

Feedback for President Percy Regarding the President's Article 22 Presentation on March 15th Related to the University Budget

Joint report of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Program Reduction and Curricular Adjustment (APRCA)

4/19/2021

Committee Collaboration

The Faculty Senate charged the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Program Reduction and Curricular Adjustments (APRCA) in October 2020, and the committee has been working since December on projects related to upcoming program reduction initiatives. One aspect of the committee's charge is to assist, if requested by OAA or AAUP, in program reduction initiatives undertaken through the PSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). The Faculty Senate Steering Committee has delegated some work related to program reduction to the APRCA committee. The APRCA Committee created the first draft of this report, and the Steering Committee has reviewed and refined it.

Context

On February 4th, President Percy sent a memo to the Faculty Senate Presiding Officer invoking Article 22 of the CBA for program reduction in the Intensive English Language Program (IELP). A special Faculty Senate meeting (as described in Article 22.3.c) took place from 3:00 – 5:00 PM on Monday, March 15th. According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, during this meeting, the President was asked to “present a full description and analysis of the financial condition of the University” (PSU-AAUP CBA, Article 22.3.c).

Following the President's presentation on March 15th, a 30-day comment period ensued. The President solicited comments directly for his private consideration. In addition, Faculty Senate collected information from the community in order to craft its own feedback to the President. Links to the two sets of comment forms, one for the President and one for the Faculty Senate, were available on the [APRCA committee website](#). This document reports on comments received through the online form.

If, having received and considered feedback from the PSU community, the President declares that a financial exigency exists or that the reduction or elimination of the IELP is necessary, he will put forth a provisional plan as outlined in Article 22.4. The President's provisional plan will be linked on the APRCA Committee website. The PSU community will be invited for another 30-day period to comment on the plan, and the APRCA website will again host links to two sets of comment forms (one for the President and one for the Faculty Senate). At the conclusion of the second 30-day comment period, the President will announce a final plan and will notify the affected department about how the reductions will take place.

Comments received

This report summarizes themes in the 102 comments and 19 uploaded files received through the Faculty Senate feedback form, in addition to several comments received directly by the Presiding Officer of Faculty Senate. In the interest of full transparency, all of the raw data are included in an online [supplement](#) to this report.

Rebound in International Enrollment

In aggregate, comments related to this topic note that the federal restrictions on visas over the past 5 years, combined with the travel restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, adversely affected enrollments in IELP through no missteps of the program itself. One comment notes, “Clearly the decline in enrollment in PSU's IELP was caused by President Trump's efforts to keep foreigners, including students, out of the country through visa delays and denials. Were it not for Trump's visa delays and denials, the IELP's tuition would certainly have continued to exceed the budgetary expenses” (April 13, 2021).

A number of comments discuss a likely surge or rebound in international enrollment. This quote provides a sample: “This is temporary! Portland State is still beloved by our sponsored students and sponsoring organizations. They are preparing to return when in-person teaching begins in the fall term. Moving through retrenchment now based on enrollments impacted by covid [sic] is not wise. We will not be prepared for the students who will likely be returning to us in the Fall 21 and Winter 22 terms” (April 6, 2021).

The comments question the 5-year timeline portrayed in the President's presentation for restoration of enrollments, speculating that enrollments could rebound more quickly. The IELP Director, Julie Haun, reports that no one can yet predict how the international market for Intensive English Programs will develop as we emerge from the pandemic (see appendix material). Holding off on major changes in IELP would allow PSU to respond swiftly to opportunities if enrollment rebounds. A comment notes, “It is difficult to build back strong units like the IELP once they have been dismantled” (March 28). Another comment pleads that at the very least, if cuts are needed, they should be based on pre-COVID numbers.

Questions of fairness arise regarding PSU profiting from IELP revenues during good times but cutting faculty during lean times. Speaking of our IELP and other English Language Programs around the US, an emeritus faculty member from the Department of Applied Linguistics notes, “I repeatedly saw university administrations treat intensive English programs as geese that laid golden eggs until, of course, because of some political, political, or social crisis abroad or here, the eggs stopped, and the administrators quickly moved to reduce or get rid of the program” (April 12, 2021). Another commenter notes that PSU was happy to accept profits from IELP when times were good, and asks, “If the IELP had endeavored to become an entirely self-support independent program when their tuition exceeded expenses and managed the profit themselves, [would they be] in their current situation with no reserves?” (April 13, 2021). Other academic units embedded in large colleges and schools are buffered from such enrollment fluctuations.

President's Budget Presentation: Enrollment numbers in IELP

The comments agree with the President's Presentation that IELP has seen a decline in enrollment, especially over the past 5 years. Additional context is needed, however: "What is not highlighted is the fact that even though our IELP was on the decline, we still had more students than most other IEP programs nationally" (April 6, 2021). The PSU program's relative strength during this difficult time bodes well for future revival.

In terms of forecasting, several comments note that the campus community has not been provided with adequate information regarding how the administration has modeled the enrollment forecast. Because student enrollment correlates with tuition revenue, transparency around the data and method used for the enrollment forecast would be essential for providing a full description of the financial condition of the university (as required by the PSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement). The Faculty Senate would appreciate seeing the evidence upon which the administration has based the forecast of the downturn in enrollment and would like to know the accuracy of these projections over a 4-5-year period during the aftermath of the pandemic. An APRCA committee member asked whether an impartial researcher/evaluator or team could be tasked to answer address the enrollment question.

President's Budget Presentation: Federal and State Funding

PSU has benefited from the CARES Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA). President Percy sent a [message](#) to the University community about this topic on March 25, 2021, noting "PSU is receiving approximately \$105 million in federal relief."

Comments put this infusion of financial resources into conversation with the prospect of cuts to IELP. One comment asks, "I wonder how the administration's budgeting plans have taken the American Rescue Plan into account?" (April 14, 2021). Another stated, "PSU is receiving \$105 million from the American Rescue Plan. The university's dire budget predictions are now unfounded in light of this major cash injection" (April 13, 2021). Another comment discusses both federal and state funding, noting, "With funding arriving from the American Rescue Plan and a projected Oregon tax refund kicker in 2022, why should PSU move forward at this particular moment to compromise one of its key assets, the IELP?" (April 1, 2021). Funding from these sources, in combination with hires made around the University (including a cluster hire in CLAS) spurred this statement: "Simply put, they [the administration] did not make their case that the entire university would face dire financial straits if they did not retrench a widely accredited program for international student inclusion at PSU taught by long term NTTF faculty" (appendix document, April 16, 2021). The Faculty Senate is of course aware that one-time funding cannot forever support ongoing budget items and that much of the federal funding comes with strict stipulations about how PSU can spend it. Nonetheless, it does seem as if the funds should provide a bit of breathing room to see whether international enrollments for IELP rebound to pre-COVID levels.

President's Budget Presentation: Mistrust of Data

Feedback on the President's Budget Presentation includes requests for additional transparency on source data and models used for projections, as well as a plea for more accurate visual representation of material.

In terms of the source data, feedback notes that the financial figures provided by FADM on February 22nd on slide #22 at the [Budget Town Hall](#) (and reiterated in other venues, such as the Board of Trustee Meetings and the OAA Budget Town Hall) are difficult to reconcile with any data available to faculty

members through DataMaster reports. One eloquent comment asks, “Different sources of information give different figures for General Fund revenues and expenses. Which numbers should we trust?” (File uploaded with comment, April 13, 2021). In specific, slide #22 understates the positive balance (revenues minus expenses) in general funds by a mean of \$9.7 million annually over the last five years. The basis of this statement is a comparison between slide 22 (the number showing the difference between the two lines on the graph) and the data available through DataMaster report F0040 (the difference between actual revenues and actual expenses). This discrepancy undermines claims that the administration is providing accurate and transparent data.

Relating again to Slide #22, further examination suggests that management reserve expenditures have been aggregated with general fund expenditures; it would have been helpful to know this information up-front in the report. In addition, some budget-related presentations refer to Education & General funding while others refer to the General Fund; the slippage between these two categories is confusing and somewhat misleading. A faculty member expresses this concern: “The administration should state the method by which the numbers in the report to Faculty Senate were obtained, so that faculty can better understand what significance the numbers have. Transparency means that it should be possible for any member of the University community (or for that matter, the interested public) to find the source of past and current information that is being claimed as the basis for future projections” (File uploaded with comment, April 13, 2021). The Faculty Senate requests that future budget presentations make clear the source of information. Slides should reference DataMaster report numbers so that faculty can cross-reference the publicly-available data with the presentation; if the administration is using other numbers, then the Faculty Senate requests that those numbers be made public.

In addition to mistrusting the numbers, comments note some issues with the design of the budget presentation materials. For example, the ways in which trend lines are displayed on slides 12, 13, 22, and 24 of the Budget Town Hall seem confusing and potentially misleading. First, the non-zero baselines exaggerate trends and makes them look steeper and more severe. Second, on slides 12 and 13 the primary and secondary Y axes are not titled, so it is unclear as to which of the three data series is associated with which axis. This type of confusing information only serves to undermine the confidence of the faculty and should be rectified in any future reiterations of the budget information.

Article 22 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement asks the President to solicit feedback from the Faculty Senate regarding his budget presentation. Faculty feedback will be more useful and accurate if the faculty are fully informed of the financial situation. Because the current budget plan seems to be to engage in budget reductions of 1.5% for the next 4 years, and because the Article 22 process for the IELP will likely provide a template for other such processes in future years, the Faculty Senate requests greater budget transparency.

President’s Budget Presentation: RCAT Numbers

Regarding the use of the Revenue Cost Attribution Tool (RCAT) numbers (slide 25 (as revised) of President’s Presentation), the Faculty Senate wishes to point out that even if the IELP were eliminated entirely, the indirect costs attributed to that program would not disappear. Instead, they would be attributed to other areas of the University. The presentation seems to imply that the expense is attributable to IELP and that eliminating or reducing IELP would erase that cost. Additionally, it’s worth pointing out that IELP provides in-shop admissions and advising services (see below for more on this point), and it is thus unfair to drive out indirect costs for similar centrally-provided services that IELP

students do not use. One comment suggests, “We don't seem to evaluate services such as the Writing Center by such metrics, and I don't know if they're entirely apt for evaluating the value that the IELP provides to as a support service for currently enrolled students” (April 12, 2021). Furthermore, presenting select RCAT data out of context is misleading and creates the false equivalence of comparing this unique program to a school or college.

Timing: IELP Merger underway with Office of International Affairs

IELP merged with Office of International Affairs, as approved by Faculty Senate in April 2020. The process to move some functions currently undertaken by IELP into OIA is still underway. These functions include, on the ‘upstream’ side, outreach, marketing, and admissions, and on the downstream side, registration, cultural engagement, advising, and new student services. Currently, all of those functions are in the IELP’s direct budget, whereas other academic departments “pay” for those items through indirect costs in the RCAT. Once the merger is complete and these functions move off IELP’s budget, their financial situation will look different in the RCAT. (See appendix material from IELP Director Julie Haun for a fuller explanation of this issue).

Comments suggest that it would be premature to cut IELP before the merger has been completed. One commenter asks, “My greatest question for the APRCA regarding the President’s Budget presentation is: why is the university considering cutting a program that is in the middle of a merger with the Office of International Affairs?” (April 14, 2021). Similarly, another comment notes, “the IELP’s merger into OIA was done to FIX the budgeting issue by separating the IELP services budget from the instructional budget. There hasn't been time for the merger to be fully articulated, let alone finalized. Wouldn't it be worth seeing how things work out with the newly formed unit before slashing and cutting based on guestimates?” (April 8, 2021). Both of these comments ask that we allow the merger to unfold before making changes to IELP staffing.

PSU Goals of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

A number of comments note the important contributions such positive relationships create in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The comments pertain both to the students that IELP serves and to the faculty in the program.

On the topic of student diversity, one comment asks, “If diversity and social justice are a top priority at PSU then how can we justify cutting a program that directly impacts the access for our non-white students? Doesn't add up for me” (April 16, 2021). Another notes, “On behalf of the Cultural Resource Centers (Pan-African Commons; La Casa Latina Student Center; Multicultural Student Center; Pacific Islander, Asian, Asian American Student Center; Native American Student and Community Center Student Programs and the Middle Eastern North African South Asian Student Center) at PSU, we would like to express our support for IELP. The international community is a vital partner in our work” (April 15, 2021). Another simply states that it seems wrong to “dismantle a department which brings only diversity to campus” (appendix document, April 16, 2021). These comments suggest that cuts to IELP will undermine diversity gained from international enrollment and the support of multilingual students.

On the topic of equity related to faculty, the AAUP union statement and other comments point out that the faculty in IELP are disproportionately female and less well paid than faculty elsewhere in the University. Laying off these NTT (non-tenure track) faculty members constitutes a challenge for our understandings of fairness and equity in budget cuts.

IELP: Strong International Reputation and Rapport with Students and Alumni

Another theme in the comments relates to the IELP program's strong international reputation and its rapport with its current students and alumni. Based in the International Student and Scholars office, one PSU staff member remarks, "The IELP has been a leader in English Language programs in the United States for many years and has a reputation for being one of the most comprehensive and rigorous English language programs in Oregon" (April 12, 2021). Another comment notes, "The IELP at PSU is well-regarded nationally and internationally, helping to support PSU's strong reputation around the world." (April 5, 2021). The Director of International Special Programs of OIA writes, "I have worked often and closely with IELP since 1992. The IELP has been an indispensable partner over the years and has enabled our programs to be successful and generate meaningful revenue for PSU" (March 30, 2021). The reputation of the program relates directly to the people who staff it.

IELP faculty and staff are an asset to the institution. They are skilled, caring, compassionate employees. Numerous comments support this point. A number of Fulbright scholars whose introduction to the US came through their experiences with PSU's IELP remark on the strong positive emotions they experienced at the time and still feel for the program. One comment from a program alumnus says, "IELP has terrific teachers and staff who genuinely care about their students. I had one of the best life experiences in the U.S. because of the IELP Fulbright pre-academic program in July 2016" (April 11, 2021). Another Fulbright scholar writes, "This program made me feel welcomed, respected and most importantly prepared!" A third notes, "The IELP program and PSU provide Fulbrighters with an unforgettable cosmopolitan experience to make friends and do the first networking. Professors and assistants of the IELP program are first-class people, kind, open-minded, academic competent" (March 26, 2021). They appreciate the cultural and academic preparation that they received and the confidence that the program helped them build.

Other international students comment positively on the compassion, love, and community that they found in IELP. One remarks, "The IELP teachers and staff do understand international students and their cultures which makes them feel more comfortable and supportive. They connect us as international students to each other, learn new cultures and American culture which make life here easier and happier. I have many international friends because of the program. Without friends and family, I would be a different person going through graduate school alone. The IELP is my first home here in the US" (April 12, 2021). Another alumnus writes, "The IELP team is not just an English language school but it is a new home and family for International students" (April 1, 2021). Another comments, "The IELP means the world to me! It is not a program. It is a family of caring teachers and staff who care about the students' future and invest so much in supporting students' goals" (April 11, 2021). An academic advisor at PSU sums it up by stating, "The IELP does an amazing job of not only teaching international students the high level [E]nglish skills they will need at the college level in order to be successful, but also in teaching and acclimating them to U.S. culture and the U.S. academic culture and norms. Our colleagues in the IELP are highly knowledgeable, dedicated, and seasoned professionals."

A number of comments note that PSU stands to lose a lot by laying off the current staff, especially if rebounding enrollments for IELP require us to rehire others in a few years. Building back up to meet new demand would be time-consuming and difficult. A subset of these comments suggests that faculty and staff with experience in IELP could, rather than being laid off, be deployed to other campus initiatives (e.g., reaching out to the refugee community in Portland; participating in Bridge classes; or helping staff

the Writing Center, the Learning Center, Global Diversity and Inclusion, International Admissions, and the first-year experience program).

IELP Student Support Services Provided to the Wider Campus Community

A number of comments emphasize the student support that IELP offers. An IELP faculty member points out, “We work closely with the Department of Applied Linguistics, University Studies, the PSU Writing Center, the PSU Diversity Action Council, the Graduate School, and the Maseeh College of Engineering and Computer Science” (April 1, 2021).

The course UNST 170: Multilingual FRINQ Lab receives special attention and appreciation. This course, among others, helps students acclimate to both the language and the culture of the university and enhances retention of international and multilingual students. One FRINQ instructor writes, “The IELP Program has been very useful to my Freshman Inquiry students. Several who did not feel confident with their English skills took the FRINQ classes for such students and benefited from them a great deal” (March 18, 2021). Another PSU instructor notes, “I see the services as IELP as invaluable for the retention of students I have worked with from the multilingual FRINQ writing support to the academic writing classes for my students whose English is not their first language. The retention of these students ensures that we can continue to meet the objectives of our federal grants” (March 22, 2021). One faculty member frankly wonders, “Can we really 'afford' to lose the IELP when there is no student support system for ESL/L2 students OUTSIDE of the IELP at PSU?” (March 30, 2021). Other support services provided by IELP, including advising and tutoring workshops, also receive praise.

IELP faculty work with University Studies and Engineering to support both international and domestic students. IELP brings international students into these programs and supports them while they are here; without the IELP “pipeline,” these students would not enhance revenues in other areas of the University.

Several comments note the close and mutually beneficial integration between IELP and the Department of Applied Linguistics, particularly on the MA in TESOL. A faculty member in Applied Linguistics wrote, “Many of our students have been IELP students themselves and have worked or volunteered with the IELP. Many of the IELP faculty hold an MA TESOL from our department, and IELP instructors have regularly served on MA TESOL student thesis and presentation committees” (March 19, 2021). Another comments, “The [IELP] ... provides many opportunities for undergraduate Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Certificate and graduate students in the MA Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)” (April 5, 2021). For a full discussion of the beneficial interactions, please see a strong letter of support (provided in the appendix) for IELP from Susan Conrad, Chair of the Department of Applied Linguistics.

Conclusion

PSU has experienced so many budget crises over the past quarter of a century that we are already an extremely efficient institution. Any program reductions should reflect long-term priorities and strategies. Given our desirable position on the Pacific Rim and the international reputation of our IELP program, we are well positioned to take advantage of a rebound or surge in international students. Any program reduction decisions should keep this future opportunity firmly in mind.

Faculty Senate is committed to enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion across campus. Given the robust feedback received from many former and continuing international students, it is clear that IELP is a critical part of their education at PSU. Reducing the IELP any further will have a dramatic impact on the University's ability to support the current and future multilingual students who so richly add to the campus climate and university ideals.