

Mississippi University
for Women
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February 8, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing today to provide an update on university finances and the development of the FY 2018 university budget. I want to begin by sharing with you good news about our spring 2017 enrollment—it's up 5.67% or 146 students over spring semester 2016. The increase is due to stronger retention of undergraduate students (up 4.38% or 81 students), graduate students (up 7.93% or 9 students), and continuing dual enrolled students (up 47.62% or 110 students). While the university experienced declines in other student classifications (new freshmen, new transfer students, new graduate students, and readmitted students), overall The W's enrollment increased.

For the past five years the university has focused on student recruitment, retention, and degree completion, as well as the importance of earning tuition revenue. I know you are aware that we have experienced four mid-year budget reductions in the past two fiscal years when state revenue collections were less than expected. Since the beginning of FY 2016, the university's state support has declined slightly more than one million dollars, while net tuition revenue increased slightly less than this amount. The university adjusted by forgoing many priorities scheduled to be funded by the tuition increase, but with your help, the university managed these adjustments by reprioritizing spending, holding positions open, deferring expenditures, and making wise use of all available revenue.

Net tuition revenue is up for three reasons. First, the Board of Trustees authorized a tuition increase, but our increased enrollment and retention has also favorably influenced net tuition revenue. University-wide enrollment management efforts make a difference each day, enabling the university to make use of these revenues to support core university functions.

The W remains committed to continuous improvement, and together we are constantly adjusting, reprioritizing, and focusing our efforts anew on university priorities. Students enroll because of our quality academic programs, and I want to thank our faculty champions who have led the important work in curriculum revision, embracing new modes of delivery, and the hard work of adding and deleting academic programs. Our success corresponds to adapting to the changing needs of our students.

This university's proven record of efficiency and effectiveness is well known. Your work is recognized within Mississippi's public university system for aggressive efforts resulting in energy savings and cost avoidance, our lean organization, and our capacity to rapidly adapt to new opportunities.

Many in higher education think we have reached an "inflection point," or a time that marks the beginning of significant change. Evidence offered to support this notion includes the changing expectations of our students and their future employers, the evolving role of technology in society, and to validate the life-long connection between the value of higher education, the economy, and our quality of life.

State revenues have been flat or declining and will likely remain so in the near term. The federal government is considering new spending priorities such as investment in critical national infrastructure and defense spending. How we choose to respond will profoundly influence the university's course in the coming years.

I am an optimist. I think we should embrace this as a time of renewal, and as an opportunity to engage in a discussion about the importance of public higher education to society and the economy, as well as demonstrate the value of well-rounded and well-educated citizens to democracy.

Let me give you just a few of the reasons I have confidence about the days ahead. Our students thirst for the education received here, and they know a degree from The W will change their lives. Our faculty, supported by our staff, are committed to the success of our students. The benchmarked performance of The W—measured by the success of our graduates—is irrefutable.

Most importantly, this university community, including our alumni and friends, rally behind our students and each other. The MUW Alumni Association and MUW Foundation are hard at work to support your work. I am grateful to Deborah Hodges, MUWAA president, and Ralph McLain, MUW Foundation chair, and their respective Boards of Directors for their excellent work advancing the university.


During last week's Administrative Council meeting I outlined our path to develop the FY 2018 budget, guided by the University's Strategic Priorities and focused on our students. I am asking each of you, working through your supervising cabinet member, to think broadly and deeply. Except for the hiring pause, these other actions occur routinely as we continually align our resources with our mission.

- **Hiring Pause:** Hiring will be paused (exceptions may be granted on a case by case basis) until the state budget is finalized around the first of April and the IHL Board of Trustees makes funding allocations—most likely during the April meeting of the Board of Trustees;
- **Efficiency Suggestions:** Suggestions of proposed efficiencies are invited to continue to improve our effectiveness, while reducing costs. These should be routed through your supervising cabinet member by March 1, 2017;
- **Organizational Structure:** Suggestions regarding the organizational structure are invited to continue to improve effectiveness, while reducing costs. Over the past couple of years, this has been a topic of discussion across the university, so that good work will be included. Decisions will be guided by the University Strategic Priorities and, principally, the needs of our students regardless of the mode of delivery of their education. These should also be routed through your supervising cabinet member by March 1, 2017;
- **Restructuring Work:** It's reasonable to expect position descriptions will be rewritten as work is reorganized.

This work won't be done when the FY 2018 university budget is adopted by the IHL Board of Trustees; this is work that must continue over time.

I am grateful to each of you for your good work on behalf of our students, as well as your commitment to collaborative efforts.

Sincerely,



Jim Borsig, Ph.D.
President