McCombs College Tuition & Budget Advisory Committee (CTBAC)
2014-2015 Annual Report
For the intended use of students, staff, and faculty of the Red McCombs School of Business
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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 on student opinions regarding the school’s resources.

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

Statement of Purpose

In the McCombs School of Business, 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. Throughout the 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 respond to funding shortages.

Methodology

Our research began with a series of interviews conducted by members of the CTBAC. We interviewed the department chairs and directors of academic and service departments, respectively. We presented our interview findings at committee meetings to identify and analyze trends between departments. Based on our impressions of the interviews, the committee formulated a series of questions for a student survey. The survey questions were sent out via various social media channels and emails from the Dean’s Office. 640 students took the survey over a four-week time span. The committee reviewed the responses and highlights significant findings in this report.
Faculty and Staff Interview Takeaways

A common theme that emerged during our faculty interviews is that faculty salaries are more competitive in comparison institutions, thereby affecting our faculty retention rates. Some professors recommended that compensation packages focus on benefits if direct raises are not within the budget. Many departments also said having additional administrative support staff would help offices run more smoothly, but they understood this may not be possible given the current economic climate. Other professors also expressed a desire for an increase in class offerings in order to create a smaller, more intimate classroom experience.

Student Survey Takeaways and Recommendations

Our survey, which was available for students to respond to over a four-week period in April 2015, received 640 responses, representing approximately 10% of the McCombs population. Respondents were primarily BBA students (90%, Exhibit 1), with all majors represented. Students were asked a variety of questions about their experience in the McCombs School, and their responses produced several common themes included below.

Study Spaces

Over the past few years, students have expressed the desire for more individual and group study spaces in McCombs. In the Spring 2013 survey, students were happy with the additional study spaces implemented in McCombs, such as renovations to the AIM Reading Room. However, many students still felt that the AIM and Reliant spaces were regularly overbooked and had to find additional areas either in McCombs or elsewhere on campus. The Spring 2014 survey revealed that 24% of students felt that study spaces were one of their top three priorities for additional resource allocation. This year’s survey showed that 41% of students put study spaces as one of their top three priorities. Additionally, 37% and 39% of students had trouble accessing individual and group study spaces, respectively.

When asking students about where they wanted to see additional study spaces, we found that many students suggested the following areas:

● Classrooms during non-class hours (UTC, GSB, CBA)
● The space around the ALCs and potentially the ALCs themselves
● Study tables in the Hall of Honors

As mentioned in the last year’s report, students still expressed a strong desire for power outlets throughout the Atrium. They seem to be more likely to have group meetings in the Atrium if there was a power source for them to use.
Communications
As suggested last year, we collected student feedback on the Texas Enterprise publication. After interviewing the Communications department and analyzing student feedback, we would like to recommend some changes to the distribution of the Texas Enterprise magazine. There are several resources allocated towards creating and distributing the publication, but 77% of student respondents were not aware of the existence of Texas Enterprise and only 5% of the students respondents had ever read it. Even students familiar with the publication claim to rarely, if ever, read the articles unless they see relevant topics sent out via social media channels.

We recognize that Texas Enterprise is targeted towards McCombs alumni of all ages. However, in light of a shift towards online publications of magazines and other news media, we recommend that McCombs consider creating an interactive online publication of Texas Enterprise to which alumni can opt-in. As more alumni read the online editions, fewer paper copies will be printed, leading to significant cost savings.

As a follow up to last year’s McCombs social media discussion, in terms of Facebook, the McCombs BBA page has a network reach of 1,459,254 people and has seen a 32% increase in page followers. This is a sizeable improvement from last year and further shows how social media outlets are becoming effective methods of communication to both students and the general public at relatively no cost to the undergraduate program.

Career Services
While there are many students who have been able to successfully utilize the services provided by the Career Services office, there is a sizeable number of students who have not. On one hand, 79% of McCombs students report having seen a career advisor at least once during their time in McCombs, and 62% of McCombs students believe the Career Services office is doing a good job helping them secure internships and full-time jobs (29% were neutral).

We noticed not all services offered by the Career Services office are being fully utilized by McCombs students. 69% of students report never having used the McCombs Job Board, and 68% students report never having worked with a Peer Career Advisor. We also received a number of responses in our open-ended section which indicated the Career Services office is perceived to be difficult to approach. We also discovered trends in regards to the additional services students desired from the Career Services office. 65% of students polled are in favor of additional Excel boot camps and 43% of students would like to receive major-specific career newsletters.

Furthermore, in our open-ended section, several sophomores wanted to know more about career opportunities available for them. Another, in response to the demand for opportunities for sophomores to connect with companies, suggested the creation a page on the Career Services website for company leadership and diversity programs. We plan on sharing this information directly with Career Services as well.
Scholarships
Students continue to express difficulty in accessing scholarships. When students were asked which resources they are having the most difficulty accessing, scholarships were ranked first with 40% of students reporting difficulty. Although it is an improvement from last year (56% of students reported difficulty accessing scholarships in the 2014 survey), it is still a matter of concern among McCombs students.

Student-Faculty Interaction
27% of students polled felt they were dissatisfied with their interactions with the faculty outside of the classroom. We feel that events that facilitate more casual interactions with teachers are already in existence but lack adequate publicity. Programs (such as the Undergraduate Business Council’s DINE initiative) that involve students sharing a meal with professors, are a great avenue to increase student-faculty interaction. In addition, if Teaching Assistants offered an increased number of office hours, students would have the ability to approach professors with an increased focus on building relationships as opposed to purely seeking help on class content.

Tuition
52% of students indicated they would be willing to pay a higher tuition to help keep top professors within McCombs. 40% of students indicated they would be willing to pay a higher tuition to help support all resources at McCombs. We believe this differential signifies McCombs students value appropriation to faculty salaries compared to other resources. From the results of our survey, 26% of students neither agree nor disagree to an increase in tuition to support all resources at McCombs. Thus, students are split on the issue but a large portion is indifferent to the idea of a tuition raise.

Student Giving
According to our survey, 73% of students are at least somewhat likely to give back to McCombs as alumni. Unfortunately we saw this number slightly decrease from First years (79%) to Third and Fourth years (72%). Students who said they were very likely to give back when asked why responding saying they wanted McCombs to retain top faculty, wanted McCombs to succeed, and wanted to pay it forward. Many students who were undecided said their decision to give would be determined by their economic situation.

Merchandise
Our survey showed a strong interest from students to buy McCombs branded merchandise. Of students surveyed, 45% of them would be willing to buy merchandise and another 41% indicated they might be willing to buy merchandise. We mention this in the report since the Alumni Office has been working towards creating merchandise for alumni. This effort could be branched out to students as well as a potential source of additional income for McCombs.
Online Programs
Given the online resources McCombs supplies, our survey included questions regarding student experiences with the online learning resource Lynda.com and student opinions on taking online courses outside their major. 57% of students surveyed had never heard of Lynda.com and only 12% of students have utilized the resource. Despite the lack of popularity, students who have used Lynda.com had a positive experience. Our committee also explored options for students to take online courses outside of their major, which could include upper-division business electives. 46% of students indicated they would be willing to enroll in online courses outside of their major. However, 17% expressed that they would not be willing to do so. Both of these responses indicate that placing more emphasis on online education would be an area of interest for a majority of McCombs students. We believe there should be efforts made to increase awareness for Lynda.com as well as further research on the potential demand for online courses.

Active Learning Classrooms
The newly constructed Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs) in McCombs have been utilized by only 35% of student respondents. Of the students who have experience with the classrooms, 56% expressed a positive experience and 34% remained neutral. Given that only 56% of students have expressed a positive experience in the ALCs, we recommend that instructors integrate more of the technology in the rooms into their class structure.

Please direct any questions to the CTBAC Co-Chairs:
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