

Reflecting on Budget Reductions

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Author Note

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Introduction

When I first enrolled in ARP 623, I was excited for the budget reduction scenario assignment based on the conversations with the cohort that graduated before us. Many of them had positive feedback about the course as well as the assignments. They mentioned that the course filled the gaps between the theory they were taught and the practice they engaged in. They also mentioned that the course provided them critical insight that helped each of them tremendously. Throughout this past semester, I've found this to be true for myself as well, as I've learned to bridge many of the critical issues occurring in higher education such as finances and public policy while engaging in a more practical manner where we directly engage in conversations and activities that we might encounter in the workplace.

The budget reduction scenario in particular piqued my interest as an assignment for the course. Having had the opportunity to work for the Vice Chancellor's office under assessment, I had already been exposed to some opportunities to work on a bigger picture level, thinking about how data might be utilized to inform the organizational decision making processes. Rarely, however, would I ever be put into a situation where I would be making the decisions for someone. In this process, I've had the opportunity to identify a variety of issues that occur in postsecondary education and provide brainstorming solutions to address some of them, as well as utilize research to advance the success of a fictional student population (Program Learning Outcomes 4, 6). In working with a group that I was familiar with personally rather than professionally, I've also learned how to improve my work-life balance (Personal Goal 1). Through thinking from the perspective of a Vice President, I've also had a chance to contemplate the politics within a Division of Student Affairs (Professional Goal 3)

Links to Program Learning Outcomes

The budget reduction scenario was an assignment that asked us to think about ways to make cuts to a fictional budget to meet a threshold. In this process, it was important for me and the group that I worked with to consider a variety of issues that affected how one might lead an organization. For our group, we considered fairness toward the departments that would receive cuts from the budget. Through thinking about the low staff morale that was presented, it was important for me to think about how I might handle budget cuts in a fair manner. When writing the memorandum to be presented, our group emphasized that cuts were a suggestion to departments and department heads would ultimately have a say in how the specific cuts were to be made in each department. In considering access for students to the local community, we also emphasized increasing access to internships and local jobs. As such, we were able to consider ethical issues such as fairness in this assignment (PLO 4).

When considering how decisions were to be made, research and data were utilized. As the school was presented as a campus in the California State University system, I recommended looking at the research and data provided by sister campuses when making decisions on specific programs. An example of this includes the changes recommended for recruitment and yield activities for historically underrepresented students and resources provided for the population, as the fictional campus had a lower rate compared the system and state averages. In doing so, I was able to think about ways to utilize research in making decisions as a postsecondary educational leader (PLO 6).

Links to Personal and Professional Goals

When starting this assignment, I chose to work with a group that I had not previously collaborated with in a class or work setting. The members were all close friends of mine in the cohort so it became important to carefully navigate what we considered course topics and regular conversation topics. I had to be cognizant of how to balance asserting my views as a

professional and a scholar with interacting with these individuals as my friends. Through the assignment, I realized that when I was working with these individuals, I was more attuned and focused on their thought processes and careful in my presentation of ideas, as I wanted to make sure I was not over-asserting myself. In working with professionals that I had not previously worked with, we were able to generate strong conversations from a variety of different perspectives relating to how the Division's decision might impact each individual office and thus consider the politics that come into play when making decisions. I was also able to contribute my previous experience from working in a Vice Chancellor's office when it came to considering the pressures that may be coming from the Chancellor or accrediting bodies.

Conclusion

Through this specific assignment, I was able to think and make suggestions from a different vantage point than I typically consider. This assignment, like many others in ARP 623, helped facilitate my learning in decision-making processes that I might encounter later on in my career. Through the opportunity to work with the less-familiar topic of budget management at a higher scale, I have been able to learn how I might utilize research and other materials I've learned from my courses in my practice.