

Lamar University's Fact Sheet

The vast majority of concerns raised are assertions about budget changes made after Hurricane Harvey's devastation. The loss of state funding from a decrease in enrollment required the use of reserve funds and cuts to existing budgets. In addition, much of Lamar University's budget must be spent in specific areas such as buildings, grounds, equipment, etc. Hurricane Harvey impacted enrollment immediately and prospectively, and funds had to be spent to stop current and future losses. Once these adjustments were made, there were no funds available for faculty raises. Fortunately, the budget changes made then, now make future raises possible.

In addition to budget concerns, there are some assertions that are simply wrong. Lamar University is accused of continuing to "hide" the full budget when, in fact it, is always available on the website.

Here are the specific assertions and proper responses.

1. \$1m spent on soil remediation on library grounds? If so, poor project management assessment.

No project can be accurately termed soil remediation. There was one other recent project involving subterranean work. The aging infrastructure at Lamar University will necessitate that we continue to upgrade systems as we seek to improve our footprint.

The John Gray Library sewer main repair, at a total cost of \$55,578.52, involved removal and replacement 50-feet of 8-inch sewer pipe and required replacement and repositioning of sewer access (manhole). During the project, it was found that 35 feet of 30-inch storm sewer pipe was obstructing the pitch of the sewer line; the storm sewer was replaced and rerouted. The work required temporary diversion of flowing sewage while repairs were being made. Six cubic yards of concrete debris and contaminated soil were removed, and the excavation was backfilled with clean stabilized soil. The project began in October 2018 and was completed in November 2018.

The North Central Plant feeder replacement was principally the replacement of three existing medium voltage electrical feeders with three new medium voltage electrical feeders associated with the North Central Plant on the Lamar University campus. The existing feeders were approximately 50 years old and had exceeded useful life. This project required removal of the existing feeders and abandoned steam and steam condensate lines from one underground utility tunnel; installation of temporary sidewalks and ramps; partial opening and closing of sections of existing underground utility tunnels; cutting and patching of landscaped areas; cutting and patching of existing sidewalks. The project term was approximately four months, and the total project cost was \$1,076,350.09.

2. The last \$25m payment from Academic Partnerships, where did that money go?

Academic Partnerships (AP) does not make payments to Lamar University. Lamar University bills and collects tuition and fees for all enrollments, including enrollments in Academic Partnership programs. The AP contract requires payment to AP of 50 percent of tuition charged for masters level courses and 40 percent for undergraduate level courses (FY2018). The pro forma for AP programs for the last three complete fiscal years follows:

	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
<u>Revenue:</u>			
Tuition Revenue	26,843,447.95	28,937,754.47	25,876,527.59
Less Waivers/Exemptions	(590,173.82)	(603,070.06)	(535,934.96)
Total Net Revenue	26,253,274.13	28,334,684.41	25,340,592.63
<u>Expenses:</u>			
Faculty	1,483,049.00	1,009,497.00	1,136,132.30
Staff-AP course development/advising	1,712,619.01	2,243,368.67	2,354,154.81
Benefits (Insurance, Retirement)	697,731.55	771,878.63	835,106.94
Operations support	1,329,615.17	1,603,959.58	1,611,587.06
Contract to Higher Education Partnership*	12,739,429.70	13,422,988.62	13,765,971.00
Scholarships/promotions	946,336.70	907,126.43	620,545.10
Total Expense	18,908,781.13	19,958,818.93	20,323,497.21
Revenue over Expense	7,344,493.00	8,375,865.48	5,017,095.42

Net revenue (revenue over expense) is budgeted to colleges and academic units as part of designated tuition operating funds.

No other institution in the country has the share of market in graduate degree programs, which is a testament to the successful partnership with Academic Partnerships.

3. Why does Lamar continue to “hide” the full budget? This must begin immediately to be made public again, with copies stationed in the Library with public access.

Lamar University develops fiscal year operating budgets in accordance with prudent, generally accepted practices, and in compliance with State of Texas statute and Texas State University System rules and policies. In accordance with policies, all operating budgets are posted on the LU Website. Lamar University’s submitted budgets are

approved by the Board of Regents, and are available in the TSUS Board Minutes. The Board of Regents approves the submitted budgets in August of each year and then it is added to our website. Any and all necessary budget adjustments are approved by the Board of Regents and available on the TSUS Board of Regents' meeting minutes. Paper copies of the budget were last placed in the Library in 2003 because they became available online.

Additionally, there have been meetings with each College, the department chairs, and the Faculty Senate for the past 18 months. This level of budget transparency at Lamar University is unprecedented.

- 4. Lamar cut a huge amount of money this past semester/year from each college. In the College of Business (COB) I was told it was about 50%, so much we had zero funds for printer paper. Yet, we continue again, hiring new staff/admin at alarming rates.**

College of Business actual operating funds for FY2019 was stable from the FY2018 budget period.

- 5. Computers.....to students**

Deficiencies in instructional (classroom, computer lab and study area) computing equipment and in classrooms themselves were identified and the appropriate steps have been and are being taken to address these matters, including a multi-year program to bring student-facing computer equipment up-to-date and to implement a formal replacement cycle. Faculty and administrative computer replacements are requested by department chairs to the deans, and funding has been allocated in each of the past several fiscal years.

- 6. The rainy day fund, at least \$25m, where is this money going? Is it expended? In recent years, over \$11m short budget one year? 3m deficit another year? Why keep hiring non-essential non-faculty? This deficit is not just from a 500-student loss. There is a serious fiscal accountability issue.**

Actual enrollment and the distribution of enrollment in colleges and class levels failed to achieve the projections in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. Two factors are responsible for projection failures: 1) the precipitous decline in international enrollments (which could not be foreseen); 2) loss of domestic enrollment due to Hurricane Harvey, (which likewise could not have been foreseen). Operating expenses increased in 2017-2018 in part to pay for Hurricane Harvey sections, small (low enrollment) classes which were continued, not canceled, in order for students to continue progress in their degrees. This required payment of additional monies to faculty for these extra classes. The extraordinary expenses resulting from Hurricane Harvey came from University funds. Reimbursement from FEMA, insurance or legislative appropriation is yet to occur. Reduction of expenses in any significant amount requires reduction of faculty or staff, something that was not acceptable during this period of community and University stress.

7. Some have complained that “dedicated budget amounts” have been taken without notice

The only dedicated funds in the University are fees paid by students (or other parties) for specific courses or materials. These funds are a direct result of the revenue generated by students. A decline in enrollment would result in less fees collected. We are most willing to discuss budget operation. In fact, we have spent the latter part of the spring 2019 semester meeting with the deans, the deans with their department chairs, the full Faculty Senate, and the Council of Instructional Department chairs on Lamar University financial matters. We have disseminated information and data on how Lamar University’s budget is calculated, the meaning of student credit hours and weighted credit hours, and the impact of decreased revenue as a result of declining enrollment on budgets, especially resulting from the loss of international graduate students and those impacted by Hurricane Harvey. The Faculty Senate has a Finance and Budget Subcommittee to examine financial matters. To date, the committee chair has not requested a meeting with the Provost, the Vice President for Finance and Operations, or the President on financial matters.

8. Concern regarding new midstream operations program. \$3.75m with no formal plan? Another black hole like Port Management?

Lamar University’s legislative appropriation request to the 86th Texas Legislature included the Center for Midstream Management and Science as a non-formula item. The conceptualization of this item required a review of the literature, discussion with faculty who might potentially be involved in these activities and with potential private and public partners. Currently, a group of faculty from the College of Engineering have developed a vision statement and a tentative research agenda. Constructing a formal plan will be the initial charge to the Center, if, and when, the legislature allocates funding. Faculty research grants play a significant role in the Port Management’s budget, as well as development of the curriculum.

9. How much spent on redoing quad, Lamar grounds?

Refurbishing the Quad was an integral part of the vision for the Setzer Student Center renovation and expansion to improve the student experience. The foundation for the project was student-led and they were instrumental in the planning of both the Setzer Center and the Quad. Of the total project budget of \$27,944,948, \$23,497,755 was expended for Setzer and \$2,435,480 for the Quad.

Lamar University’s grounds maintenance contract is budgeted at \$609,000 in fiscal year 2019. An outside-vendor contract is more cost efficient compared to internal maintenance.

- 10. It's been said Lamar is asking for \$1.15m from legislature. How much will go towards faculty items? Seeing as \$1.15m was just gotten for students much of this should go towards faculty issues and salaries.**

Rebuild Texas/Qatar Harvey Funds and Department of Education monies were specifically designed for students affected by Hurricane Harvey. Neither grant includes funding for faculty and staff. We did continue to provide Hurricane Harvey-related assistance both during the event and afterward. Ninety-two faculty and staff received a total of \$83,000 to help them recover from Hurricane Harvey. These were donated funds raised specifically for this purpose.

- 11. Faculty handbook appears to allow for termination of faculty with little reason...what is "inefficient/ineffective"? Who determines this....It is left intentionally vague.**

This is unchanged for the past 20 years and is part of the Faculty handbook. This is another example of the need to ensure our handbook is congruent with Texas Law and the Texas State University System handbook.

- 12. Grade changes. Some secret grade changes have occurred without instructor knowledge or consent.**

This complaint has been heard and dealt with at the University level. The faculty member behind these unfounded assertions appealed a grade change made by the Dean in one of his fall of 2018 classes. The Provost's office formed, according to policy, a University committee to review the case. The committee found in favor of the faculty member, and the grade was changed to its original letter grade. The Provost overruled the Dean on the grade change.

Subsequently, the faculty member sent a grievance to SACSCOC in June 2018. SACSCOC examined the complete record of this situation and denied the grievance in spring 2019.

- 13. No research enhancement grants for faculty even after assured we would get them.**

The announcement for Enhancement grant funds are scheduled to be released in June 2019.

- 14. Faculty grievances are not being handled identically for all. Some are simply cancelled without telling grievant, many are not handled in timely manner. In fact, it now appears that the Lamar grievance process has been replaced by the TSUS policy, as the Lamar policy is "invalid". Lamar grievances allow presentation to faculty while TSUS seems to allow to administrators such as Associate Provosts and such. This is an attempt to marginalize faculty input into grievances.**

We revised the Faculty handbook and have aligned it to TSUS policies and procedures. Work is still being done to parallel the two handbooks. In the end, TSUS policies/procedures override local handbooks, and this caveat is on the front page of the

Faculty handbook. The Provost's and President's offices have handled all grievances in an expeditious manner, and no one has been deprived of this important process. We strongly believe in resolving faculty grievances and have not stood in the way of any one's ability to file a grievance and have it openly examined and settled.

15. Other TSUS have ombudsman. Lamar executives refuse to consider this for Lamar Faculty.

The Provost has asked at least three times for a proposal from Faculty Senate. The idea of an ombudsman was generated by the Provost's office and is now before the Faculty Senate.

16. Investigations into the mysterious "hit list" of rigorous professors.

The Provost's office conducted several data analytics last year. The preliminary focus was on student failure rates exceeding 50 percent of each class. As a result, we took steps to improve pedagogy. The Provost also asked the deans to examine the situation in their colleges. Under no circumstances were faculty disciplined, nor were any faculty terminated as a result of our efforts. The Provost met with the Faculty Senate to explain the situation.

17. The newest approved, faculty handbook is not online as it is "not compliant with TSUS".

The current handbook is back online. It had been removed to deal with a number of conflicts between Lamar University and TSUS rules, as well as a large number of changes being considered at the May meeting of the Board of Regents.

18. The whole 4th leg of assessment for faculty is ridiculous. The only dissent allowed is one that is "productive". An attempt to stifle free thought or disagreements. This needs to be scrapped altogether.

For the last three years, the Faculty Senate has taken steps to review the annual evaluation process and document it. We anticipate receiving a working draft of the evaluation process and documentation by fall semester for legal and administrative review.

19. We need a yearly, faculty assessment of the president and provost. Some of the other TSUS evaluate their president, yet ours will not allow an assessment of himself.

The President and Provost are evaluated by the Chancellor and Board of Regents.

20. Why is the admin assessing how much time online professors spend in Blackboard and how long to respond to emails etc.?

We have students who make complaints against faculty—never responding to their emails, etc. The analytics are not being used by Digital Learning, but are provided to the dean and/or department chair if they have questions.

- 21. The online Ed.D of education, How can faculty member chair dissertations of 30-80 students each. This is troubling and likely an accreditation issue.**

The statement is not reflective of the workload of the educational doctoral degree faculty. To our knowledge, only one faculty member, who is now retired, carried a large number of dissertations; however, she had no additional teaching responsibilities. The current ratio of students to faculty for dissertations is 7 to 1.

- 22. Public information request for document and materials are not being handled consistently or appropriately.**

The process is being handled more consistently than ever before. All FOIA requests are completed by one person. This is the first time we have heard such a complaint, and we will review our internal processes should a complaint be received.

- 23. Lamar is purchasing land, homes, real estate nearby as it becomes available. Is this advisable considering the dire financial situation at Lamar?**

The University is responsible for ensuring the campus can grow and remain attractive to future students. The purchase of property, which is purchased with funds that cannot be used for operations, is a long-term investment in the future of Lamar University.

- 24. Why are we hiring consultants, creating many new staff/admin positions etc. if we are in such bad fiscal shape?**

Consultants have been hired in the area of student recruitment and retention to help Lamar University retain and graduate students effectively. Three years ago, our four year graduation rate was nine percent. Two years ago, it was 14 percent. This year, the rate is 17 percent. These data suggest a positive result of our investments in student retention and matriculation. No doubt we still have a long way to go. There are many dedicated faculty who have played a significant role in advancing this cause.