

Data report from the Faculty Senate Budget Committee survey sent to all faculty members of ECU during the last week of February through the first week of March.

Overview of Results of ECU Faculty Budget Priorities Survey

Highest Budget Priorities of the ECU Faculty

- Highest Priority: Employee Compensation
- 2nd Highest Priority: Existing Facility Maintenance and Improvement
- 3rd Highest Priority: Faculty Lines
- 4th Highest Priority: Faculty Development
- 5th Highest Priority: Student Financial Supports
- 6th Highest Priority: Teaching Equipment, Materials, and Technology
- 7th Highest Priority: Student Recruitment, Retention, Services, and Supports
- 8th Highest Priority: New Buildings
- 9th Highest Priority: Careful Choices about Academic Programs
- 10th Highest Priority: Library

Lowest Budget Priorities of the ECU Faculty

- Lowest Priority: Administration at Executive, Middle, Staff Support, and Non-Academic Program Levels
- 2nd Lowest Priority: New Construction and Land Purchase
- 3rd Lowest Priority: Athletics
- 4th Lowest Priority: Careful Choices about Building Renovation and Grounds
- 5th Lowest Priority: Careful Choices about Academic Programs

Purpose and Administration of ECU Faculty Budget Priorities Survey

The purpose of the ECU Faculty Budget Priorities Survey was to give voice to the perspectives of the ECU Faculty in regard to the difficult budgetary choices facing the University at this time. The survey was launched on Wednesday, February 24 and ran through Thursday, March 3 with one reminder sent out on Monday, March 1. 230 faculty members responded to the Survey. Each respondent was asked to provide three answers to each of two questions.

Results, Question 1: Highest Budget Priorities of the ECU Faculty

Question 1: In your opinion what should be the top 3 priorities for funding at the university given the flat rate of economic growth?

In this section of the survey, 228 responses were specific enough to code. Responses were generally in short phrases and even in emotional tone, with a few longer rationales for priorities or expressions of frustration with current budget priorities. Only priorities listed by more than ten respondents are reported here.

Highest Priority: Employee Compensation

- 169 respondents listed employee compensation as a budget priority. When listed, compensation was most often listed first in the three choices, as opposed to second or third. Within the requested three answers, compensation was also sometimes listed more than once. For example, the entire response of two different respondents was, “1. Faculty salaries, 2. Faculty salaries, 3. Faculty salaries.”
- Most frequently referred to as faculty salaries, faculty respondents also referred specifically to staff salaries 45 times, as well as frequently using many non-specific terms such as “employee compensation” or just “salaries.”
- This budget priority was also referred to as salary increase, COLA, competitive salaries, merit, benefits, salary equity/compression, need for compensation to support faculty recruitment and retention, and need for former or envisioned additional pay opportunities for faculty members.

2nd Highest Priority: Existing Facility Maintenance and Improvement

- 95 respondents specifically addressed the need for maintenance of existing facilities, especially older classroom buildings.
- To give a sense of the Faculty’s concerns in this area, some of the terms used to describe this budget priority included the following: facility maintenance, deferred maintenance, infrastructure repairs, renovation, face lifts, physical plant, roads, building and grounds, student housing, faculty offices, keeping the lights on, having reasonable temperatures for students/faculty/staff, and making all classrooms acceptable for instruction.

- A few of these 90 comments recommended sustainability, conservation, energy cost saving measures, going green, and cleaning up the heat plant.
- 4 respondents listed parking as a priority.
- Some comments in regard to faculty maintenance were stated as in contrast to, and of more importance than, new construction.

3rd Highest Priority: Faculty Lines

- 75 respondents specifically referred to the need for faculty hiring.
- The need for faculty lines was often addressed simply as “hiring,” “faculty lines,” or “faculty positions.”
- In addition, the need for faculty lines was described as: prioritizing faculty growth, necessary replacement of open lines, remediating significant decreases in faculty numbers in recent years, in direct contrast to growth in administrative positions, responsive to increases in enrollment and workload, important within growing programs, a response to loss of valued faculty members due to poor compensation, key to recruitment, important to reduce class size, corrective to over use of adjuncts, responsive to need for minority faculty, important for preserving faculty positions if cuts are necessary, and to avoid faculty layoffs.

4th Highest Priority: Faculty Development

- 63 respondents stated that faculty development was a budget priority.
- Most respondents specifically expressed the need for faculty development to support scholarship, including the following phrases: research and scholarship support, junior faculty research, grant-writing supports and incentives, community engagement research, research initiatives that generate money, sabbatical leave funding, travel to national meetings, support for faculty-student presentations at conferences, support for research at all levels (undergraduate, graduate, and faculty), and support for faculty work-related expenses.
- Only a few respondents described faculty development in the area of teaching, using phrases such as improvement of instructional skills, instructional and research development, and funding the TLC to offer PLCs and seminars.

5th Highest Priority: Student Financial Supports

- 62 respondents identified controlling costs to students as a budget priority.
- Of this group, 34 called for competitive and awarded financial assistance to students as: scholarships, graduate assistantships, teaching assistantships, tutors, work study, financial aid, and stipends.
- Of this group, 28 described containing or preventing tuition increases.

6th Highest Priority: Teaching Equipment, Materials, and Technology

- 39 respondents prioritized teaching equipment, materials, and technology.
- These budgetary needs were described as: paper, ink, books, teaching equipment, technology to support teaching, teaching resources for online teaching, IT, computers, direct instructional costs, department M & O, operating funds for departments, and capital equipment for program needs.

7th Highest Priority: Student Recruitment, Retention, Services, and Supports

- 25 respondents expressed support for spending on student recruitment, retention, services, and supports.
- Of this group, 14 respondents simply listed student recruitment or retention as budget priorities.
- 11 respondents described the need for student services and supports as budget priorities, including health care, child care, counseling, tutoring, and housing.

8th Highest Priority: New Buildings

- 25 respondents supported new construction as a budget priority.
- Of the responses supporting new construction, the greatest focus was on the need for classroom and laboratory space. Some asked for completion of current construction, rather than starting new projects. Many responses were very specific in terms of which new building project was being advocated: science building, College of Education building, Model, Performing Arts Center, extended campuses, and aviation facilities.

9th Highest Priority: Careful Choices about Academic Programs

- 19 respondents listed particular aspects of academic programs as budget priorities.
- Of this group, 12 respondents referred specifically to maintaining/protecting current academic programs described as viable, effective, productive, producing real jobs for students, or having potential for increased enrollment. 4 listed online programs as a priority.

10th Highest Priority: Library

- 13 respondents specifically listed the library as a budget priority, including in those statements references to library materials, journals and data bases, and services.

Results, Question 2: Lowest Budget Priorities of the ECU Faculty

Question 2: In your opinion what should be the lowest 3 priorities for funding at the university given the flat rate of economic growth?

In this section of the survey, 165 responses were specific enough to code. Fewer responses were provided to Question 2. Responses were very brief and emotional tone was even or slightly frustrated, as might be expected for a question on low budget priorities. Only priorities listed by more than ten respondents are reported here.

Lowest Budget Priority: Administration at Executive, Middle, Staff Support, and Non-Academic Program Levels

- 150 respondents named administration as a low budget priority. When listed, administration was most often listed first in the three choices, as opposed to second or third. Within the three answers, administration was also often listed more than once. For example, one response was, “*Administration, administration, administration,*” and another was, *Administrative raises, administrative positions, administrative support.*”
- Of those naming administration a low budget priority, 99 respondents commented specifically on the number of administrators, including recommendations not to create additional administrative positions, to stop the trend of expanding numbers of administrators, and to not replace open positions. Taken together, responses regarding the increase in numbers of directors, associate/assistant deans, and supervisors appear to indicate that respondents find these positions redundant or less than effective.
- 46 respondents commented on administrative personnel costs beyond the executive level. This was strongest in 17 responses specifying support staff for administrators. Also mentioned were specific expanded administrative programs, with 10 comments naming QEP, and additional comments regarding enrollment management, recruitment and retention, University Counsel, IT, the diversity office, and an office for transfer students. The responses indicate that growth in non-academic programs are not perceived by respondents as helpful or efficient.
- 34 respondents specified concerns with salaries and other financial rewards to administrators, recommending salary freezes and reductions, as well as commenting on the costs of administrator perquisites, such as bonuses, vehicles, phones, housing, and travel.
- The tone of the responses naming administration as a low budget priority also included two sensitive issues. A concern was expressed in the responses that decisions to grow administrative personnel numbers are not being made with the level of scrutiny and budget constraint that is applied to faculty and staff positions. In addition, responses indicated the perception that the increase in number of administrators directly results in an increase in non-teaching work required of faculty members, especially in regard to new and upgraded software programs.

Second Lowest Budget Priority: New Construction and Land Purchase

- 93 respondents named new construction or land purchase as a low priority.
- This priority was usually expressed in brief phrase statements only. A few statements expressed frustration with the “*disheartening*” contrast between seeing new buildings going up that will have recurring costs for many years while budgets for recurring faculty costs are so tight.

Third Lowest Budget Priority: Athletics

- 61 respondents listed athletics as a low budget priority.
- Little rationale was provided with most of these comments. Some respondents commented that athletics was costly to the University, no new sports facilities should be built, and athletics travel should be reduced.

Fourth Lowest Priority: Careful Choices about Building Renovation and Grounds

- 36 respondents listed aspects of campus renovation and grounds as a low budget priority.
- This low priority was expressed as a request for careful judgment and worker efficiency in this area, as well as keeping in mind student and employee safety and maintenance requirements rather than focusing on beautification or upgrading facilities and furnishings.

Fifth Lowest Priority: Careful Choices about Academic Programs

- 21 respondents listed characteristics of programs they do not think should be supported by the University during challenging budgetary times.
- This low priority was primarily expressed by 10 listings requesting no new programs be started. Additional characteristics used to describe programs that are a low budget priority were doctoral programs (4), programs with low enrollment (3), programs that do not place students in real jobs (2), distance or online programs (2), graduate programs (1), undergraduate programs (1), developmental programs (1), international programs (1), and service learning programs (1).

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