What is the President Thinking?

Use of Metrics

Dr. Yves Gingras, Canada Research Chair in History and Sociology of Science, Université du Québec à Montréal suggests that we all need to better understand numbers and the use of rankings in his textbook *Bibliometrics and Research Evaluation: Uses and Abuses*. His critique cut through the bafflegab by focusing on the quality of the data and the meaning of the analysis. He questioned the exact meaning of the chosen quality indicators suggesting that comparing performance with the mission of the institution should be used to measure success. Dr. Gingras’ message was data has meaning and information without context is not useful.

The University of Regina (UofR) recently reported that its research revenues increased by 12.6% from last year, which placed it first among comprehensive universities in the "Research Income Growth" category at Research Infosource. We have the data. John Starvinides used the CCAM discussion forum to provide context. Using ResearchInfosource information\(^\text{1}\) that ... ‘our institution lost almost 40% of its research funding ... that research revenues over the last few years are still the lowest since 2004.’ John also compared UofR to like sized comprehensive universities finding our research metrics wanting. Clearly, placing research revenue growth numbers within this broader context allows for an informed appreciation of the significance of the data.

We need to be careful consumers of information. Thanks to John Stavinides for addressing the issue of research performance bafflegab.

Money

It is December 4th. The semester ends this week, exams followed by the Christmas break and on to the winter semester and the silly season of doom and gloom – the UofR budget. What does the future hold for the UofR?

Last year was bleak\(^\text{2}\). ‘In November 2016, reacting to a worsening government financial situation, the province implemented a $1.661 million “claw back” from the university.’ ... ‘so the net effect on operations was a reduction of $1.364 million. This amount was contributed by the various academic and administrative units of the University’. The data, the numbers presented in the Annual Report suggest a significant Operating Budget problem.

The context for these money discussions can be found on the next page\(^\text{3}\) of that Annual Report.

The operating fund ended 2016-17 with a deficit of $194,180 after providing funding to support a number of one-time initiatives and opportunities. Targeted projects included:

- **External Relations** – funding to continue two term Donor Officers for 2017-18: $197,555

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\(^\text{2}\) P 16. 2016-17 University of Regina Annual Report  
\(^\text{3}\) P 17. 2016-17 University of Regina Annual Report
• External Relations – advertising budget for student recruitment for 2017-18: $400,000
• Human Resources - two term positions to convert the payroll process to bi-weekly payments to meet legislated requirements: $112,000
• Human Resources - to configure the newly-acquired Academic Performance Review Database solution (Converis): $62,000
• Facilities Management – to continue short-term the appointment of the Personal Safety Coordinator: $26,667
• Vice-President Research – support for the Fedoruk Chair in Nuclear Imaging Technologies: $30,000

Subtotal – One-time allocations in the 2017-18 Comprehensive Budget Plan: $828,222

• Tunnel Project (Kisik/Campion): $2,000,000
• College West Roof and Switchgear: $1,200,000
• Laboratory Building Strategic Investment Fund (Canada) Matching Funding: $2,500,000
• College Avenue Campus revitalization: $800,000

Subtotal - Capital Projects $6,500,000

Administration chose to spend the $7.328 million operation budget surplus on capital projects and special initiatives. Was the 2016-2017 UofR fiscal year bleak? Is there an Operation Budget problem? Just as Dr. Yves Gingras suggested, we need to be careful consumers of information.

Bargaining

URFA is bargaining in an environment dominated a provincial government committed to austerity. This past spring, the provincial government was looking to a wage roll back of three-percent. The position taken by UofR administration is there is no money. However, the choice, the reality is there is no money for people.

It is anticipated that negotiations will be difficult. Austerity can affect URFA’s members in different ways. For example, those holding faculty positions may face increased teaching loads, increased administrative duties and be frustrated by the lack of time available for scholarly duties. Administrative, Professional and Technical (APT) members face an ever-increasing workload and the prospect of job loss. APT bargaining began in October. UofR Faculty will begin to bargain after APT.

What does the URFA President think?

Tough negotiations are the flavor of the day. URFA is very well prepared for this round of bargaining. Your bargaining teams were pulled together last spring and they are prepared to bargain. The plan is to be hard on the facts at the table and our commitment is to keep the membership fully engaged during bargaining. Regular status reports will begin in January 2018.

All the best for the holiday season.

In solidarity,
Dennis

Dennis Fitzpatrick
President URFA