

Budget Model Redesign Listening Session Feedback Report

Compiled May 10, 2021

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Executive Summary

Over the course of three weeks starting on April 19, 2021 and concluding May 5, 2021, the budget model redesign working team and members of both the Strategic Alignment and Design Committees hosted six virtual (via Zoom) Listening Sessions open to the CU Boulder community including staff, faculty and students.

Listening Sessions were organized around six themes: Subvention and Strategic Funds, Interdisciplinarity, Student Success, Academic Mission & the Public Good, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) and Research & Creative Work. Each session included an overview of the budget model redesign project, breakout discussions, a report-back on breakout room conversations (posted to the chat) and a question/answer period.

A total of 168 individuals made up a total of 240 attendees (some individuals attended multiple sessions), with the highest number of attendees attending the Student Success, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and Research & Creative Work sessions.

Feedback was collected from the chat function in each session, as well as from in-session polls conducted in four of the six sessions (Subvention & Strategic Funds and Interdisciplinarity sessions did not conduct polls) and a post-session survey sent to all attendees.

Comments gathered from each session veered from the very general to the very specific. In addition to comments related to the six specific session themes (Student Success, etc.), additional themes emerged from the comments, feedback:

- State of the current budget
- The budget model redesign process
- The future model itself; concerns and hopes
- Specific college/school/unit concerns

This report will be shared with all three budget redesign committees and posted to the project website.

Attendance Summary

Total sign-ups:	368
Total attended:	240
Total individuals:	168
Staff	136
Faculty	28
Graduate student	3
Undergrad student	1
No. offices represented:	76
Offices Represented	
A&S Admin	
A&S Advising	
A&S Honors	
A&S, MASP	
Academic Affairs	
Applied Mathematics	

Art & Art History
Art Museum
Astrophysical & Planetary Sciences
ATLAS
Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences
Biochemistry
Budget & Fiscal Planning
Center for Asian Studies
Center for Inclusion & Social Change
Center for Law, Technology & Entrepreneurship
Center of the American West
CIRES
CMCI Admin
College of Music
Computer Science
Continuing Education
Controller's Office
CU Presents
Data Analytics
Engineering Admin
Engineering BOLD Center
Engineering Management Program
Engineering PLUS
Engineering, Chemical & Biochemical
Engineering, Mechanical
English
Environmental Center CU Green Labs
Environmental Design
Environmental Health & Safety
Environmental Studies
French & Italian
Geography
Geology
History
Human Resources
Idea Forge
Information Science
Infrastructure and Sustainability
Institute for Behavioral Genetics
Institute of Behavioral Science
Institute of Cognitive Science
Integrated Physiology
Intermountain Neuroimaging Consortium
International Student & Scholar Services

JILA
LASP
Leeds School of Business
Museum of Natural History
ODECE
Office of Admissions
Office of Contracts & Grants
OIT
Physics
Political Science
Program for Exploratory Studies
Psychology & Neuroscience
Program for Writing & Rhetoric
RASEI
RIO
School of Education Admin
School of Education, CU Engage
School of Law Admin
Sociology
Space Weather Technology
Strategic Relations and Communications
Student Affairs Admin
UMC
Undergraduate Education
University Libraries
Volunteer Resource Center

Types of Feedback from Each Session

Subvention/Strategic Funds (2021-04-19)

Chat (*Messages in chat: feedback, questions, reporting out from break-out groups*)

Interdisciplinary (2021-04-22)

Chat (*Messages in chat: feedback, questions, reporting out from break-out groups*)

Student Success (2021-04-26)

Chat (*Messages in chat: feedback, questions, reporting out from break-out groups*)

Poll 1 *What drew you to join this session on student success today?*

Poll 2 *In one or two words, what is the most important metric of student success to include in the new budget model? (see [Appendix](#) for word cloud)*

Academic Mission & Public Good (2021-04-29)

Chat (*Messages in chat: feedback, questions, reporting out from break-out groups*)

Poll 1 *In one or two words, what is the most important aspect of our academic mission to prioritize in the new budget model? (see [Appendix](#) for word cloud)*

Poll 2 *What was your number 1 take-away from the break-out session?*

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (2021-05-03)

Chat (*Messages in chat: feedback, questions, reporting out from break-out groups*)

Poll 1 *What drew you to join today's session?*

Poll 2 *What are you taking away from the breakout session?*

Research and Creative Work (2021-05-05)

Chat (*Messages in chat: feedback, questions, reporting out from break-out groups*)

Poll 1 *What drew you to join today's session on Research and Creative Work?*

Poll 2 *In one or two words, what is the most important metric to consider with regards to budget allocations for Research and Creative Work? (see [Appendix](#) for word cloud)*

Feedback Themes

Current state of campus, budget, funding

- Interdisciplinarity/collaboration is too “manual,” requires MOUs/custom arrangements; needs automation; too many “roadblocks”
- Current model leads to hoarding of students
- Perverse incentives around enrollment growth
- Pressure to increase research/enrollment but few corresponding resources

Process of Budget Model Redesign

- Fear, distrust, skepticism
- Uncertainty or ambivalence
- Communication-related issues
- Campus involvement; inclusion of all stakeholders
- Need to learn from mistakes/prior successes/existing programs
- Interest in staying involved
- Have more questions

The eventual model itself / outcome of the process

Fears, concerns, uncertainty (general concerns)

- Balancing of short-term financial incentive vs. long-term reputation
- Effort spent justifying/administering budget will overwhelm or take away from actual efforts to improve it

Hopes, aspirations, optimism (general desire)

- Stability/continuity; long-term planning; future-facing investments
- Addressing values/campus priorities
- Transparency, fairness, simplicity
- Shared governance of funding decisions
- “Money should follow students”
- Over-reliance on “money following students”
- Using/allocating funds strategically
- Student-focused mission (holistic)
- Assessment of initiatives; accountability and improvement
- Need for clear metrics; key performance indicators (kpis); consistent, well-defined expectations

Specific content; comments are not exclusively session-based

Subvention/Strategic Funds

Specific issues/recommendations

- Issues with the word “subvention”
 - Not sure what it means; not transparent b/c word is “unknown”
 - Dislike of word; sounds like “handout,” “too business-y,” “budget jargon”
 - Better way to communicate the comprehensive nature of our university mission
- Need for/support of non-revenue producing programs; concern about an over-emphasis on STEM

Interdisciplinarity

- General importance/desire for prioritizing interdisciplinarity; need to incentivize
- Specific issues/recommendations
 - Make teaching across colleges easier/incentivize it
 - Make research across disciplines easier/incentivize it
 - Interdisciplinarity too focused on STEM; what about arts & humanities?
 - Diverse range of “interdisciplinarity”/no one-size-fits-all
 - Clear/fair funding strategy for faculty with multiple appointments

Student Success

- General importance/desire for prioritization
- Specific issues/recommendations
 - Retention/grad rates
 - Defining student success (holistic, specific metrics, need to define, apply campus-wide)
 - Focus on teaching/learning; address incentives that make teaching “inferior” to research
 - Mentorship of students
 - Greater engagement (w/ faculty, other students, the community)
 - Student belonging, well-being, sense of community, agency
 - Focus on career-readiness and placement; post-graduate success

Academic Mission & the Public Good

- General importance/desire for prioritization
- Specific issues/recommendations
 - Liberal arts/informed citizenship; well-rounded students; CU Boulder not a trade school
 - Need for stronger leadership and consensus re: mission/public good (including who is the “public?”)
 - Facilitate/support/encourage innovation
 - Students are the primary mission
 - Research is (part of) the mission

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- General importance/desire for prioritization
- Specific issues/recommendations
 - Experience of marginalization; not just metrics
 - Use IDEA plan recommendations/guidance
 - Tie DEI metrics to funding
 - Challenges defining “metrics”; must go beyond disparities in student retention/graduation; need new metrics (e.g. track racist acts, student experience on campus)
 - Change culture around DEI at all levels; education on DEI for all; DEI as the norm
 - Customization; not all BIPOC students/staff/faculty need the same things
 - Fund/support affinity groups; what does this look like in the budget?
 - Recruitment of diverse student body, faculty, staff
 - Retention of diverse student body, faculty, staff
 - Better leadership/messaging around DEI from top down
 - Support DEI even when non-revenue generating and in non-revenue generating programs
 - Address structural barriers (e.g. financial aid, housing deadlines, accessibility)
 - DEI in research, staff/faculty; not just student success
 - Compensation, protection, and support for BIPOC individuals on campus (students, faculty, staff);
 - Importance of supporting existing programs doing good work; don’t reinvent the wheel; provide more support

Research and Creative Work

- General importance/desire for prioritization
- Specific issues/recommendations
 - Better allocation of space/labs, including sharing of space/equipment/resources
 - Buildings/labs/spaces need investment/upgrades;
 - Budget needs to enable long-term planning and stability for research projects/creative work
 - Investment in research administration/support
 - Reduce silos and foster collaboration in research
 - Increase undergraduate activity in research/creative work
 - Clearer leadership re: research mission at CU
 - Need money to make money; early, stable investments drive future funding (e.g. seed grants, resource allocation, etc.)
 - Involving undergraduates in research/creative work; arts & humanities does this naturally
 - How do you assign value to research/creative work? Is some better (more worthy of investment) than others? Opportunity to align research/creative work investment with strategic campus goals?

Faculty/Staff Success; employee issues

- Mentorship of faculty/staff
- Understaffed areas, admin support, grant support (esp. as grant admin requirements grow)
- Recruitment and retention
- Treatment of faculty vs. staff; pay scales; appreciation/culture

Specific college/program/resource issues

- Funding of campuswide resources/services (e.g. center for Teaching and Learning, mental health services, advancement, career services, programmatic infrastructure)
- Funding of physical infrastructure, space allocation, costs, funding, choice of projects
 - Sharing/use of space/equipment across programs (colleges?)
- Research institutes
 - Funding mechanism(s)/support
 - Long-term planning and shortfalls
- Core curriculum and funding
- Languages programs (incl. Language programs and issues with language requirements)
- Remote education
- Concerns about specific colleges; how departments are funded

Post-Attendance Survey Results

25 responses; 10% of total attended

Themes

Q1. What information, provided during the Listening Session, was most helpful to you?

- Breakouts; hearing concerns and ideas of others
- Overview of how project will be handled; historical progression of project
- Better understanding of the budget issues campus is grappling with
- Information on total budget, expenditures, and decision-making scaffold
- Introduction of concepts like “incentive model,” subvention & strategic funds”

Q.2 What questions do you have about the budget model redesign?

BMR process and communication

- How can we stay involved?

- How will feedback be reviewed; integrated into design?
- What are the open questions for faculty to discuss?
- Many questions can't be answered yet; the need to rethink the budget seems obvious but the strategies/priorities are still pretty opaque.

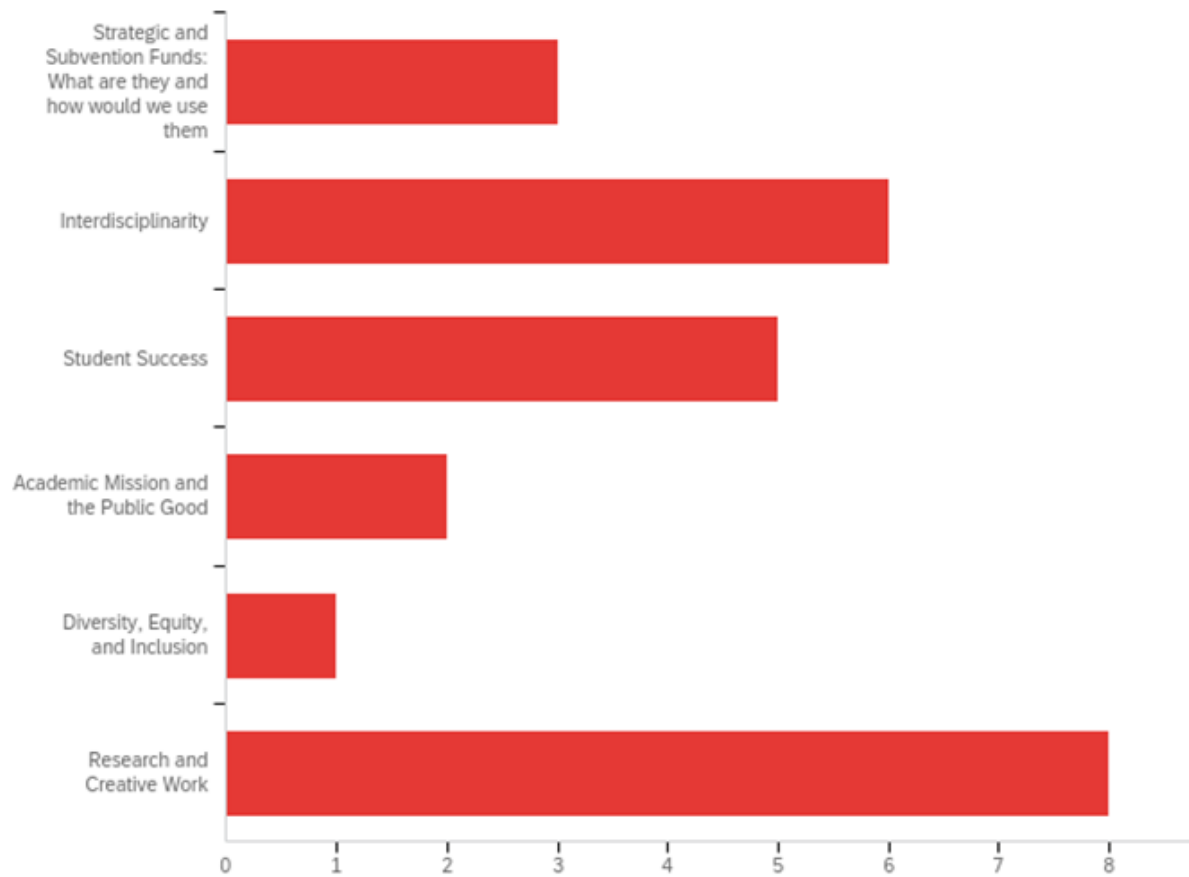
Future model concerns; questions

- Will vision dictate budget, or will budget dictate vision?
 - Will we prioritize endeavors, for example, that prioritize both DEI and public good or continue funding things that do not support either?
 - Misalignment of gifts, donations, endowments and other private fundraising efforts have created a culture of haves/have-nots on campus; this needs to be analyzed and addressed.
 - How to assign value creative work; research?
- “Incentive-based” budgeting
 - Appropriate for higher ed?
 - How to defend against danger of “kicking departments when they're down” when using performance-based metrics?
 - Will a department's general budget get reduced/replaced with the incentive approach?
- Operational questions/concerns
 - Can budget redesign proceed without management redesign?
 - How will post-COVID operations impact the model with online, hybrid and in-person class offerings? Remote/hybrid/on-campus work (staff?)
 - Will the new model address that research needs to be funded in a completely different way than academics?

Q.3 What other topics or information would you like more of, or to be included, in future sessions or on [Colorado.edu/budget](https://colorado.edu/budget)?

- A glossary of terms; (e.g. what is ICR)
- How the new budget will impact individual departments; systems for “internal” allocations
- Once it's further along, how exactly the budget reflects values/priorities
- How decisions were made/priorities determined
- History/current budget model
- Connections to campus master plan; sustainability goals (e.g. carbon neutrality)

Q.4 Which session are you providing feedback on?

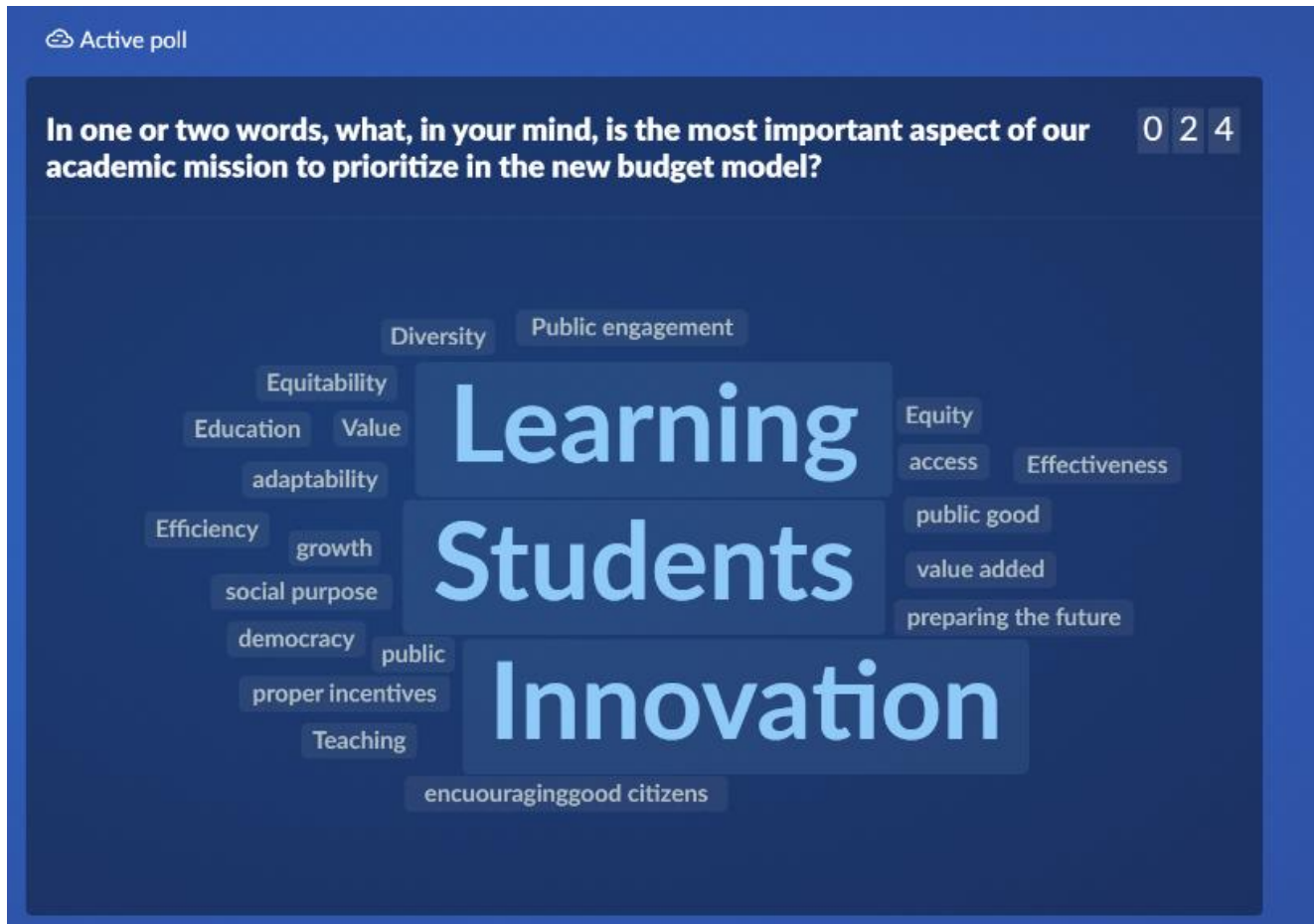


Appendix

Student Success



Academic Mission



Research and Creative Work

