

McCombs College Tuition & Budget Advisory Committee (CTBAC)
2012-2013 Annual Report
For the intended use of students, staff, and faculty of the Red McCombs School of Business
Issued April XX, 2013

About the McCombs College Tuition & Budget Advisory Committee (CTBAC)

The McCombs College Tuition & Budget Advisory Committee (CTBAC) was founded in 2010 following the passage of S.R. 1002 in the Senate of College Councils. The McCombs CTBAC serves as the representative body for students in the budget- and tuition-setting process and actively communicates with students, faculty, and administrators in order to advocate for student priorities in college- and university-level decisions. Additionally, the McCombs CTBAC seeks to promote transparency through the education of students and the McCombs community about the budgeting process and inform administrators regarding student opinions regarding the school's resources.

For more information on the McCombs CTBAC, please visit www.mcombs.utexas.edu/Student-Organizations/CTBAC.

Statement of Purpose

In McCombs, the CTBAC fulfills its purpose by conducting surveys and interviews with students, faculty, and staff to find both common priorities and divergent goals around which administrators can make decisions regarding the school's tuition and budget. During the 2011-2012 academic year, the McCombs CTBAC interviewed key stakeholders in the McCombs community and, in conjunction with feedback from students regarding the state of McCombs' academics and other resources, recommended a tuition increase to complement Dean Thomas Gilligan's proposal for increased funding.

The mission of the McCombs CTBAC has shifted this year to budget-related matters as tuition-setting is no longer a top administrative priority. For the 2012-2013 academic year the McCombs CTBAC has sought to gain input from students, staff, and faculty regarding the state of the school's resource allocation as the University of Texas and the McCombs School recover from past funding shortages.

Methodology

Our research began with a series of interviews conducted by members of the CTBAC. We interviewed the department chairs/heads of both academic and service departments. We presented our interview findings at meetings and kept track of trends between departments. From our impressions of the interviews, the committee formulated a series of questions for a student survey. These questions were reviewed by the committee and condensed and/or edited into a survey about McCombs. We also added a set of questions included in CTBAC surveys in other colleges that asked about UT as a whole from the Senate of College Councils. The final set of survey questions was sent out through various social media channels and an email from the Dean's office. 354 people completed the survey. The committee reviewed the responses and highlights significant findings in this report.

Student Survey Takeaways

Academics

One of the most visible trends that appears after analyzing our student survey results is the fact that the effect of budget changes on students' educational experiences has not been overwhelmingly negative. In fact, 54% of students have seen no effect from budget reductions during their time in McCombs. Additionally, students claimed that they are, on average, satisfied with the quality of their educational experience in the business school, rating their level of satisfaction as 8.4 out of 10. These statistics speak very highly of the dedicated efforts that the administration has taken in managing budget changes to ensure that reductions do not become a detriment to students' educations. The recommendations that follow in this report come from this foundation – acknowledging the highly successful actions that

administrators have already taken while highlighting areas where these efforts could be even more effectively directed.

One of the key insights the survey provided was the fact that a majority of students at the McCombs School of business demonstrated a want to have a larger amount of business electives in our academic programs. When asked about what area of the business school they wanted to see more resources devoted to, the option to increase the variety of business elective offerings was in the top three choices for the majority of students. This alternative was ranked above areas such as advising, study abroad, scholarships, and career services. Most surprisingly, when given the choice, two thirds of survey participants preferred to have more elective offerings than smaller core business classes. These results show that students at McCombs value the opportunity to take a variety of classes over better services, facilities and even class size.

Recommendation: The McCombs CTBAC recommends that resources be devoted to creating more business electives. We believe that by increasing the portfolio of courses available to students, the school can indirectly reduce class size and improve the quality of the BBA program.

The McCombs CTBAC found that many McCombs students are calling for a more challenging curriculum and that many core business classes are not rigorous enough. According to the recent survey, students appear quite pleased with their experience in McCombs (average score of 8.36 out of 10) and rated academic programs as the primary factor that attracted them to the school (Questions 11 & 12). However, several students noted in the comments regarding Question 12 that their “course work could definitely be more challenging across the board,” that “classes are too easy, and [the] curriculum is truly not challenging enough” (Question 12). These comments are closely linked with the CTBAC’s findings that students strongly prefer a complete inside-the-classroom experience to a strong extra-curricular experience when evaluating the quality of their business education (Question 10). The comments mentioned above all came from BBA students in McCombs and underscore the role of the Undergraduate Programs Committee in developing a complete set of challenging core classes that prepare students for success in their professional lives.

Recommendation: The Undergraduate Programs Committee (UPC) should continue to pursue efforts to maximize case-based learning in the undergraduate core curriculum while encouraging professors to integrate Excel and written communication practice into each class. The UPC should encourage faculty to retain the quality of their courses while many subjects’ learning objectives are standardized across sections.

As professors try to keep up with today’s constantly changing learning environment amid technological advancements, many wonder what is the optimal amount and exact format of online incorporation into the course curriculum. Based on the responses to the Accounting Curriculum Review and CTBAC surveys, students have expressed a clear preference for increasing the amount of online tutorials and modules assigned to students before class. Students have also expressed a desire for professors to post solutions to in-class, teacher-led problems online. Ranked in order of importance, students want professors to put instructor-guided practice problems, instructor-created teaching modules and video recordings of class lectures online (page 22). More specifically, 65% of the students surveyed want short online videos and tutorials explaining concepts with problem illustrations before class to motivate preparation (Accounting Survey, page 2). Furthermore, conversations with professors have confirmed their agreement with placing more materials online.

Recommendation: The McCombs CTBAC recommends that in order to maintain the school’s academic rigor and stay competitive with comparable institutions, McCombs must incorporate technology into the learning experience to a greater extent.

Services

After analyzing the results from the survey, it is clear that students have expressed trouble accessing scholarships as well as finding study spaces within McCombs. Roughly 43% of survey respondents have expressed interest in having more opportunities to apply for merit-based scholarships, claiming that it is difficult to find non-need based scholarships even with all of the McCombs scholarship programs available. According to students, scholarships are among the top five considerations that students believe McCombs should consider when allocating new resources. In regards to study spaces, several students are happy with the additional group study spaces implemented this year (the AIM reading room renovation, for example), but others still feel that there are not enough group study locations since areas like Reliant or AIMS are often overbooked. Students would like a place to be able to sit down with an outlet to charge their laptop and work in a group, but are finding it difficult to do this inside the business school, especially during exam weeks.

Department Chair Interview Takeaways

Faculty/Staff

The students and faculty of McCombs, based on their responses to the CTBAC student survey, academic department interviews, and service department interviews, are calling for more budget resources to be allocated to faculty and staff personnel. In the student survey, 111 students ranked “more class sections” as their top priority in the budget allocation process; this was more than any other category available. These results are substantiated by the fact that 45 students requested new faculty in academic departments and 80% of students ranked a stronger in-class experience as more important than stronger extra-curricular programming. “Academic programs” and “undergraduate program rankings” were the two highest ranked reasons for choosing McCombs over other business schools. The above student survey statistics are either directly or indirectly affected by the number of faculty and staff that McCombs employs.

Based on our interviews with department chairs, we came to realize that the administration is cognizant of the need for more faculty members and is actively searching for endowments and sponsorships to fill these holes. Service departments are stretched thin without administrative assistants, causing advisors to spend more time on administrative activities and less time helping students with their degree plans. 16% of students have had difficulty accessing advisors, which means that 16% of students are having trouble planning their degrees and registering for the appropriate classes. Academic programs are experiencing difficulty recruiting new and retaining old faculty with the competitive salaries and benefits offered at other high-caliber institutions. Class sizes are currently manageable, but increasing them marginally without hiring new lecturers and professors can quickly escalate and affect McCombs’ ranking. Although faculty members represent one of the largest expenses of a university, faculty members are also the most important expense and direct contributors to the education students receive and the recruiting appeal of McCombs. Based on the findings above, the McCombs community is requesting an increase in the budget allocation to faculty and staff.

Through interviews with academic and service department chairs, the McCombs CTBAC found that all departments saw the negative effects of budget reductions largely in the removal of administrative assistants from their staff. This change is especially a challenge in academic departments where faculty members are required to teach students as well as manage the administration of the department, often without the necessary assistance. If we hope to provide the support necessary to faculty in order to ensure the growth and development of academic programs, administrative support is absolutely necessary.

Recommendation: The McCombs CTBAC recommends that the maintenance of proper and adequate administrative support in all academic and service departments be placed as a priority in allocating new resources to personnel areas.

Other Findings

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