

Chronological History of the
Academic Affairs Budget Advisory Task Force Formation

On March 21, 2011, Provost Covino shared his intention to form a budget advisory Task Force at the Academic Senate Executive Committee meeting, a suggestion for which no member found fault or voiced an objection. One committee member asked if the budget committee would be involved, and Provost Covino shared that he was appointing the Chair of the Budget Committee to the Task Force and there was no further concern voiced.

The Senate Executive Committee routinely serves the campus by administering calls for a wide variety of committee appointments and task forces, along with making recommendations for appointments.

From the Academic Senate Bylaws, Article XII.1.A.15:

15. The Executive Committee shall make recommendations concerning the appointments to committees, task forces, ad hoc committees, and other groups as required.

<http://www.csufresno.edu/aps/documents/apm/129.pdf>

The actions of the Provost in forming the Task Force were in accordance with the by-laws of the Academic Senate, and he was aided by the Senate Executive Committee in soliciting and selecting members. There are no actual or implied statements in the Bylaws of the Academic Senate or Executive Committee requiring the Executive Committee to consult the full Academic Senate on these matters. In fact, the Bylaws clearly delegate this duty and authority to the Executive Committee; therefore, by the provisions stated in the Bylaws of both the Academic Senate and the Executive Committee, the Senate has delegated this authority and responsibility to the Executive Committee.

Regardless, on March 21, 2011, Provost Covino announced to the full Academic Senate that a task force was being comprised. There were no concerns raised by the Senate following the announcement.

From the March 21, 2011, minutes of the Academic Senate:

D. Provost Covino discussed the enrollment targets for 2011-2012. Dr. Covino announced a task force is being comprised to develop

recommendations to Academic Affairs with regard to budget reductions and cost savings.

A campus-wide call for membership went out to the entire faculty, including all Academic Senators, for four (4) tenured/tenure-track faculty to serve on the Task Force. Again, there were no concerns raised by the Academic Senate following the announcement.

Following the campus-wide call, on March 28, 2011, the Executive Committee discussed the appointments in closed session--a particularly important practice when discussing personnel matters--which included Provost Covino (as he is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee). The Executive Committee worked with the Provost on selecting members of the Task Force, and there were no objections or concerns raised about forming a Task Force of this kind. The members present for this discussion (according to the minutes) were:

Chair Michael Caldwell, Jacinta Amaral, Thomas Holyoke, Pedro Ramirez (student member), O. Harald Schweizer, President John Welty, Provost William Covino, Lynn Williams and Michael Botwin (ex-officio)

From the minutes:

9. Executive Session.

MSC to move into Executive Session. (3:45 p.m.–4:00 p.m.) to discuss the nominations for the Academic Affairs Budget Advisory Task Force.

10. Return to open session. (4:00 p.m.)

MSC to present a list of eight candidates to Provost Covino for the selection of four task force members.

This decision was reported out and there were no objections noted. Three Deans, the Co-Chairs (Chair of the Academic Senate and Associate Vice President/Dean of Undergraduate Studies) and the Chair of the Senate Budget Committee were appointed by the Provost. The Provost was present for the justifications made for the eight faculty candidates, and the Executive Committee, exercising the responsibility to act in accordance with the Bylaws, made the decision to present the candidates to the Provost. Therefore, the actions regarding selection were not only executed by—but also authorized by—the Executive Committee of the Senate, who is delegated with the responsibility to:

"make recommendations concerning the appointments to committees, task forces, ad hoc committees, and other groups as required."

Since none of the members of the Executive Committee ever objected to the formation of the Task Force after the function of the Task Force was clearly explained, it is clear that this was a lawful, open and direct example of consultation and shared governance.

Following the initial campus call for membership, a member of the Budget Committee and past Chair of the Academic Senate, James Kus, made an inquiry to Senate Chair Caldwell regarding the formation of the Task Force versus the use of the Senate Budget Committee. Since Provost Covino made the request, Chair Caldwell referred Dr. Kus to Provost Covino. Provost Covino responded with the following to Kus, via email:

The Task Force I am assembling will potentially address a wide range of possibilities, ranging from curricular change to reorganization to accreditation to the support of strategic priorities for the Schools/Colleges. Therefore, a broadly-based ad hoc committee of both faculty and administrators is necessary to represent a broad range of perspectives on the programmatic, structural, and strategic elements of the academic operation that may have fiscal impact. The Budget Committee is very welcome to contribute through its representative to this discussion.

Kus (a long standing member of the Budget Committee), after receiving this response regarding the formation of the committee stated, via email:

My email to Michael Caldwell was in response to his call to the faculty for people to serve on the task force -- no mention was made in his original email that the task force was other than a Senate body (corrected today with another call). Thus my confusion. In the 1992-93 budget crisis, the Senate created a committee (if I recall correctly, also called a task force) to review priorities and make recommendations as to what departments/programs might be cut. I thought that Caldwell's first message was to set up a similar Senate group -- once I talked to John Constable, who had more information, and after yesterday's UBC meeting, it is clear that the group you are setting up is not in conflict with the mission of the UBC (or the work of URPAC) -- but that was not my impression based on Mike's first message to the faculty.

It is clear that the Budget Committee, including the Chair of the committee (Constable) and one of the committee's long term members (Kus), had no concerns or reservations regarding the formation and potential work of the Task Force. To claim so, eight months after the fact, is false.

Throughout the Summer months, the Task Force met with every Dean, including the Deans of the Library and Continuing and Global Education. At no time did any Dean voice any concerns or objections to the work of the Task Force. The co-chairs of the Task Force also met with every Dean individually and at no time were there any concerns raised about the Task Force.

The Task Force was formed utilizing standard Senate procedures, did not garner any objections from any party—including the Budget Committee—for over six months, until the recommendations were published.

Although I never received a request from the Budget Committee to meet or discuss the work of the Task Force, Dr. Nef, who regularly attends Budget Committee meetings, offered to share the Academic Affairs budget information (previously shared with all of the Deans) that was the basis for the task force deliberations. This has not yet taken place. Dr. Constable has indicated to Dr. Nef that it will likely be on this week's Budget Committee meeting agenda.

Prepared by Michael Caldwell
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