Frequently asked questions about the effect of budget reductions on academic programs and departments

What are the guiding principles behind the implementation of the required budget reductions in Academic Affairs?

1) Preserve our ability to provide undergraduate instruction at a level that serves the needs of our students. To the extent that a negative impact on undergraduate education cannot be avoided, work to minimize the number of students affected.

2) Preserve the quality of our academic programs, including both teaching and research activities, with reductions structured to protect our most outstanding programs. Preserving quality requires maintaining adequate budgetary resources to enable future faculty hiring, avoiding significant reductions in graduate student support, and otherwise making sure that the decisions that we make now have a minimal adverse effect on academic programs in the long term.

3) Minimize the number of layoffs.

In 2008 the University adopted a new strategic plan, with a focus on four fundamental priorities, to move it forward over the following ten years. These four priorities are related to Undergraduate Education, Graduate Education, Research, Scholarship and the Creative and Performing Arts, and Partnerships, Outreach and Engagement. These priorities underlie the principles that guide the implementation of the budget reductions, and the specific decisions being made are informed by the steps needed to achieve them.

Because of the magnitude of the budget reductions faced by the campus for Fiscal Year 2010, the Provost asked all deans to make specific proposals for budget reduction actions (as well as suggestions for revenue generation), keeping in mind the guiding principles of the Strategic Plan. The specific actions taken for each college for FY10 are described at http://www.provost.umd.edu/fy10reductions.cfm.

A report on progress made during the first year of implementation of the Strategic Plan can be found at http://www.provost.umd.edu/implement.cfm.

How are decisions made regarding program and/or department changes?

Proposals to change, reorganize, consolidate or create academic units or programs normally are initiated by departments, by colleges, or by small groups of individual faculty and students. Often these begin with informal conversations that may or may not eventually lead to an action. Under normal circumstances, faculty bring proposals through their deans, who in turn submit them to the Provost. The Provost may also ask college deans to consider actions such as program changes, or consolidation and/or reorganization of departments or other units. After consultation with the Academic Planning Advisory Committee (APAC), the Provost decides whether or not to pass proposals on to the Campus Senate for a formal
The Senate then gives its recommendations to the President on proposals that it considers. While full Senate consideration is not required for most changes to the curriculum of an existing program, all proposals to establish or discontinue an academic program, or to create, substantially reorganize, or close an academic unit, do require the Senate’s review and recommendation.

Legal authority over the University’s academic program inventory rests with the Board of Regents, with additional oversight by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The Board of Regents has delegated much of this authority to the President. The President also has the authority to create, reorganize, or close academic departments. However, decisions by the President to offer, substantially change, or discontinue an academic program, or to create, reorganize, or close an academic college, require the concurrence of the Chancellor and/or the full Board. The President always consults with the Senate before recommending such actions. It is rarely the case that the President has not followed the Senate’s advice on this kind of action, or that the President’s recommendation to the Board has not been agreed to. Shared governance of the University’s academic organization and offerings is vigorously adhered to and highly effective.

**How does the Senate’s consideration of program and/or department changes work?**

The University Senate (comprised primarily of faculty members but with representation of students and staff) is by statute an advisory body whose recommendations carry a great deal of weight. According to the University’s Plan of Organization (http://www.senate.umd.edu/governingdocs/planoforganization.pdf), the Senate’s primary function is “to advise the President on any matter of concern, including but not limited to education, budget, personnel, campus community, long range planning, facilities, and faculty, staff and student affairs”.

The primary venue in which the Senate acts on proposed changes to departments and programs is through its Committee on Programs, Curricula and Courses (PCC). This committee is chaired by a Senator and appointed by the Senate. It includes faculty, staff, and student representatives as well as ex officio administrators. Current PCC membership can be found at http://www.senate.umd.edu/committees/pcc/members.cfm, while the committee’s charge can be found on page 15 of the Senate Bylaws, http://www.senate.umd.edu/governingdocs/bylawsrevised11-12-09.pdf. For curriculum changes and many other actions Committee approval is the final step. Details concerning how different kinds of proposals are prepared and processed are at http://www.provost.umd.edu/PCC_DOCUMENTS/Introduction.htm.

If the Senate PCC approves a proposed action that requires full Senate consideration, the proposal is sent forward to the University Senate, via the Senate Executive Committee. The Senate’s recommendation is then sent to the President, who ultimately decides on the course of action to take.
What is APAC, and what is its role in this process?

APAC is the Provost’s Academic Planning Advisory Committee. See http://www.provost.umd.edu/Advisory_Committees/APAC.html for a description, current membership, and links to Senate documents advocating its formation.

APAC is advisory to the Provost. It is not an elected group but it is appointed by the Provost on the basis of recommendations from units and departments and in consultation with the Senate Executive Committee. When a proposed action is put forward, APAC will be consulted and will advise the Provost as to whether the idea is mature enough to proceed with the next level of review. For major initiatives, the Provost may choose to consult with this group before there is a formal proposal. For particularly difficult decisions, the Provost may also ask for a more formal vote by the members who are eligible to do so (most of the Provost’s senior staff are non-voting members).

An important step involving changes to the structure of departments (mergers, eliminations, consolidations), is for APAC to meet directly with those who will be affected by the proposed change. Guidelines for this process are laid out in the President’s policies on Procedures for Reduction, Consolidation, Transfer or Discontinuance of Programs: http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/ii800a.html.

Because of the magnitude of the budget reductions faced by the campus for Fiscal Year 2010, and possibly beyond, additional steps are being taken to include more input from students and staff to the decision making process at an early stage, beyond their current representation on the various formal committees. One additional staff employee has been added to APAC, to include representation by both exempt and non-exempt staff. In addition, four student representatives and three staff representatives have agreed to review proposals being considered by APAC, to reach out to their respective constituencies, and to report back to the committee issues and concerns raised by the community as proposals are considered at this phase of discussion.

When departments, units or colleges are reorganized, what happens to faculty?

Department, unit and/or college reorganizations can involve transfer of the tenure homes of faculty. When the transfer of tenure involves the movement of an individual or unit into an already existing unit, the faculty member writes a letter requesting the move to the head of the receiving unit. The initiation of the request must be approved by the faculty member’s current chair and dean. Then the receiving unit votes to accept the faculty member. The transfer is finalized when a Memorandum of Understanding is approved by the faculty member, unit head and dean specifying the terms of appointment, space and promotion considerations. When the move is the result of consolidation of units, the process is simplified. The faculty member requests a transfer of tenure from the dean and chair of the new unit and together they create a Memorandum of Understanding.
When departments, units or colleges are reorganized, what happens to staff?

(needs some text...)

When departments, units or colleges are reorganized, what happens to students?

(undergraduates: if no change to programs, impact on undergraduates is relatively small. If there are program changes, proposals must address the impact on instruction)

(graduate students can be impacted by changes.... proposals should address this...)