

Questions asked following the 3/4/19 Senate meeting regarding the Bunsis Report and SBU Budget

19 responses

The Bunsis report details Athletics as one of the fastest growing sectors at SBU, 2008-17, and one of the most costly among our peers, and over half of that (\$32m last year) paid by university "subsidy." Athletics is apparently losing lots of resources that could be put to alternative, even academic enhancement purposes. Questions: 1) are the statistics provided here essentially correct? 2) Why has SBU not provided its own transparent figures of program cost? (for example, specifically about the costs of football, traditionally, the most expensive single team and a growing issue of public health concern) 3) Once the facts are clear, would the Administration put the drain of athletics to a faculty or university-wide referendum? Is this the priority SBU actual wants in its budget?--or could we follow the lead of other schools (even in SUNY) that have recently prioritized academics and research over draining athletic programs?

At the university wide senate meeting of march 4th, the critical figure of \$423 million in "unrestricted reserves" was brought up, both in the initial presentation of the Bunsis report, and in the subsequent Q and A. Moreover, this figure was brought up in the context of an institutional memory of a repeated declaration on the part of university leadership that it shared faculty concerns about the dire consequences of letting go faculty who were doing everything right. The administration told us straightforwardly that it would never let faculty go if it weren't the last resort. In response to the seeming incongruity between the availability of reserves and this "last resort" claim, the administration has alleged the \$423 million figure is misleading and thus seems to stand by its "last resort" claim. Can the administration please provide better and more definitive and transparent proof of this, if in fact it still maintains it? If one reads the Bunsis report carefully, one will see that he anticipated that the administration would say what it did at the Senate Meeting, and Professor Bunsis is quite clear that we do NOT have the restriction the administration claims we do. Does this university therefore still stand by its claim that it had no choice but to let these faculty, including cherished adjunct faculty, go (realizing, in asking this question, some last minute adjustments were made for two of the three tenure track faculty in question---although none of the adjuncts)?

Are Stony Brook Foundation & Research Foundation funds and expenditures reported on by Stony Brook and calculated in the Bunsis Report?

The Bunsis Report concluded that SBU is not in a financial shortfall. Why, then, are we on an austerity budget in SHTM? We have 887 less staff from 10 years ago but the workload has only increased with enrollment. Can we please dedicate some money to hire lower-level administrative support staff?

Did the hospital's borrowing of funds for the MART building reduce the flow of revenue from the hospital to SOM and/or to the University in any way.

The administration claims that the only funds that impact our budget crisis are state funds and tuition. But there are many ways that funds flow from other categories. For example, the vast majority of IDC funds go to the president's general fund that he spends at his discretion. Can we see an accounting of how those funds were spent.

Why do we have the highest percentage of total salaries on upper level administration and why are we not cutting those positions?

Why was this report necessary? Why doesn't the administration provide such information to the university community on a regular basis?

What concrete steps are being made to bring SBU's inflated administrative costs into line w peer institutions?

Please provide a breakdown by bargaining unit - PEF, CSEA, UUP (east and west campuses), MC and PBA - by total number of employees, the salary totals, and each bargaining unit's share of the contractual raises amounts that the Admin is attributing too. Much has been made of UUP's portion but inconsistent answers have been provided by the administration as to the source of the numbers they are using to justify their statements that it is only UUP's portion creating the supposed problems when MCs and other units received substantial increases over the course of this last contract round. Thank you.

[Please note, this is a slight edit of the question I formerly submitted, but I have now changed the word "adjuncts" to "lecturers," which is what I meant to say. Otherwise it is word for word what I previously submitted. Thank you.] At the university wide senate meeting of march 4th, the critical figure of \$423 million in "unrestricted reserves" was brought up, both in the initial presentation of the Bunsis report, and in the subsequent Q and A. Moreover, this figure was brought up in the context of an institutional memory of a repeated declaration on the part of university leadership that it shared faculty concerns about the dire consequences of letting go faculty who were doing everything right. The administration told us straightforwardly that it would never let faculty go if it weren't the last resort. In response to the seeming incongruity between the availability of reserves and this "last resort" claim, the administration has alleged the \$423 million figure is misleading and thus seems to stand by its "last resort" claim. Can the administration please provide better and more definitive and transparent proof of this, if in fact it still maintains it? If one reads the Bunsis report carefully, one will see that he anticipated that the administration would say what it did at the Senate Meeting, and Professor Bunsis is quite clear that we do NOT have the restriction the administration claims we do. Does this university therefore still stand by its claim that it had no choice but to let these faculty, including cherished lecturers, go (realizing, in asking this question, some last minute adjustments were made for two of the three tenure track faculty in question---although none of the lecturers)?

During the fiscal crisis, the Administration had given large financial resources to groups below on campus. It would help to find out the exact numbers as they are in the hundreds of thousands for each. 1. Both International Admissions and International and Academic programs for the recruitment of international students. 2. Communications(Far Beyond Campaign and others) 3. SUNY Korea 4. Consultants 5. Out of State Admissions

In the wake of VP Byington's presentation can the Senate get a clarification on two matters on which the Bunsis document and the admin seem at odds: 1)the state of reserves and their disposition. Do we have reserves or not (the VP seemed to be saying both)? If we have reserves of \$245 million, as the records would seem to indicate what prevents the University from applying them to the needs of West campus other than an arbitrary accounting decision made locally; 2) the actual costs to the University of servicing the loans amounting to well over a billion dollars. If the State is paying the interest, why does the University list these as costs? If they are in fact not costs to the campus shouldn't our bottom line be 60 million dollars better than shown in the public records? Similarly, who pays down the principal, the State or the University? If I remember correctly this is a \$70 million per annum cost, and if the campus is paying

it, then it would seem to support the premise that these loans were a product of locally-conceived priorities rather than mandates imposed from outside. If so, construction costs have come out of the hide of core missions of the institution. All of this requires concrete and to-the-point explanations.

Vice President Kaushansky said that partial funding (in the millions I think) for the MART Building came from monies originally intended for a law school. That would have been while Shirley Kenny was President. How much money was transferred, and who was involved in making the decision that sums to be spent for one purpose should be spent on a quite different one? 2. The rhetoric of the VP for Finance was built on the premise that "you spent"---when the questions of the audit and those on the other side of the stage were that we had no hand in deciding that spending, the outflow of funding that was invoked to justify cuts. a) What was the process of deciding that spending on Athletics should increase while academic programs were ravaged? b) How much money was spent on advertising ourselves to ourselves in the Far Beyond campaign: the fees to whatever agency dreamed it up, the fabrication of the SAC curtain, the painting of the underpass, buildings, and the buses to a accord with the scheme, the fabricating of all those banal banners and flags on the mall, and so on, turning the library and the arts building into billboards? Who made the decision to spend that money while at the same time claiming financial exigency? c) How much money was spent on the production or acquisition of the insultingly lame visual materials at the mandatory meeting on harassment over Fall break, followed by the mandatory online training videos on harassment, and on the responsible conduct of research? That the administration did not understand that at a time when financial crisis was repeatedly invoked the first response to the hiring of an outside consultant who added nothing but a certain charm to the mandatory meeting would be "How much did he cost?" seems to me remarkably insensitive to its own community of faculty and staff. That the mandatory videos are named "training" videos as if we were being trained to fetch, sit, and stay likewise seems to me insulting, but at least honest: instead of treating harassment, say, as a problem to be explored by the collective intelligence of the community it is presented as a command to be obeyed, which is what it is--though faculty pleaded for education through discussion. Likewise: that we paid CITI for a video in RCR in which the section on Humanities contained nothing pertinent to Humanities and all the other sections were banal adds insult to expense. The President proudly noted that ten thousand people had completed the harassment course; a colleague told me it took her an hour and a half to do so. If that is representative those videos represent FIFTEEN THOUSAND HOURS of wasted faculty and staff time--but the administration seems to count only dollars, not the actual time and labor of its faculty and staff. The Report-It policies could simply have been distributed to departments for discussion--much cheaper, and more effective. 3) The RCR video repeatedly pointed to the potential harm to the free flow of information from research when academic research is tied to corporate sponsorship. And yet since that video the announcement has been made that the office of economic development is now being moved under the aegis of the VP for Research. That may save salaries, but how extensive has the discussion been of the potential dangers to research when a wall is breached, as in that between advertising and reporting in journalism? 4) We have heard from those who used to work in the hospital that the decision to turn a building planned as a Children's Hospital into a Cancer Center has required millions in repurposing. If so, how much is the cost and who is bearing it?

I'm confused by Byington's argument. Bunsis shows positive cash flow of \$161.5 million for 2017. Byington's graphic shows state appropriations for the hospital of only \$38.6 million. Subtracting that amount from overall positive cash flow would still leave about \$123 million of positive cash flow.

why are we spending so much for sports when other areas of academics and research are so underfunded

This question is indirectly about the Bunsis report (more so about Byington's PPT about administrative vs. instructional salaries), and about the financial state of SBU as a whole.. If we are in such a crisis to the point where we can't hire instructional staff (even at the adjunct level for several thousand per class), how much does it cost (man hours etc.) to handle the many recent administrative turn-overs? And where are we getting money to fund searches for their replacements? For example, Stanley mentioned that we are paying a firm to help us hire a new provost--how much does it cost to pay a third party (presumably) thousands of dollars to find candidates for us? (I am positive that many, many staff and professors will willingly volunteer their time, free of charge, to help with the job search process.)

Can Bunsis come to Stony Brook and defend his report in person in front of Stanley and Byington?

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