s work, including meeting agendas, minutes, and materials, links to legislation, the TAC Charter, and the communication plan for publicizing the work of the Council and hearing input from various constituencies.

**Advisory Role of TAC**

Walsh explained legislative mandate for the TAC and described its advisory role. She clarified that the Council does not make the decision on tuition rates and fees, but makes recommendations to the President. Walsh said President Schott will place a lot of confidence in this group and trust us to have looked at all the angles and give her our best thinking. Slattery said it played out like that last year; the process was challenging, but what worked really well was the President coming to us for our thinking. We made the best out of circumstances that were not the best. Walsh said President Schott’s recommendation to the Board of Trustees last year was exactly the recommendation that TAC made to her, including the different “what if” scenarios, which were very challenging. She said one tool to help determine what recommendation is made to the President is a budget pro forma, which is very interactive and allows us to model different scenarios.

## **Process of Making Recommendations**

Walsh said there are a lot of factors at play in the budgeting and tuition-setting process, and the details will be covered in future meetings. Several Council members discussed some of the challenges faced during last year's process and the ways this year might be similar and different. Pardo mentioned upcoming events with State Senator Jeff Golden and State Representative Pam Marsh to talk about issues around affordability. Walsh thanked Pardo and said it would be great to know of any similar events and things like student days in Salem. She said a lot of the work Council members do is educating people about our issues. She said it would help to try to move the conversations we have in the community away from just raising tuition to why we raise tuition. People need to understand how to connect the dots.

Slattery asked about the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and their work on the funding model (also known as the Student Success and Completion Model – SSCM). He asked if it looks like the funding model will be made more equitable to institutions like SOU. Walsh said it's too early to say, but it appears that people are starting to see the picture. She said it seems like they now have it as a priority to examine the funding model and the decisions behind it, which wasn't a focus before. Slattery said it seems like there needs to be a commitment on the state level that regional institutions are important. Walsh said HECC officials have said on record that regionals are absolutely essential to the state, and if they don't do well the state doesn't do well. Stillman said the timing is such that we can't expect any real benefits from this process anytime soon; the best we can hope for would be an alteration to the funding model before the next biennium. Nevertheless, he said, the Public University Support Fund (PUSF), which provides the money distributed by the funding model, is still grossly underfunded.

Carr said she would like to know more about the funding model. Walsh said the Council will receive quite a bit of background on that and many other relevant factors in the future, but basically, the funding model is based on degrees conferred every year, broken down by kinds of degree. She said enrollment is also taken into account. Carr asked if it looks at the number of students or degrees. Stillman said it focuses on the number of degrees awarded. Slattery said there's no reason to feel bad about not knowing exactly how it works, he has been through it several times and he still doesn't fully get it. Lovern agreed and said even having worked very closely with it there are things he and his colleagues are learning. Stillman agreed that the model is very complex.

Walsh asked if there were any further questions about the process at this time. She said it's also important to mention that the Board relies on the work of the TAC as well, through the President.

## **HB 4141**

Walsh talked about HB 4141, a piece of legislation passed a couple years ago, somewhat influenced by SOU's tuition setting process several years before. She said SOU's process at that time had some room for improvement, then we learned from some of our mistakes and fixed our process. She said the legislation now basically mandates a process very similar to what we developed.

### **Key Dates**

Walsh discussed some of the key dates in the tuition and fee setting process. She said at the March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee of SOU's Board of Trustees the Committee members will likely want status updates on the work of the TAC. She said the President's recommendation will likely be discussed at the April 20<sup>th</sup> Finance and Administration Committee meeting, then brought to the full Board of Trustees at their meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Calendars**

Walsh asked Council members to keep their calendars up to date. She said the Council will start out with one-hour meetings every week, but may need to look at going to 90 minute meetings later in the process.

### **Communication**

Walsh discussed communication guidelines for the Council. She said transparency is important and the minutes from TAC meetings will be available to the public on the TAC website. She also encouraged people to be thoughtful about what message they are spreading to others on campus and beyond. She reminded the Council that they are in a sense representing the President of the University.

Slattery said he thought the TAC meetings last year were some of the best meetings that he attended in the year. They were informative, intelligent, and tight. He said it turned out to be a really good experience. Walsh said sometimes we sit in meetings and it may feel like we're admiring the problem, but that's not what we do here. Lovern said TAC was commended for its transparency last year and encouraged people to ask any questions they may have. Walsh agreed and said no questions are off limits. She said we have many tools at our disposal to help understand the issues and make our recommendations, and we're still working on developing even better tools and systems.

The meeting ended at 2:20pm.