**BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**POSTED 7/27/2011**

**Question:** The automated slide door on the Center for the Arts side of the PAC opens when people walk past it, and there is a lot of foot traffic that goes past it. Due to the venturi effect, the amount of cooling lost through that door alone likely approaches that used by an entire small building. Would it be possible to simple install a 2nd door inside to serve as an airlock entry, or make the door an exit only?

**Answer:** We will remove the sensor from the outside approach and have the door open by a hand operated switch when entering the building. This method will keep the door from opening when walking past it.

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**BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**POSTED 6/29/2011**

**Question:** Would it be possible to hold graduation ceremonies in the PAC? Also, would it be possible to reduce the lighting in offices and encourage everyone to turn off office lights when they leave for the day.

**Answer:** Unfortunately PAC cannot accommodate the 8,000+ attendees that attend graduation and we are working on several energy conservation plans that are around lighting issues. We have been installing sensors when and where we can in locations so that no one has to remember to turn the lights out.

**Question:** Hold the graduation ceremonies in the PAC. Reduce the lighting in offices; and encourage everyone to turn off office lights when they leave for the day.

**Answer:** Unfortunately PAC cannot accommodate the 8,000+ people that attend graduation and we are working on several energy conservation plans that are around lighting issues. We have been installing sensors when and where we can in locations so that no one has to remember to turn the lights out.

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**BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**POSTED 6/14/2011**

**Question:** I am a graduate assistant. I wish to know if even students working part-time would be a part of reduction in force on campus. Would students be informed priory and would there be a chance to get another on-campus job that can be helpful to students pursuing graduation?

**Answer:** We realize that student worker and graduate assistant positions may be vital to a student remaining enrolled in school, and budget managers
have been instructed to protect these positions as much as possible. Student positions may be cut, however, if a department exhausts all other means to meet the budget reductions.

Both student workers and graduate assistants are appointed annually, and will be notified as soon as possible if a position is not being renewed.

Student workers who lose a position may contact Career Services for other available positions. Graduate assistant positions have multiple funding sources and requirements and handling of them is decentralized. If a graduate assistant’s position is cut, he or she should consult with the department or college about other opportunities, and may also contact Career Services about other opportunities to work on campus in other than graduate assistant positions.

**BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**POSTED 5/31/2011**

**Question:** Would it be too far-fetched to consider taking on a rich partner like China or its University in a partnership that would benefit us both for new revenue source?

**Answer:** There are restrictions on the types of partnerships we can have with foreign governments or universities; however, we are pursuing relationships that could lead to more international students with government sponsorship for their educational costs as well as more international students capable of paying out-of-state tuition on their own. In addition to creating revenue, this is in line with our goal of bringing a more global perspective to campus.

**BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**POSTED 5/4/2011**

**Question:** Has there been any consideration given to consolidating functions such as payroll, accounting, human resources, and procurement with other A&M Universities?

**Answer:** There have been several initiatives to create shared services in the Texas A&M University System. One example is in procurement. Consolidated Request for Proposals (RFP’s) and contracts have become the norm, which reduces duplication of effort for the procurement offices. Other consolidation of functions will be considered when feasible.
Question: Has there been any consideration given to contracting out imaging services, public relations, facility maintenance, custodial services and landscaping services?

Answer: Contracting out various functions on campus has been discussed. Options that will result in same or better levels of service and cost savings to the University will be considered prior to Sept 1, 2011.

Question: Are positions being analyzed and categorized into essential and non-essential for purposes of Reduction in Force (RIF)?

Answer: No, positions are not being categorized as essential and non-essential. The Reduction in Force process requires an analysis to identify functions that will continue after budget reductions are made. Employees who are best able to perform those functions will be retained.

Question: Is there a possibility of seeking a tuition increase for Fall 2012 in order to offset the budget cuts related to the 2nd year of the biennium?

Answer: Yes, it is possible the University may seek a tuition increase for terms beginning Fall 2012. However, there are various factors to consider before raising the cost of tuition and fees for students. The Board of Regents ultimately approves designated tuition increases, which may limit or cap our tuition increases as has happened in the past.

Question: It was previously asked if an across the board salary cut could be applied (to employees earning more than a “minimum” salary) in order to offset RIF job losses. We learned that the magnitude of such a cut – about 20% would not be possible because so many of our positions are already underpaid. However, is any consideration being given to a smaller salary cut, perhaps in the 3% to 5% range, which might not make up for the entire shortfall, but could still save a significant number of the more critical positions?

Answer: It is possible that the University will consider small reductions in pay to offset state appropriation reductions. This is complicated since University salaries are funded from various fund types, some of which have restrictions on use. Careful analysis and case by case review will be required to ensure that pay reductions, which may cause turnover, are effective in meeting our financial and institutional goals.

Question: It is my understanding a bill allowing furloughs was introduced. Would this be a better option than RIF?

Answer: House Bill 2720 was introduced to permit furloughs and it is in the legislative process. To follow any bill, go to http://www.legis.state.tx.us/Home.aspx. A furlough is more appropriately used for a one-time reduction and is not very effective for an on-going reduction to a budget. The reductions we
are facing will be for both FY 2012 and FY 2013 and may extend into the
next biennium.

**Question:** Will it be possible to save by using less heating and air conditioning?

**Answer:** Yes, the University strives to keep most facilities at 74 to 76 degrees during
spring, summer and fall operating hours. Winter settings are in the 68 to 70
degree range. Employees are encouraged to report heating and cooling
issues by submitting a work request to Physical Plant online at:
http://iservicedesk.tamucc.edu/

**Question:** If the Legislature does not approve the budget in time and has to go into
special session will the timeline for the RIF be adjusted if we are not going
to find out our budget until July?

**Answer:** No, we must prepare a budget by June 13 to meet the deadlines set by
the Texas A&M University System. Therefore, we will plan our budget using
the HB1 substitute as the basis for our budget. We are proceeding with
the reduction in force process so that we can provide affected
employees with one month of paid status and one month of leave
without pay status.

**Question:** In regards to the RIF, will there be priority given to permanent employees
to keep them over someone that is in a temporary role (either part-time or
full-time)?

**Answer:** The RIF’s analysis process requires decision makers to consider all
expenses, including student and non-regular employee wages when
reviewing operating plans. The RIF’s matrix does not evaluate temporary
or student employees.

**Question:** What is the impact to benefits (health insurance, longevity pay, vacation
accruals, etc.) if someone’s position is changed to less than 12 months or
less than full-time?

**Answer:** Employees who have 9- or 10-month appointments will have minimal
impact on their benefits if they are full time during those months. They
will receive longevity pay and earn leave during the months they work
and receive state contribution towards their insurance premiums.
Employees who work 20 – 39 hours per week will only receive half of the
state contribution toward their monthly insurance premium; their leave
accruals will be pro-rated based on percent effort; and they will not
receive longevity pay. Employees who work fewer than 20 hours per
week are not eligible for benefits.

**BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**
**POSTED 4/4/2011**
Question: Where can I find a copy of the Texas A&M University System regulation on reductions in force?


Question: Is it possible for an employee to work part-time instead of losing their job?

Answer: Each department head will develop a reduction in force plan that meets the needs of the department. Changing a position from full-time to part-time is an option. Such a change would impact an employee’s benefits. If you have an interest in working less hours or perhaps working less than 12 months you should discuss this with your supervisor.

Question: For those employees that receive notice their position is part of the reduction in force, would they be able to use vacation time and/or compensatory time to remain on payroll for the month of September 2011 instead of being on leave without pay?

Answer: Yes. Employees may use earned vacation and/or compensatory time to remain on the payroll through September 30, 2011. Any remaining time will be paid in a lump sum in October 2011.

Question: If a department is identifying positions for the reduction in force in June, would the supervisor or department head be able to inform the employee that their position is being “recommended” for elimination or a reduction in percent of effort thereby allowing the employee additional time to locate another position?

Answer: Informing employees prior to final approval by the President could result in an employee making a decision based on wrong information if initial department head recommendations are changed in the review and approval process. In addition, we will be working to fill essential vacancies with internal transfers. We have not made a final decision on this and will explore options that are in the best interest of both the employee and the university.

Question: Will the employee be eligible for unemployment if they are subject to a reduction in force?

Answer: Decisions about unemployment are made by the Texas Workforce Commission based on several factors. Workers who are laid off due to a reduction in force are eligible for unemployment compensation if they meet other qualifying criteria. You can learn more by visiting http://www.twc.state.tx.us/ui/bnfts/claimant1.html#qualify or calling 1-800-832-2829.
Question: The presentation at Staff advisory council listed possible reductions to student positions. Would that only be applicable to institutional and not work study student positions?

Answer: Each department will make decisions regarding both institutional and work study student positions based on available funds. Student employment impacts student retention which is very important for many reasons. For some students these positions are their only way to pay for college and educational expenses. Every effort will be made to assist affected student employees find employment on campus, as well as off campus. It is important that departments list all student employment vacancies with Career Services to streamline the process and maximize opportunities for students.

Question: When will the state budget be finalized so we will have a better idea of what our reductions will be?

Answer: There is a slight possibility that the state budget will be finalized by late May. However, it is more likely that we won’t know what our budget and resulting reductions will be until sometime in July.

Question: Does the years of service criteria on the Reduction in Force selection matrix include years of service just at TAMUCC or all state service?

Answer: The selection matrix is in draft format and has not been finalized. The current draft considers regular, benefit eligible service at TAMUCC.

Question: Do you have any idea of the number of jobs that will be reduced and more specifically the number of staff positions?

Answer: Earlier this year each department prepared a plan based on a 15% budget reduction. These plans estimated that 70 staff positions may need to be eliminated. This is a very rough estimate and will most likely change since we have many options to deal with budget reductions, to include not filling vacant positions, changing full time positions to part time, and exploring other ways to fund salaries.

Question: I heard that if we retained just 3 additional students each semester beyond our current retention rate, the university might be able to save one staff position.

Answer: Yes. Our state funding is based on the number of semester credit hours of enrolled. When more students take more classes and make progress toward degree completion, we receive more state funding. Student retention has a positive impact on revenue as well as critical university performance criteria.
Question: With the state budget reductions expected for Fall 2011, will employees be paying more for health insurance?

Answer: Yes, employees will likely be paying more for health insurance. We fully anticipate that the state contribution for health insurance will decrease. A special Texas A&M System committee, which includes representation from our campus, has been working on identifying options that minimize increases for employees in the face of reduced contributions from the state and continued increases in healthcare costs. Final decisions have not been made and cannot be made until the legislative process is complete.

Question: Will the Employee Betterment Program still be offered?

Answer: Current plans are to continue the Employee Betterment Program without any changes.

Question: Will the Employee Wellness Program still be offered?

Answer: Recreational Sports will continue to offer the Wellness Program to 20 employees each semester.

Question: What other benefits may be cut or eliminated?

Answer: We do not anticipate eliminating any other benefits. Current plans are to continue the Employee Assistance Program. In Austin, several bills that affect state employee benefits and retirement contributions have been introduced. Outcomes are yet to be determined.

Question: Is it true that using Century Gothic font for all email, correspondence, reports, etc., can reduce printing and printing related cost. Should the font become a standard use on campus?

Answer: Yes, it is true that the font will reduce printing and printing related cost. The use of the font is highly recommended.

Question: Will there be an incentive for early retirement?

Answer: At this time, no plans have been developed for an early retirement incentive.
**Question:** If employees do lose their jobs, will there be assistance provided to the employees that lost their job?

**Answer:** Yes, HR will provide employees with a packet of information that will familiarize employees with the resources and agencies that can assist with job search and placement. In addition, assistance will be provided through Career Services regarding updating resumes, etc.

**Question:** Will the reduction in force (RIF) guidelines look at more than employee evaluations? What are some of the criteria on the matrix that will be used to evaluate employee status in the RIF?

**Answer:** The criteria are currently in draft form and are not finalized. Some of the items on the draft criteria matrix are: ability to perform a wide variety of additional duties and tasks, employee’s institutional knowledge in this position, relevant specialized training and certifications, and ability to adapt to change.

**Question:** Would it be possible to do a 5% cut on all salaries to meet the budget cuts?

**Answer:** It would take approximately a 20% reduction to all salaries funded by appropriations and tuition to meet the projected budget reductions.

**Question:** Are there any sacred cows when reviewing positions that will be subjected to the RIF? Will any management positions be considered for elimination?

**Answer:** There will no sacred cows. There have already been some leadership/management positions that have been eliminated or restructured and we will continue to review consolidation of management positions where possible. Many vacant positions will be used to address the budget reductions, thereby, eliminating the need for as many reductions in force. There may be some departments that have a limited ability to take a reduction in force without compromising safety, security, accreditation or the mission of the university.

**Question:** Will there be consideration for having staff work from home to save electricity and reduce space needs?

**Answer:** Managers and supervisors already have the flexibility to establish work standards and location; however having staff work from home would not result in any significant savings as many of the facilities still would have to be maintained for student needs and other staff not working from home.
**Question:** Would going to a four-day work week be helpful for saving on utilities?

**Answer:** Currently to meet the student course offerings there are Friday classes and therefore it is not likely we will be able to change our workweek. As enrollment grows, there will be the pressure to expand the workweek maybe even to Saturday classes.

**Question:** Will it be possible to actually reduce faculty when considering our enrollment is growing?

**Answer:** As faculty vacancies occur, they will be reviewed to determine if there are possibilities to not replace these positions or to replace with adjuncts or other instructional personnel. It will be extremely difficult to reduce faculty in times of growing enrollments and therefore will likely not happen; however, we will be looking at increased faculty productivity and carefully examining small classes and low-producing programs.

**Question:** Is there a target date for letting employees go if a RIF is necessary?

**Answer:** Yes, based upon the current appropriation budget proposal, we would complete the RIF’s approvals in July and employees would be given notice no later than August 1, 2011. The current plan would be to give employees 30 days paid administrative leave and 30 days of leave without pay.

**Question:** Would any employees be allowed to take voluntary time off?

**Answer:** Any employee wishing to take voluntary time off should discuss it with his or her supervisor because the length and duration of any leave without pay may impact work schedules and assignments and could affect the employee benefit package. An employee who wants to volunteer to have a reduced percent time effort on a permanent basis should present the request to the supervisor at any time prior to May 2011, when it is likely that planning for a reduction in force will begin. The supervisor will take business needs into consideration in making a decision.

**BUDGET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Question:** Could you verify whether any specific positions have been identified for elimination due to budget cuts?

**Answer:** The State funding for FY 2012-2013 still has not been finalized. But based upon the preliminary information from the state, the University may have to reduce positions. If it is determined that a Reduction in Force (RIF) is
necessary, department leaders will be provided with formal instructions on how to determine which positions are critical and which positions should be considered for elimination. This has not yet occurred and so there are no specific positions identified for elimination at this point in time.

**Question:** What percent of salary reduction across the board would be needed to meet the current projected budget shortage per year?

**Answer:** It would take a 20% reduction in salaries for those paid from state appropriations and from designated tuition to meet the projected budget reduction of $10,000,000 annually. Given the high percentage that would be required, this is not being considered as one of our coping strategies at this time.

**Question:** In an effort to reduce the cost of attendance for students, would it be permissible to have a student club purchase used books and resell at reduced rates to other students?

**Answer:** Students are not prohibited from selling their books to any retailer or other organization. A student club that is supported by the University would not be allowed to engage in retail book activities on campus according to “Use of University Facilities Rule”. The greatest program to reduce the cost of books to students is to encourage faculty to increase the number of years a current adoption is used for instruction. This ensures that a large amount of used text books are in supply for all students. Also, if the book adoption is turned in well before the next semester, students can receive a more favorable payout for selling their used text books.

**Question:** Can the University change some or most building’s housekeeping procedures on trash and recycle pick up to avoid adding additional custodial support for new facilities?

**Answer:** Yes, currently there is one facility (primarily offices) that has changed housekeeping and each occupant must deliver their trash to a full size receptacle centrally located on their floor. The University will explore this change for cost containment and implement in other buildings where appropriate.

**Question:** Would giving more students the option to complete an independent study course vs. classroom instruction save the University money?
An independent course study still requires an instructor/professor to participate, evaluate, and review the student’s topic of study, project, submission of materials, and to ensure that learning outcomes are clearly met. It is also likely the student will use services such as Library and other technologies to fulfill the objectives of the study. There could be cost savings for classroom use.

**Question:** Will the campus consider using an e-commerce or internship to run an online surplus goods store and use the profits for scholarship funds?

**Answer:** In summer 2010, the University started using an online auction system called “Public Auction” that posts items much like eBay, but caters to schools, cities, and governmental agencies to provide a widely viewed e-commerce system for selling surplus goods. We have been successful in selling boats, vehicles and modular buildings. We are now exploring more goods to post and improve revenues on our surplus sales, but anticipate less surplus items as budget constraints will impact placement purchases. Currently, we have staff operating this activity, but should it be necessary, we will use an intern and could do a pilot program on eBay. Texas Government Code requires first preference to transferring state property to a public school or school district; therefore, not all property will be available for surplus sale via online auction or otherwise.

**Question:** I heard a rumor that there will be a 20% cut in faculty and staff pay. Is that true?

**Answer:** No. Recently, unapproved minutes of the Staff Advisory Council were inadvertently distributed. The minutes contained inaccurate information. The pay cut referred to was a proposal to decrease teaching salaries for summer session by 20%, not to cut regularly budgeted salaries by 20%. The Faculty Senate understandably has concerns about summer school salaries and the issue is under further review. There are no plans to reduce regularly budgeted salaries.