

Senate Summary

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REPORT FROM PRESIDENT YOUNG

Student enrollment

Basic student enrollment headcount has increased this year by approximately 4 percent. "We have exactly 29,284 credit-bearing headcount enrollment, the highest the U has ever had," said President Young. That's up about 1,300 students—in spite of the U raising admission standards at the undergraduate level. Graduate headcount increased by about 7 percent, showing that the U is gradually moving toward a more heavily-weighted graduate student enrollment, which is one of its goals. In short, undergraduate and graduate enrollment is up, and administrators are pleased to see the increase.

Budget

U administrators continue to meet with legislative leadership and the governor on budget issues "We don't anticipate any mid-year budget cuts as we had last year, but next year we need be prepared to take the full brunt of the cut—in essence 17 percent on the state portion of our budget," said Young. Unlike last year, there is no federal stimulus money and we "are no longer awash in non-lapsing balances." Deans and department chairs are being asked to look for places to make additional cuts. At the same time, concerned leaders in the business community are beginning to talk about the need for some revenue enhancements. "The state has made great progress and to lose that momentum because of a slash and burn budget for higher education could have some long term adverse consequences," said Young. The business leaders are working with legislators to see if they can ameliorate the consequences of the budget cuts. "These leaders realize it's important to look strategically at budget cuts because some of these cuts could have more adverse economic development consequences than would be the case with a modest tax

increase if the tax increase is carefully targeted," said Young. Although the U's research grants and this year's fundraising efforts have been strong, legislators need to understand that nearly all that money is raised for specific purposes and is not transferable. Young is asking everyone to prepare for the worst and at the same time know that administrators are working hard to not realize the worst. "We will know more how the legislature feels about the economy as we get closer to the legislative session," he said.

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

A White Paper presented by Stephanie J. Richardson, Director, Center for Teaching & Learning Excellence; and Associate Professor and Division Chair, College of Nursing

Several studies show that a large amount of energy is expended annually on student course evaluations at college campuses across the United States and internationally. Students view the evaluation process as yielding small returns for effort spent; faculty often question the reliability and validity of results due to inconsistencies in rates of return and in student ratings and comments; and administrators collect and manage student course evaluations to establish a process for personnel development and retention, promotion and tenure decisions, but are often uncertain as to what processes and information are necessary for effective decision making. While each of the primary stakeholders understands the difficulty in developing effective evaluation systems, each also sees the potential value that can emerge from effective course feedback. For students, it's a way to help faculty improve their instruction. For faculty, feedback can improve teaching while building information for retention, promotion, and tenure. For administrators, feedback is vital to institutional

integrity. The complete paper is available on the Academic Senate Web site at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/asenate/>, then select “White Paper” from the left sidebar.

STUDENT MEDIA COUNCIL PROPOSED *Revision of Policy 6-401*

Senators were briefed on a new policy—Policy 6-401—that would decommission the Student Publications Council and the Student Broadcast Council; and replace them with the Student Media Council. The revisions were developed by the Presidential Media Education Task Force because changing technology has created new forms in which students can develop creative and strategic work. These new opportunities no longer fit under the former two-council system. The new council would also provide a stable funding base with a more streamlined and transparent system for student support. The new Student Media Council would oversee all University-wide student media outlets, related services, and business functions supported entirely or in part by student media fees. The policy will be debated at the November Senate meeting.

TWO NEW CENTERS RECEIVE APPROVAL

- **Sustainability Research Center**
- **Ecosystems and Global Change Center**

These two new centers are similar in that they both focus on interdisciplinary research in climate change (especially ecosystems), and in anthropogenic climate impacts—but they differ in their function. The Sustainability Research Center (SRC) identifies potential funding resources, and potential projects to receive the funding; CEGC delivers the actual research.

The Sustainability Research Center (SRC) is the research and educational component of the existing Office of Sustainability. Through the SRC, all campus groups engaged in sustainability projects will come together to take advantage of each other’s efforts, and to maximize funding opportunities. The SRC will provide a new foundation of support and training, based on philanthropic and corporate funding, for interdisciplinary teams of U of U researchers who are currently working independently or who are affiliated with existing centers and institutes. For example,

architecture is working on green buildings; political science is looking at cap and trade carbon taxes; and behavioral science is working in the area of environmental psychology and how to get people to change their habits. Bringing these groups together to work collaboratively can have a positive impact on the U’s scholarly contributions that can then help to establish the U of U as a world class research institution in the topic of sustainability.

The Ecosystems and Global Change Center (EGCC) will promote collaborative research in ecosystem and global change sciences; and will advance the understanding of the impacts of environmental changes on natural, managed, and human-built systems. EGCC also will coordinate and help manage field stations and infrastructure critical to interdisciplinary research, especially at the interfaces between existing U of U departments and training programs. The process would be used to obtain additional grant opportunities and further the education of graduate students.

SENATORS APPROVE NEW DOCTORATE IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

This professional doctorate in the College of Health is for currently-licensed occupational therapists who have earned either a bachelor’s or master’s degree who may want to advance their education. The intent is to produce leaders in the profession who will contribute to the body of evidence within the profession, who will disseminate knowledge, develop programs, and perhaps enter educational positions.

GRADUATE COUNCIL REVIEWS

Graduate Council reviews have been completed for the following departments and centers: bioengineering, communication sciences and disorders, educational leadership and policy, electrical and computer engineering, human genetic, languages, languages and literature (2006), pharmacology and toxicology (2006), and the Middle East Center (2007).

The next Academic Senate meeting will be held Monday, Nov. 2, 2009, at 3:00 p.m., in 115 CRCC.
Report by Ann Floor, Office of Marketing & Communications, University of Utah