



**Faculty Association
Functional Area Committees Observation Report**

**Submitted to the LCSC’s President’s Cabinet on
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Background:

Faculty observers for each of the functional area committees (FACs) were selected from the faculty association leadership as well as the committee members making up the Faculty Senate’s Budget, Planning & Assessment (BPA) committee: past chair Jenni Light, chair-elect Lorinda Hughes, current chair Leif Hoffmann, and BPA members William Davenport, Gary Mayton, Amy Minervini, Manee Moua, Teresa Nash, and Nikki Vandermeer. Individual observations were discussed at meetings of the faculty leadership on Monday, February 1, 2021 and Monday, February 8, 2021 and compiled into this report.

The various FACs were observed by faculty representatives as follows:

Functional Area Observed	Observation Date(s)	Designated Observer
Academic Affairs	January 27, 2021	Jenni Light; Manee Moua
Administrative Services	January 13, 2021	Leif Hoffmann; Amy Minervini
Career-Technical Programs	January 20, 2021	Lorinda Hughes; Teresa Nash
Direct Reporting Units (DRUs)	January 22, 2021	Leif Hoffmann; Gary Mayton
Liberal Arts and Sciences	January 21, 2021	Lorinda Hughes; Nikki Vandermeer
Professional Studies	January 12, 2021	William Davenport; Lorinda Hughes
Student Affairs	January 12, 2021	Leif Hoffmann; Amy Minervini

Observation Summary:

In prior years, the FAC process and particularly FAC observations focused on highest priority budgetary requests from each unit. However, due to budgetary constraints as a result of political decisions compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 and again in 2021 FAC processes differed markedly from previous years.

In 2019, newly elected Idaho Gov. Brad Little asked most state agencies to trim current budgets by 1% and to identify another 2% base reduction in their budgets for the ensuing year. Additionally, the presidents of the University of Idaho, Boise State University, Idaho State University, and Lewis-Clark State College announced a tuition and fee freeze for the 2020-2021 school year in December 2019. It has been the first statewide tuition freeze in 43 years. As a result, these base reduction requests and the contemporaneous tuition freeze translated at Lewis-Clark State College into the development of 2%, 5%, and 7% reduction scenarios for all reporting units.



Subsequently, the reduction scenarios became reality. With enrollment declines due to COVID-19, it led overall to a number of unfilled positions, lay-offs, furloughs, retirements, and reorganization plans across campus.

While this year's FAC process did not concentrate on further reduction scenarios, all units were charged with providing a plan for a 0% or flat division/departmental budget for the upcoming year. Although funding requests were allowed, they tended, once again, to be secondary, with the focus being on maintaining the status quo while navigating the on-going repercussions of the pandemic on higher education and the previous state-wide higher education budgetary decisions.

Each unit, of course, is impacted differently at the 0% scenario, such as travel reductions versus essential operational concerns. Most units reported that they "can still make do" for this coming year. However, very quickly it became clear through the observation process that while every unit was accommodating the zero-budget request, many units will not be able to function in the same productive way as in the past. Strains and weariness across campus due to personnel cuts are obvious. Two examples out of many would be the need for the program assistant to the dean's office of CTE and an administrative assistant for the CAH. The main request from all reporters was the need to restore, rehire, or replace positions that were cut last year.

Indeed, many of the concerns expressed in last year's Faculty Association FAC Report on how an already small, HIGHLY efficient, low overhead, intensive touch institution like LCSC can continue offering high quality services when the focus is on reduction scenarios have come to fruition.

All units stated that either a flat budget is not currently or in the subsequent years considered a sustainable operation; personnel remaining the major concern for many. Some units have reported that the present situation, if it has not already, will lead to a decrease in service and support offerings, including for faculty, with the potential accompanying repercussions for conversion, recruitment, and retention of students AND faculty and staff. Put differently, many units are stretched to the maximum, affecting employee work/life balance and morale, along with the ability of a unit to provide services beyond maintaining baseline operations.

Furthermore, while, due to the previous year's cuts and additional operation expense reductions, the 0% scenario is manageable for many units *this year*, it has additional effects that were also already highlighted in last year's report: non-renewal of professional memberships and trainings that through non-exposure to the latest developments, trends, rules, regulations, and efficiencies in someone's field might lead to potential higher costs down the road. Also, for units, such as physical plant, a 0% scenario is actually a reduction in buying power for custodial and grounds budgets due to general inflation.

In sum, as was the case last year, observers have remarked on the great solidarity among all units and people involved in the FAC process, with all units willing to support each other, even if it



meant giving priority to requests from another unit. The can-do attitude was impressive, but everyone involved agrees that this cannot continue indefinitely.

Of the triumphs and challenges shared by each unit's leader, it is an understatement to say that the effects of the pandemic on college operations slowed down many functions, services, and achievement of some goals. However, it is clear that these people have made great contributions to LCSC despite challenges imposed by the pandemic.

Of a greater concern and challenge to the productivity and operations of these groups appears to be restrictions on proper staffing, especially in light of administrative plans to expand programs.

Multiple groups made sound cases for functions and services that additional faculty and staff would provide, such as requests for filling and/or converting faculty positions in math, social work, and psychology to maintain and/or grow programs as well as administrative positions in the controller's and other offices to deal with staffing shortages and the on-going request to hire an Environmental Health and Safety Specialist to comply with State and Federal regulations. One technological request stood particularly out due to the fact that it is a joint request from the controller's office, IT, and the registrar's office regarding the acquisition of a software to increase efficiencies by alleviating scanning and creating a better ability for campus to retrieve and track documents such as travel, IDPs, IDGs, etc.

It is therefore welcome news that this year LCSC does not plan to join its sister institutions in another round of tuition freezes.