



# **Report on results of 2015 faculty budget priorities survey**

Conducted by  
Faculty Senate Budget Committee  
Fall 2015

February 23, 2016

This report provides a narrative discussion of the survey results.

The following additional documents, which were used in creating this report, are posted on the Faculty Senate Budget Committee website at

**<http://facultysenate.nku.edu/committees/budget.html>**

- **[Qualtrics report of the raw survey results](#)**
- **[Qualitative comments grouped by themes, by question](#)**

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## Executive Summary

**Background:** The faculty budget priorities survey was developed and conducted by the Northern Kentucky University Faculty Senate Budget Committee during Fall 2015 in consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. Input into the survey was provided by the Provost, the Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance, and the Chief Financial Officer. The survey was conducted via Qualtrics and the faculty listserv in November 2015.

**Response rate:** There were 321 responses:

- 45% of full time faculty responded (265/583):
- 6% of part-time faculty responded (25/423)
- 8% of the 321 respondents preferred not to provide rank/position; 2% indicated "other"

The response rates by colleges varied, with Arts & Sciences (51.1%) having the highest response rate and Chase College of Law (21.7%) having the lowest.

**Budget priorities.** Notably, 87% of all respondents ranked "address salary issues for faculty/staff" among the top three priorities (69% ranked it first; 13% ranked it second; 5% ranked it third). Of 11 items to be ranked, the top 3 items were:

- Address salary issues for faculty/staff: 1.95 average ranking
- Fund reduced teaching workload for faculty to accommodate research, programmatic grants, strategic investment initiatives, and graduate mentoring/capstones: 4.43 average ranking
- Increase availability of professional development/travel funds for faculty: 4.97 average ranking

While addressing salary issues for faculty/staff received the highest average ranking in all colleges, as Table 1 on p. 2 shows, the items ranking second and third varied somewhat across colleges.

**Addressing salary/benefits issues.** Of eight items to be ranked, the top three items were:

- Address salary issues for full-time faculty (e.g., cost of living, merit, salary, compression/inversion/equity) – 1.70 average ranking
- Retain more full-time faculty – 4.05 average ranking
- Maintain effective/small class sizes – 4.22 average ranking

The results show substantial agreement about the need to address salary issues for full-time faculty, as "Address salary issues for full-time faculty (e.g., cost of living, merit, salary, compression/inversion/equity)" was ranked first by 72% of respondents.

Overall, in ranking merit vs. cost-of-living vs. equity/compression adjustments:

- 45% ranked equity/compression adjustments first
- 40% ranked across-the-board cost-of-living adjustments first
- 15% ranked merit raises first

These rankings differed notably by college, with the percentage ranking equity/compression adjustments first ranging from 26% in Business to 70% in Health Professions (see Table 2 on p. 3).

These rankings also varied by faculty classification. However, the highest percentage of all ranks of tenure-track faculty rated equity/compression adjustments first: full (46%), associate (51%), and assistant (49%) (see Table 3 on p. 3).

Another important observation to consider is that any percentage-based salary increase made without addressing pre-existing equity/compression issues will exacerbate these problems.

Question #7 asked faculty to rank five types of faculty benefits from (1) highest to (5) lowest.

- 47% ranked funding presenting at conferences first (2.14 average ranking)
- 20% ranked sabbaticals first (2.97 average ranking)
- 12.5% ranked project grants first (2.95 average ranking)
- 12.5% ranked other professional development first (3.40 average ranking)
- 8% ranked summer fellowships first (3.55 average ranking)

These results differed somewhat by college. All colleges but Health Professions rated funding for conferences as the highest priority, and the percentages placing it first ranged from 30% (Health Professions) to 91% (Steely Library). (See Table 4 on page 4 for details.)

**Technology issues.** The survey indicates that many faculty struggle with outdated technology and classroom design issues. Some faculty lack the technology to do their jobs because their departments/colleges have insufficient funding. Faculty teaching online report frustration with a lack of support for development and maintenance of online courses, in terms of equipment, software, and IT/instructional design. The problems with outdated and insufficient technology also seem to contribute to student satisfaction and retention.

The comments indicate that concerns for equitable distribution of technology must be balanced with disciplines' varying needs. Even within disciplines, faculty needs vary, so some suggest moving away from one-size-fits-all policies. Many ideas for alternative computer replacement schedules were offered, including upgrading computers on as needed basis and providing tablets to faculty who need them. Faculty would like to see more standardization of classroom technology, with all classrooms being "smart" with consistent software and versions, and software updates scheduled for non-class times.

**Class size/classroom design/effective utilization of classroom space.** Many comments indicate strong support for NKU to maintain its reputation for small class sizes. However, some faculty are concerned that the new budget model incentivizes larger class sizes. Others observed that class size need not be an either/or proposition. Overall, faculty would like more input so that classrooms can have the versatility to accommodate different teaching styles and class sizes.

**Reducing expenses.** Many expense reduction ideas were offered. Three areas received frequent mention: administrative positions and salaries, athletics, and consultants. The survey indicated strong perceptions of overspending in these areas. Other suggestions included reducing spending on guest speakers, marketing/branding, and utilities (see pp. 6-7).

**Alternate revenue sources.** The main categories of ideas offered for generating alternative revenue sources include expanding lifelong learning opportunities, renting facilities, recruiting students, establishing more community partnerships (e.g., room sponsorships), looking for utilities/conservation opportunities such as establishing a solar array, and strategizing with competitive tuition rates to attract more students (e.g., guaranteed 4-5 year rates). Additionally, improving morale may help faculty become more inclined to give back to NKU, both now and in the future.

**New budget model.** While some faculty expressed optimism about the new budget model, many identified concerns, often dealing with questions of implementation and transparency, including that

beneath the college level. One worry is that the new budget model will be detrimental to students. Another is that it reinforces silos, thus conflicting with transdisciplinarity. While faculty seem to support the model's guiding principles, they wonder how these principles will be achieved. Examples of specific questions are included on pp. 7-8, and complete lists are available in the full report.

**Other.** The last survey question collected many additional comments relevant to the university in considering budget priorities. These comments reflected many issues evident throughout the survey, e.g., disconnect between faculty and administration, salary and workload issues, lack of resources, and the general feeling of being overburdened and underappreciated. While faculty have demonstrated a commitment to student success, they do not feel that the university demonstrates the same commitment to faculty success. There is a sense that faculty concerns are being collected, but not heeded. However, the sheer volume of responses indicates that there is still hope.

**Action plan for budget committee.** The Faculty Senate Budget committee hopes to address concerns raised in this survey by:

- further examining faculty and administrator salary issues
- promoting ways of increasing trust, collaboration, and transparency between faculty and administration regarding budgetary issues and decisions to increase understanding of how and why money is being spent
- investigating ways to have more institutional support for faculty for everything the strategic plan and new budget model are asking be done

# Report on results of 2015 faculty budget priorities survey

## Background

In Fall 2015, the Northern Kentucky University Faculty Senate Budget Committee developed a faculty budget priorities survey, which was administered in November 2015 via Qualtrics and the faculty listserv. Input into the survey was provided by Sue Ott Rowlands (Provost), Sue Hodges Moore (Senior Vice President for Administration and Finance) and Mike Hales (Chief Financial Officer).

The Qualtrics report of this survey ([2015 Faculty Budget Survey Results](#)) is available on the Budget Committee website (<http://facultysenate.nku.edu/committees/budget.html>). Similar surveys have been conducted for the past several years, and results of those surveys can be accessed through the Budget Committee website as well. In order to gather information relevant to the university's current budget challenges and its upcoming move to an incentive-based budget model, this survey differed from previous surveys in that it asked more pointed qualitative and quantitative questions and also requested that respondents give items unique rankings, rather than rate each item's importance on a 1-4 scale, as had been the previous format.

This report is intended to provide a brief discussion of some of the key findings of the survey. Because most responses to the qualitative questions addressed multiple topics, each respondent's answers were analyzed and broken into categories. A document grouping the responses to each qualitative question into themes ([2015 Budget Survey Qualitative Question Responses Grouped by Topic](#)), which was used in producing this report, is available on the Faculty Senate Budget Committee website. Representative comments are provided throughout this report. However, in order to get a full picture of the ideas provided, readers are encouraged to review the complete listing of categorized responses, as it will not only provide a stronger sense of the most prevalent comments but will also bring out insights that might otherwise be buried.

## Response rate

Of the 321 responses (see survey questions 1 & 2 in the [Qualtrics report](#) and [2015 headcount numbers from oie.nku.edu](#)), the response rates are approximated as follows:

- 45% of full time faculty responded (265/583)
- 6% of part-time faculty responded (25/423)
- 8% of the 321 respondents preferred not to provide rank/position; 2% indicated "other"

Breaking this down further, of the 265 full-time faculty indicating their college, Arts & Sciences (with more full-time faculty than the other divisions combined) had the highest response rate:

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| • Arts & Sciences                   | 51.1% (143/280)   |
| • Education & Human Services        | 49.2% (30/61)   |
| • Health Professions                | 39.6% (21/53)   |
| • Informatics                       | 37.5% (24/64)   |
| • Haile/US Bank College of Business | 38.7% (24/62)   |
| • Chase College of Law              | 21.7% (5/23)  |
| • Steely Library                    | 12 (Because the "Univ. Admin." total provided by IR includes other admin. faculty, a percentage was not calculated) |
| • College not given                 | 6   |

## Budget priorities

In question #3, faculty were asked to rank 11 items from highest priority (1) to lowest priority (11). Below are the three items with the highest average rankings overall:

- Address salary issues for faculty/staff      1.95 average ranking
- Fund reduced teaching workload for faculty to accommodate research, programmatic grants, strategic investment initiatives, and graduate mentoring/capstones      4.43 average ranking
- Increase availability of professional development/travel funds for faculty      4.97 average ranking

Notably, 87% of respondents ranked "address salary issues for faculty/staff" among the top three priorities (69% ranked it first; 13% ranked it second; 5% ranked it third).

While addressing salary issues for faculty/staff received the highest average ranking in all colleges, as Table 1 below shows, the percentages of respondents ranking it first ranged from 60% in Law to 83% in both the colleges of Education & Human Services and Health Professions. The items with the second and third highest average rankings varied somewhat across colleges.

<b>Table 1: College Overall Priorities Rankings (question #3)</b>		
<b>College</b>	<b>% ranking salary first</b>	<b>Top three average rankings</b>
Arts & Sciences	66% (104/157)	Address salary issues: 2.02 Fund reduced teaching load: 4.20 Increase avail. of faculty professional dev./travel: 4.96
Education & Human Services	83% (25/30)	Address salary issues: 1.50 Fund reduced teaching load: 4.20 Increase avail. of faculty professional dev./travel: 4.87
Health Professions	83% (20/24)	Address salary issues: 1.17 Add additional staff positions: 3.96 Fund reduced teaching load: 4.46
Informatics	72% (18/25)	Address salary issues: 1.64 Fund reduced teaching load: 4.16 Provide adequate funds to obtain, maintain, repair, upgrade, and/or replace technologies affecting faculty's ability to teach effectively: 4.84
Business	67% (16/24)	Address salary issues: 2.38 Increase avail. of faculty professional dev./travel: 3.58 Increase availability of funds for sabbaticals, project grants, and summer fellowships: 5.00
Law	60% (3/5)	Address salary issues: 1.80 Provide additional funds for technological infrastructure support throughout campus.: 4.20 Fund reduced teaching load: 4.60
Steely Library	82% (9/11)	Address salary issues: 1.73 Increase/sustain the funding for NKU libraries: 2.36 Provide adequate funds to obtain, maintain, repair, upgrade, and/or replace technologies affecting faculty's ability to teach effectively: 4.55

### Addressing salary/benefits issues

Questions #4, #5, and #7 were intended to drill down into the issue of faculty/staff salaries and benefits. In question #4, of eight items to be ranked from (1) highest priority to (8) lowest priority, the items with the top three average rankings were as follows:

- Address salary issues for full-time faculty (e.g., cost of living, merit, salary, compression/inversion/equity) 1.70 average ranking
- Retain more full-time faculty 4.05 average ranking
- Maintain effective/small class sizes 4.22 average ranking

A clear priority was given to addressing full-time faculty salary issues, with 72% of the respondents (205/286) to question #4 ranking this item first.

Because faculty salary changes can take a variety of forms, question #5 was intended to see how faculty prioritize merit vs. cost-of-living vs. equity/compression adjustments:

- 45% ranked equity/compression adjustments first
- 40% ranked across-the-board cost-of-living adjustments first
- 15% ranked merit raises first

As shown in Table 2 below, these rankings differed notably by college, with the percentage ranking equity/compression issues first ranging from 26% in Business to 70% in Health Professions.

	<i>Arts &amp; Sciences</i>	<i>Education &amp; Hum. Serv.</i>	<i>Health Professions</i>	<i>Informatics</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Law</i>	<i>Library</i>	<i>Not given</i>
<b>Merit</b>	15%, 2.33	7%, 2.61	0%, 2.65	14%, 2.38	32%, 1.95	20%, 2.40	18%, 2.18	27%, 2.27
<b>Cost of Living</b>	42%, 1.89	29%, 2.00	30%, 2.00	38%, 1.90	42%, 2.00	20%, 2.20	46%, 1.82	53%, 1.80
<b>Equity/Compression</b>	43%, 1.78	64%, 1.39	70%, 1.35	48%, 1.71	26%, 2.05	60%, 1.40	36%, 2.00	20%, 1.93

The rankings also varied by faculty classification, as shown in Table 3 below. It is interesting, however, to note that the highest percentage of all ranks of tenure-track faculty rated equity/compression adjustments first: full (46%), associate (51%), and assistant (49%).

	<i>Full Professor</i>	<i>Associate Professor</i>	<i>Assistant Professor</i>	<i>Lecturer</i>	<i>Full-time Instructor</i>	<i>Part-time Instructor</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Not given</i>
<b>Merit</b>	29%, 2.08	14%, 2.38	7%, 2.49	6%, 2.53	0%, 2.67	20%, 2.27	33.3%, 1.67	16%, 2.47
<b>Cost of Living</b>	25%, 2.25	35%, 1.98	44%, 1.80	59%, 1.62	67%, 1.33	47%, 1.80	33.3%, 2.00	47%, 1.79
<b>Equity</b>	46%, 1.67	51%, 1.65	49%, 1.71	35%, 1.85	33%, 2.00	33%, 1.93	33.3%, 2.33	37%, 1.74

Another important observation to consider is that any percentage-based salary increase made without addressing pre-existing equity/compression issues will exacerbate these problems.

Question #7 asked faculty to rank five types of faculty benefits from (1) highest to (5) lowest:



- 47% ranked funding presenting at conferences first 2.14 average ranking
- 20% ranked sabbaticals first 2.97 average ranking
- 12.5% ranked project grants first 2.95 average ranking
- 12.5% ranked other professional development first 3.40 average ranking
- 8% ranked summer fellowships first 3.55 average ranking

These rankings are supported by qualitative comments within the survey indicating that funding for travel to conferences is an issue of concern for faculty and that there is a perception of overspending on travel in some administrative units. Also, some faculty suggested reducing spending on sabbaticals and project grants until faculty/staff salary issues are addressed.

The results differed somewhat by college, as can be seen in Table 4, with the percentages placing it first ranging from 30% (Health Professions) to 91% (Steely Library).

<i>College</i>	<i>Arts &amp; Sciences</i>	<i>Education &amp; Hum. Serv.</i>	<i>Health Professions</i>	<i>Informatics</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Law</i>	<i>Steely Library</i>	<i>Not given</i>
<b><i>Sabbaticals</i></b>	26%, 2.77	7%, 3.18	13%, 3.30	20%, 3.08	20%, 2.95	20%, 2.60	0%, 3.18	21.6%, 3.64
<b><i>Project Grants</i></b>	14%, 2.78	11%, 3.32	9%, 2.96	12%, 2.96	5%, 3.65	0%, 3.40	9%, 2.73	21.4%, 2.71
<b><i>Summer Fellowships</i></b>	6%, 3.42	0%, 4.11	0%, 4.22	20%, 3.24	15%, 2.95	40%, 3.00	0%, 4.27	14%, 3.64
<b><i>Conference Funding</i></b>	46%, 2.26	75%, 1.39	30%, 2.43	40%, 2.32	40%, 2.10	40%, 2.00	91%, 1.18	29%, 2.50
<b><i>Other Faculty Prof. Dev.</i></b>	8%, 3.78	7%, 3.00	48%, 2.09	8%, 3.40	20%, 3.35	0%, 4.00	0%, 3.64	14%, 2.50

### **Technology issues**

Question #6 requested suggestions and comments regarding technology issues. A number of faculty acknowledged the important services that IT provides and offered compliments. Others expressed optimism that the Health Innovations Center (HIC) and the remodeling of Founders Hall will address some of their technology-related challenges.

Overall, faculty reported facing a variety of serious struggles with technology both in and out of the classroom, caused by old computers, outdated software, lack of smart classrooms, and inadequate support. Some faculty are compelled to self-fund equipment needed to do their jobs because their departments have insufficient funding. Regarding budgets for technology purchases, there are perceived inequities both within and across departments and colleges, "haves and have nots."

While online teaching is increasing in prevalence and expanding online offerings is part of the strategic plan, faculty who teach online express frustration. They sense a lack of support for development and maintenance of online courses, in terms of equipment, software, and IT/instructional design.

Student satisfaction and retention are also affected by technology, as indicated by comments such as "Students express displeasure and form negative opinions about the quality of NKU when our technology is so archaic" and "How can we prepare our students for professional careers and for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when all of our technology at NKU is antiquated?" A few

faculty raised the possibility that it may be time to consider requiring students to provide their own laptops; many have them anyway, and this could reduce the need for computer labs.

The comments in the survey indicate that concerns for equitable distribution of technology must be balanced with disciplines' varying needs for software and hardware. Even within disciplines, faculty needs vary, so many suggestions indicate moving away from one-size-fits-all policies. However, faculty would also like to see more standardization of classroom technology, with all classrooms being "smart" with consistent software and versions, and software updates scheduled for non-class times.

The responses indicate that the computer replacement policy needs to be revisited. Many expressed confusion about the policy, e.g., "Is there a schedule for replacing computers? Whose schedule is it? I have heard about this for the last seven years but have never seen it in practice." Suggestions indicate that a new policy should recognize that faculty have differing needs, e.g., "I'm not sure why the replacement schedule is independent of how the technology is used," and "Faculty should be given computers on an as needed basis," and "I think mandatory replacement every X number of years in regards to equipment is not a necessity, but rather surveying the user of a particular 'outdated' computer to see what, if anything, is problematic before replacing would make sense." Some respondents suggest tablets be provided to all faculty who need them and/or for faculty to have stipends related to technology, perhaps in lieu of the current mandatory computer replacement policy.

### **Class size/classroom design/effective utilization of classroom space**

Many comments throughout the survey indicate strong support for NKU to maintain small class sizes, which have traditionally differentiated NKU from other schools in the region, e.g., "What has made NKU a special place to teach has been small classes and on-on-one contact with the students." However, some faculty expressed concern that the new budget model is providing incentives towards larger class sizes: "It seems to me that the present class size strategy is counter-productive in the extreme and certainly contrary to what attracted me (and many students) to NKU in the first place." Other respondents' viewpoints differed, e.g., "It seems we are moving away from small class sizes, which is fine if necessary, but then let's admit it and move forward, instead of still talking about it as a potential selling point for NKU."

Some observed that class size need not be an either/or proposition: "We can teach many of our classes effectively with much larger sections ... We need many more classrooms with capacity of 70 seats, with department chairs having the guts to assign faculty to them," and "I think we need to think strategically. Some courses, for example, can be taught in very large sections—provided there is a fantastic instructor and TA support. Others really need to be smaller."

Faculty would like more input into design of classrooms, pointing out that some classrooms are not designed to be flexible and versatile and are still set up for strictly lecture-style teaching. Some classroom furniture is old/outdated. Several mentioned designing rooms so that whiteboards and projectors can be used simultaneously. In short, faculty have a variety of teaching styles and desire classrooms that can easily be adapted to their needs. Sometimes these updates need not be extraordinarily expensive, as one respondent indicated, "Many older classrooms could be upgraded by the simple addition of more power outlets."

Several ideas were given about scheduling and space utilization, such as offering more online and hybrid classes (supported by appropriate software, hardware, and support); being more strategic in scheduling classes; offering more evening, late afternoon and Saturday classes and perhaps providing

incentives for students to enroll in them; and investigating the possibility of all two-day classes (MW or TR). Some concern was expressed that new buildings have “too many ‘open spaces’ and classrooms/labs that are so unique that they sometimes sit idle.” Overall, faculty would like to see classrooms designed with the versatility to accommodate different class sizes and teaching styles.

### Reducing expenses

Question #9 asked respondents to identify specific areas or items for which NKU’s spending could be reduced; this question generated by far the largest volume of responses of any other question (18 pages in the PDF categorizing the responses). Three areas stood out:

- **Administrative positions/salaries.** Five of the 18 pages address this topic. Faculty perceive an ever-increasing number of administrators, “It appears that in a time of little to no funding, there are an abundance of new administrative positions. Again, they could be valuable but that is not always apparent,” and “NKU is so top heavy, it is about to topple over,” and “We continue to hire more administrators, such as assistant vice provosts ‘because the vice provost has too much to do,’ but yet we cannot afford to pay our faculty more, who are continuously asked to do more for no compensation.” Some respondents suggest that rather than creating new positions, perhaps some administrative tasks could be handled more efficiently/effectively by giving faculty course releases.
- **Athletics.** Nearly 3 of the 18 pages mention athletics. The move to Division 1 is referred to by respondents with terms such as “worst idea ever,” “absolute horror,” “totally unnecessary,” and “what a costly mistake.” Faculty would like more of an accounting of the costs/benefits of spending for athletics.
- **Consultants.** NKU’s use of consultants was another frequently mentioned topic. The general impression seems to be that much of the work that highly compensated consultants do could be done in-house. Seeing hundreds of thousands of dollars being paid to consulting firms while faculty are undercompensated is detrimental to morale.

Many other cost-cutting ideas were offered, with the gist of the comments indicating that perhaps spending on new initiatives and nice-to-haves should be curtailed while need-to-haves are addressed. For example, one comment pointed out that hiring more faculty to address the mission of the new HIC, while not addressing the salary issues of current faculty “seems misguided.” Others suggested cutting back on spending related to regents professors, sabbaticals, project grants, and other awards. Below are some other examples:

- implement tiered approaches to health insurance and parking; because the prices are the same across-the-board, the current system is more costly to those with lower salaries
- eliminate unnecessary guest speakers and trainers (we have many resources in-house)
- avoid purchasing furniture to replace already functional furnishings
- reduce the number of underutilized graduate assistants
- consider reducing the number of graduate programs
- avoid overspending on food/drinks at receptions
- reduce spending on landscaping; plant more perennials and all-season plants
- reduce spending on marketing, branding trinkets, glossy printing, and webpage redesigns
- evaluate travel spending—consider whether international travel should take precedence over faculty travel to state or national conferences

Several ideas were offered for reducing spending on utilities, including turning off lights, adding motion sensors, installing hand dryers, reducing heat/air conditioning on weekends, installing dimmers, and using up-to-date insulation and energy management instead of single pane windows.

### **Alternate revenue sources**

Question #10 asked respondents to identify alternative revenue sources. Some ideas echo back to the themes of faculty salaries and the perceived high costs of administration and athletics:

- Quality will attract students. Focus on current faculty instead of hiring more administrators.
- Increase faculty morale. In turn, faculty will be more inclined to donate and support NKU—both now and in the future.
- Athletics should be self-sustaining and better generate revenues.

Many other ideas were offered, and these are available in the full categorized listing of comments. Below is a summary of some of the major categories:

- **Education.** Expand lifelong learning opportunities provided for the community. Develop stronger strategies for summer/winter sessions.
- **Facilities rental.** Market more campus space (e.g., lake area, auditoriums) to outside parties for events such as wedding receptions and graduations.
- **Student recruitment.** More aggressively recruit metro, out-of-metro, and foreign students; establish agreements with more community colleges. Build stronger “pipelines” to high schools.
- **Corporate/non-profit partnerships.** Strengthen community partnerships, e.g., seek sponsorships for particular classrooms and more ways to “outsource” faculty and classes.
- **Fee-based campus events.** Charge admissions for more arts, planetarium, and specialty shows.
- **Philanthropic gifts.** Nurture relationships with potential donors, e.g., current students and faculty. Current faculty morale and salary problems impede developing a culture of philanthropy.
- **Utilities and conservation.** Consider using NKU’s currently unoccupied land to establish a solar array (such as that used by the Cincinnati Zoo) to generate power, save money on utilities, and perhaps even sell power back to the local grid. Collect rainwater for groundskeeping.
- **Tuition.** Consider counter-intuitive ideas like decreasing tuition or adopting a “tuition-freeze” model that would keep the rate the same for students for 4-5 years, possibly also improving retention and degree completion rates.

### **New budget model**

Question #11 asked faculty to provide comments/question about the new incentive-based budget model. Some faculty expressed cautious optimism and hope that this model will help NKU through its current difficulties, e.g., “RCM [responsibility centered management] could save this place if implemented correctly,” “The awareness of costs/revenue for university business, including academics, is healthy and welcome” and “It’s always hard to change. It seems to be more equitable, and I look forward to having it all rolled out and fully functioning.”

However, many faculty expressed questions and concerns. Below are examples:

- If a student doesn’t pass a class, where does the money go, as the new model states that money will go to “Credit hours earned”?
- With multiple overhead pools, the methodology of allocating funds leaves much that may not be readily apparent.

- If the 70/30 split is based on a student's choice of major, might that be make it even harder for majors not housed in shiny new facilities like Griffin Hall and the new HIC?
- Are the largest credit-hour majors necessarily in need of the highest budgets, e.g., a human family logically may need to allocate more resources to an infant or a senior in high school, even though these members are likely not the biggest producers.
- What incentives are there for those who do not do well in this model to change behaviors?
- Why is athletics off the table in this? We were told the shift to Div. 1 will pay for itself. Has it?
- Why are graduate online courses treated differently from all other courses?
- Why is it taking so long to actually hear about how the transition is going this year? It still does not feel like a very transparent process.
- It is rumored that all the Colleges are currently in the red under the "shadow model." If so, then the model seems useless as a tool for reallocating budgets within the University.
- How can departments be expected to work together for the betterment of our students while this model furthers silo funding?
- What meaningful input will be sought and how much actual input will faculty have? If the faculty do not have a proper role in this, why ask or care what budget model we use?

Several respondents expressed concern that the incentives seem to stop at the college level, leaving deans to allocate to departments as desired, e.g., "The devil is in the details, which happen beneath the college level. The deans need to get moving on this, so we have a better idea of how department budgets will be affected," and "Was disappointed to learn that the model only penetrates to the college level. Hence departments have no structure to use to make plans that benefit themselves," and "I would like to see the colleges demonstrate a model that trickles down to the smaller units so we can be certain we are being treated equitably."

Another worry is that the new budget model will be detrimental to students:

- It seems to incentivize larger class sizes.
- Its focus on student credit hours completed (rather than taught) may encourage grade inflation, ignoring that sometimes student failure is a means to student success.
- It seems to overlooks quality control while focusing on cost control and revenue generation.

Finally, there are concerns that the new budget model is in direct conflict with some elements of the strategic plan, particularly transdisciplinarity. Faculty predict that it will "breed competitiveness and hostility" and hinder the kinds of collaboration that the strategic plan encourages.

While faculty support the guiding principles of the new budget model, such as simplicity and transparency, many of the comments indicate that it is not yet clear how these principles will be achieved, e.g., "Get rid of the promotional propaganda that the new budget model is 'simple.' I may be, but it ain't," and "For all the information sessions, it lacks transparency and creates confusion as many questions remain unanswered," and "Though we talk about transparency, I do not think our upper administration can be transparent when they don't know what to expect. And that is a discomfoting place to be when even our leaders don't know what to expect, yet we're heading there anyway."

## Other

The responses to the survey's final question provide many additional suggestions, comments, or questions relevant to the university in considering budget priorities. Among these are also thanks to "all who are working with this new model to get NKU to a more comfortable and appropriate fiscal place" and to "the great leadership of President Mearns as he continues to lobby for more fair allocations from the state."

A growing disconnect between faculty and upper administration is evident throughout the survey. Responses indicate that faculty want to be more involved in the decision-making process, not only with things like classroom design, but more importantly, with identifying underlying causes of student retention issues. They lament the "distressing trajectory" of decisions being moved out of departments and into the hands of deans and other administrators.

In recent years, NKU has emphasized several different initiatives related to its strategic plan, and faculty have worked hard on these, all while receiving little to no raises, resulting in increasingly serious problems with salary equity, compression and inversion. The following comments characterize the feelings of many faculty facing these issues:

- "We were sold the idea that if we did extra work, volunteered for more activities, tried our best to go the extra mile for our students, things would get better for us and for the university. ... The one thing that bothers me the most right now is that new people are being hired in at a starting position for pay that is higher than people who have ... worked hard to rise through the ranks to a position of trust and responsibility. ... It is not all about the dollars, it is more about perceived fairness and respect."
- "Many of us still spend 80+ hours a week doing our best – only because we care so much for our students. Not compensating us is entirely demoralizing, degrading, and super depressing. Please find a way to acknowledge our efforts of us devoting our lives to NKU. Stop blaming the state and figure out a solution! What if they don't come through – what is plan B? I fear we are near a mass exit of good faculty from NKU – your time is severely limited in retaining good people. Act like you care."

Overall, while faculty are committed to their students and to the spirit of the strategic plan, responses to this survey suggest that the University should consider slowing its emphasis on new initiatives, "Raises to the faculty and staff at this point are far more critical than supporting the strategic plan. The President needs to understand just how overburdened and underappreciated the faculty and staff feel." While faculty have demonstrated a commitment to student success, they do not feel that the university demonstrates the same commitment to faculty success. The need for more investment into our faculty is a critical component to growing and sustaining student success and to achieving other goals of the strategic plan.

In reading between the lines of the responses throughout the survey, most faculty truly want to be at NKU and want to do their best for their students, but are finding it more and more difficult to do so. Frustration is evident:

- "It should be abundantly clear that the lack of even cost of living raises for the faculty and staff over the past too many years has caused a deep dent in morale. The funds being spent for Division One status and upper administration salaries is an embarrassment and a detriment to the faculty and staff. But no one cares."
- "Two years ago a faculty survey was done by the Budget Committee of the Senate. What makes you think this will be paid attention to?"

There is a sense that faculty concerns are not being heeded. However, the sheer volume of responses to this survey indicates that there is still hope.

**Action plan for budget committee**

The Faculty Senate budget committee would like to address concerns raised in this survey. Its plan for this semester includes the following:

- With the assistance of Institutional Research, looking more into faculty and administrator salary issues.
- Move towards revisiting the summer/winter compensation policy, which has been a source of confusion and could contribute to making these sessions more cost effective for all involved.
- Promote ways of increasing trust, collaboration, and transparency between administration and faculty regarding budgetary issues and decisions to increase understanding of how and why money is being spent (e.g., faculty would like more of an accounting of the costs/benefits of spending for athletics).
- Investigate ways to have more institutional support for faculty for recruiting, grant writing, scholarship, technology, and student outreach—adequate resources are needed in order to do everything the strategic plan and new budget model are asking be done.