

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Finance Committee

Campus Governance

Spring 2023

Finance Annual Report 2022/23

Finance Committee

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/finance>

As I have discussed previously with you, the Finance Committee finds it difficult to fulfill its charge, copied here for convenience:

"The Finance Committee reviews the annual campus budget and advises the chancellor on the formation of budgetary proposals. The committee considers the allocation of financial resources to and within the campus and examines the financial impact of all major proposals and policy initiatives. The committee reviews and recommends policies on financial management within the Morris campus. It monitors deficits, reserves, and endowments."

I as chair certainly feel that substantial changes need to be made for the Finance Committee to effectively serve the campus. In several discussions at meetings, it was made clear that the committee generally shares this negative assessment. Past chairs have communicated to me similar concerns.

The committee charge refers to collecting information ("reviews", "considers", "examines", and "monitors"). It also refers to acting on this information ("advises" and "recommends"). With the current structure, collection of information is problematic and acting on it is worse.

One problem is lack of time. This year we had seven scheduled meetings, as opposed to more in previous years. Another problem is the information we are given is not always high quality for a number of reasons. A common situation is the numbers we are discussing are future projections and the dominant theme is that we don't really know. One time, connected with Huron Consulting, the central administration explicitly decided not to share information we asked for with us. Sometimes we are given detailed information about non-central issues, such as small fluctuations in various quantities over time, or changes in programs that involve very few students. Another problem is that interpreting the information we are given requires some financial training. Members of the committee certainly did their best, but it was a common occurrence that we were not able to contextualize the information given to us.

As we think about how to improve things, one important observation is that the Finance Committee has no routine business to accomplish: there are no course proposals or student petitions to act on, no Campus Assembly agenda to create, no student group constitutions to review, no equity issues to address, no awards to give out, etc. In fact, we took no actions of any consequence in the entire year.

I think one possibility is that we should revert to an earlier structure where there was one committee considering both financial issues and future planning. This committee would have to meet more often, and would require a substantial commitment by all members. If we stay with the current structure of a stand-alone Finance Committee, I think we and the administration should jointly agree to raise "advice" to higher priority in our interactions.

Sincerely,

Dave Roberts

Finance Committee Chair