EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 11, 2020 | 4:00 PM | USUSA Senate Chamber

CALL TO ORDER

Move Public Forum to the top of the agenda: VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

Officer Accountability

PUBLIC FORUM

President Cockett: Introduce me and tell me what I’m doing here.

President Ahmed: I’ve invited President Cockett here to talk to us about our potential tuition increases. Our tuition committee has met, and we’ve discussed what we feel is a necessary increase and what some additional benefits would be.

President Cockett: As you heard, there are some things that we just don’t have the option on. Sami went with me yesterday to the Higher Ed Appropriations Committee of the Legislature and there’s a huge conversation about the cost of the route to college what’s interesting is people talk about affordability and cost as if they’re the same thing. To get us all on the same page here, affordability actually is a concept that says whether an individual has the ability to pay for college. There’s going to be some material coming out, a large task force has been working on it, and it sounds goofy, but I guess it works. There’s something called the 10 Rule. It’s for people and families to plan: if you put 10% of your disgressionary income away for 10 years and the student agrees to work 10 hours, then they look at which college you could attend. Here in Utah, if you do that, you could actually attend any college in Utah if you live at home and your family pays for all of your housing and food. That helps people get perspective of what they could do. That’s affordability. The governor came out and said, “I’m not going to endorse any kind of tuition increase at our public institutions until they’ve addressed affordability.” The interesting thing is, he then talked about tuition. So, tuition and affordability are not the same thing; neither cost of educating the student is a totally different thing as well. Cost is how much we have to put in to educate each of our students, tuition is what you pay, and affordability is this idea of whether a person or family can afford to go to college. On cost, the way we do that is it’s a combination of the tuition that we accumulate across the entire system plus what the legislature gives us. Together, that pays for your education. We probably talked about this in the past, but what has happened is if you standardize the cost over time and somehow you make it flat because you adjust for something, what has happened is legislative support has declined so what has happened to tuition? It has filled that gap. That’s what’s happening. If you had inflationary cost, if the state would continue to fund us at that rate, what would happen to tuition? It wouldn’t have to increase. that is at the heart of it. The way the legislature has done they have had two very significant budget cuts in Utah. One was in 2002-2003, and then during the great recession. I was in administration
and I remember that well: 17% budget cut back to the institution. We did not recover all that from tuition; you did not see a 17% increase. They all say, “are you making any cuts in your own operations?” We are making cuts and readjustments and prioritizing all the time but the number one thing that the state is not keeping up with is salary compensation. This is where it gets... if you don’t help us on this, we will end up in a dramatic budget cut. The state legislature sets a salary compensation increase and over the last few years they’ve hovered at 2.5%, so an employee will see 2.5% in their base (not take home). That’s what it looks like this year. Not a huge amount, especially for some of our staff assistants; 2.5% of $30,000 is not a huge amount. They say this is for all public employees, but then they say, “we’ll give all state agencies, public ed, safety, state agencies, police, highway patrol 100% of the increase, but not higher ed. We’re only going to give them 75% of that. The other 25% should come from tuition.” This has been going on for many years, it’s just been the way it is. I think with this conversation of “stop raising our tuition,” what we’ve talked about in the Tuition Committee is maybe it’s time for the students to say, “you need to fund higher ed’s salary increase the same way you do across all public employees.” I would certainly be willing to help next year, we’re just too late this year. The other one the state does not do is faculty promotion and tenure.

I’ve explained to the Tuition Committee that faculty have two points in their career when they get a raise: when they move from assistant professor to associate professor, usually after six years, and then there’s another point where they move to a professor rank. 65% of our faculty get that second increase. that’s another one the state does not cover. They say, “you can get that from tuition.” We’ve calculated what that is: for Logan and all but eastern, Blanding, and Moab, That totals to 2.5%. There’s another one that’s the same thing the legislature allows agencies that provide the universities support to charge us. They have been approved for an increase in their charges and the state is only giving them 75% of that and they are to charge the universities that 25%. When we estimate the cost of that, that’s a .3% increase. If you absolutely said there’s nothing else that we can approve, this would be a total of 2.8%. If you said no, we would then have a budget cut. I can make that recommendation, but that’s pretty substantial for us to cover. I appreciate that the Tuition Committee could see that. I kicked out the idea of .5% tuition increase for increased campus safety. I’ve already got campus safety in another budget request to the legislature, but of all the things we want it to do it doesn’t do everything, but maybe this is not the year to implement everything and instead we’ll carry it forward as a legislative request. I can give you more details; The other thing is what happens with Eastern, Price, and Blanding, and Moab. Think of the geography of Utah in the southern half: you have Price, Moab and Blanding; Price and Blanding were with the college of eastern Utah and they had very low tuition. When we brought them in, we said we would keep at that low tuition. People in Moab were actually driving down to Blanding to take classes down there for that cheaper tuition. There are about 100 students, so we are going to let Moab have that lower tuition as well. If you look at their contribution to these three things, their percentage needs to be higher because they have a lower amount. They’re still not contributing exactly the Logan students do or else they’d have a significant increase. Their increase is going to hit about 4% to come close to what the Logan and other students are paying.

President Ahmed: Something I want to add from our discussion is that as student representatives, there’s a misunderstanding of how tuition increases and they think it’s administrators in a room high fiving saying, “5% this year!” One good way we can help get involved in is through USA next year, so think about that. It would be a good initiative to follow through because from my discussion with President Cockett, we have to meet those things and I think cutting costs is not always the option I think if we can have students have a thorough understanding and we can maybe push it for next year and the years to come, then we can have more of a united voice instead of “why is it going up? What are they doing? I’m so sick of this!” Those aren’t coherent answers to the problem. It makes sense to me why tuition goes up, and we can even start this year in compiling things this year.

President Cockett: If we could get them to do 100%, their support would increase at the rate our cost is increasing. If there were no other initiatives that you folks agree to, we could hold tuition constant. That’s my dream.

VP Rivera-Soto: For those of you going to higher ed day, this will probably be part of the things we’ll work on. Do we know if the state legislature is going to give money to the rural online initiative this year?

President Cockett: I know we gave a presentation that was very well-received. Carl Albrecht is
working on that. How did you know about that?

VP Rivera-Soto: We’re going down to lobby, so I’ve been talking to Neil a little bit.

President Cockett: That’s something through our extension program and it helps people in rural communities develop skills, knowledge, etc., on how they can use online to create businesses, to have jobs, etc.

Another request is the new languages building, so Paulina’s up on that one. Those do not affect your tuition. We’ll either get the money or we won’t.

VP Lake: One thing I brought up when we met as a tuition committee was a little bit of reluctance for the campus safety increase. With what’s being presented from the state already and the plans that don’t require an increase, funding can be received for safety projects, something like lighting or structural support, realistically anyone from campus can apply to Facilities Enhancement. Nobody did, but that’s not because they didn’t know about it. If it’s not one-time funding, then I think it’d be appropriate to fund it with tuition, but if it’s something where safety could be funded with a one-time thing then it should be.

Director Olds: Could you give a brief recap of the increased cost and the reasons behind it?

President Cockett: The increase cost is primarily because of increased salary compensation to university employees, including staff and faculty. Together, to provide the funding that we’ve provided in the past, the 25% match and promotion and tenure, we’re estimating that that will be 2.5%. We’re estimating because if the legislature says no salary compensation increase or they change that number, that number will change. We’re hearing 2.5% though and lo and behold, it’s 2.5% tuition increase to compensate for those dollars. That’s for Logan and Statewide.

Director Olds: The legislature matches our 25%?

President Cockett: The legislature provides 75%, we have to bring our 25%. A Salary compensation increase of, say, 3.5%, it’s still 75% and 25%. The other thing is something called internal service fees, which is for the agencies that charge us for things they do, like risk management. We know what they’re going to increase their rate, but they also only got 75% from the legislature and were told, “get 75% from higher education.” The other aspect of that is that the lower tuition at Blanding, Eastern, and Moab will have this increased rate instead of 2.5% closer to 4% to contribute the same amount of money proportionally.

VP Brain: Ultimately, they do not match us 100% because they believe that families should save 10%?

President Cockett: No, that’s just a concept to determine what “affordability” is to educate people about how they can go to college. It bugs me when they say, “you need to keep tuition affordable,” because tuition is a part of cost which is equal to tuition plus legislative dollars. I’ll show this during our Truth in Tuition, but we compare ourselves to land grant universities; we don’t compare ourselves to UVU or SLCC, because we have totally different expenses etc. When we compare ourselves to other equivalents like Colorado State, Montana State, Idaho State, Oregon State, etc., we are tied for the lowest cost with Montana State. All the rest of these schools have a higher cost. Is that helpful?
President Ahmed: I got to see that chart yesterday at the capitol. I would like to take a vote to see if we’d support her in the increases that are necessary for that.

Support President Cockett in 2.8% tuition increase: VP Lake: Moved / VP Rivera-Soto: Second / Voting body: Passed

President Cockett: Truth in Tuition is March 11th, and I’ll have pizza. We’ll be broadcasting it to all other campuses so they can also understand this. I’d love to have you two or anybody who wants to help me with this conversation. When we did food last year, I was really nervous about having more people, because usually it was like six people and that’s all that was there, so we figured there’d be more. And Sami or Dexton, do you remember what was said? “It’s the transparency, just explain to us why and let us decide.”

President Ahmed: Thank you for coming.

Table ECR 2020-01 and send Council Updates over email: VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

President Ahmed: I lend my time to VP Rivera.

VP Rivera-Soto: Sami and I are meeting tomorrow about final details for Higher Ed Day, so I’ll send an email tomorrow night with more details.

President Ahmed: We’ve received an email asking for students to name the new auditorium space. This was discussed in Academic Senate and they suggested the Scotsman and the Sagebrush Room. Do you guys have any ideas or suggestions?

VP Low: Can we name it after a person?

President Ahmed: Usually that’s associated with a donation.

VP James Morales: It would have to go through the University Naming Committee.

VP Brain: I think it’d be cool to have something named after Noelle Cockett on campus.

President Ahmed: Okay.

Please email those to me.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ECR 2020-02

VP Brain: This is the second reading. If it passes, we’ll take it to Stater’s Council.

VP Lake: Were there changes beyond grammar that were made?

VP Brain: Yes, the addition about Programming Board and access to the Slack channel.

READING OF CHANGES
I included those together because they all pertain to the issue of remaining connected to other student organizations. Would you like me to read anything else?

President Ahmed: Did anything else change significantly?

VP Brain: No.

Linda Zimmerman: Point of Information: We are freeing up the space where the projectors for the auditorium used to be for storage for the Service Center. Would you like to change that from the design room?

VP Brain: Nelda just wanted to save storage space in general, so I’m sure that would work fine.

Senator Fry: I think the first sentence of the new paragraph has some errors. It doesn’t have a subject.

VP Brain: You’re right. How about “retain access to?”

VP Lake: Do we want to remove design room and just say “storage space in the TSC?”

Approve changes: VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

VP Lake: You will need line numbers.

Approve second reading: VP Lake: Moved / VP Rivera-Soto: Second / Voting body: Passed

President Ahmed: This has passed as a second reading and it will be moved to Stater’s Council. Thank you.

NEW BUSINESS

President Ahmed: I want to explain why we tabled the first bill: there was confusion with Statewide and Regional, so we called the leaders of those areas to gather feelings on that change being made because there will be constitutional changes involved, so we’ll have the second meeting next week.

ECR 2020-03

READING

VP Lake: On line 7 “associations” needs to be singular. Line 35 needs to be changed to “whereas.” On line 45 it needs to be changed to “of the.”

VP Brain: On line 48 there was some redundancy. It could be changed to “level of familiarity and specialized knowledge”.

VP Jessop: This position also sits on the alumni board I don’t know if that would be included at all

President Ahmed: that’s in the alumni association

Director Olds: On line 10, there should be a “the” added. On line 54 there should be a “the” inserted before Alumni Association.

Approve changes: VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed
VP Lake: Do you want to talk about your discussion with the advisor?

Linda Zimmerman: I met with Nate Lundberg, the advisor, yesterday. We agreed with all of the Memorandum of Understanding that Tarren emailed to us. We felt comfortable with that. This is definitely a specialized position and they have been quite frustrated that they have not been able to appoint the position, so advisors are very supportive of this change.

President Ahmed: Any other comments?

Director Olds: What does “access to the PR and Marketing office” meant?

President Ahmed: it’s the same as your guidelines outline.

VP Jessop: We are moving towards our own content creation.

President Ahmed: That’s the purpose of the memo of understanding, so the change can be facilitated gradually.

Approve first reading: VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

ECR 2020-04

READING

Senator Fry: In that first paragraph, it needs a space. Also, “in” the year, not “on.”

Director Olds: On line 3, “a victory win in a sporting event,” Line 4, add “the” before “USU 1010 Connections.” Line 13 needs a possessive instead of a plural and then a plural of “victories” with a comma.

VP Tomlinson: Line 16 needs “finals weeks,” right?

Director Olds: Point of Clarification: We’ll light it for the whole week, like for five days?

VP Patino: Yes.

VP Brain: Will there be a big press release?

VP Patino: Yes.

Approve changes: VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

Approve first reading: VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

ADJOURNMENT

VP Lake: Moved / Senator Fry: Second / Voting body: Passed

IN ATTENDANCE: Linda Zimmerman, President Sami Ahmed, VP Dexton Lake, VP Braden Tomlinson, VP Cooper Low, Senator Jared Fry, Director Cameron Olds, VP Jenny Patino, VP Tarren Jessop, VP Paulina Rivera-Soto, VP Emma Brain, Assistant Anna Kremnev