

Question from Mr. Tyler Hall

Mr. Mark Denney, could you please offer insight on how budget initiatives were shifted due to the FY2019-20 budget impacts? Around this time last year Admin & Finance and the other divisions laid out their budget priorities and initiatives. Staff/faculty pay equity across the university and merit were among the top priorities for budget use for the last year. Why was the priority of staff/faculty pay equity and merit lowered when they were among the top priorities last year?

Response:

The initiatives are not specifically prioritized from A to Z, the prioritization process is utilized to inform the President and leadership as decisions are made to finalize the budget. Once initiatives are included in the budget, they are essentially equal in priority for execution. The decision to delay, not remove or lower the priority of the merit pay was due to external pressure, not an internal decision, due primarily to the Covid19 pandemic impact on the economic forecast of the State of Texas and the extreme challenges that has created in the State's projected ability to support the critical needs of the Universities legislative requests, and the validity legislators would place on that request if pay increases were implemented at this time.

Question from Dr. Mike McMullen

How can you say that funding initiatives will remain a priority when Dr. Blake sent out a memo saying no faculty raises?

Response:

Merit pay increases remain a priority which is why the budget item remain in the budget, and will be enacted when viable. The decision to delay the merit increases was a very difficult decision for President Blake and due to external forces, not a lack of priority or support.

Question from Dr. Randall Xu

What initiatives are moving slowly? What initiatives are delayed?

Response:

All the initiatives remain budgeted, and will move forward as possible. Initiatives that were already in place prior to the external pressure to delay the merit increase obviously remain as they were, such as the AVP/COO position at Pearland and the increased financial aid scholarships to students for Fall Semester and the Data Warehouse. All others have been significantly delayed.

Question from Dr. Amber Brown

If increasing student numbers and tuition revenue is so important, why is the responsibility for recruiting on the programs/faculty? Why don't we have university recruiters?

Response:

That is a key focus and an expressed intent of the President's initiative of the elevation of the department of Strategic Enrollment Services, to elevate and focus effort on Enrollment Management and drive recruiting that was not previously occurring.