

Budget Advisory Council Feedback

August 13, 2020

These are individual feedback from Budget Advisory Council members (not officially voted on). They are being provided, as submitted by the individual BAC members, for Executive Cabinet to consider as part of the on-going budget planning process:

"After talking this over with a few exempt staff, I would like to ask that you push for the COLAs to be considered for exempt staff and contracts be re-issued for this year, which will offset the 3% for the 8 furlough days knowing that by the end of the year our salaries will reflect the COLA increases. I understand that this has to be agreed upon by BAC before the recommendation is forwarded to EC.

Lastly, if the college goes with 3%=8 day furloughs across the board then that is what we/exempt staff has to go with but many will not be happy knowing that we didn't get the 20-21 COLA and will lose money overall for the furlough days.

And after Kevin's comment at the last meeting about the utilities, it makes sense that the entire campus would be furloughed on the same days as a cost savings that facilities can potentially add to their budget to help with the overall college budget gap.

Thanks for guiding us through this difficult process. Enjoy your Thursday!"

"I think that Exempt and Classified staff should be furloughed the same number of days. If it's 8 days then 8 days for both. Is that 8 days before June 30, 2021?"

"Michael - This is why I was asking if anyone had done any number crunching on what that would amount to. If each employee type contributes by either forgoing COLAs, or implementing furloughs to compensate for the COLA amount, then it would seem that Exempt have already done their part.

However, if the savings is significant enough to then also add the furlough for exempt, then that might change my thoughts around that. I would not want anyone making under \$53,000 – that did not get a COLA – to be also asked to furlough.

So, do we know what the numbers are if we look at total salaries to exempt staff that make more than \$53,000? If we just go off the spreadsheet of overall we would be looking at the COLA amount for all exempt, including those that make less than \$53,000.

I hope this is making sense.

Bottom line: I would like to see everyone contribute. Exempt already has by missing out on the COLA for this year. I am on the fence about whether or not I support the idea that Exempt should take another hit by having to furlough. While generally speaking Exempt make more than classified; for some, they are the only wage-earner for their families; others have two incomes. Additional reductions may affect some folks in adverse ways that we are not aware of.

If the amount of savings would not make a big enough difference, I am not for it.

Also – I wonder about the cost associated with implementing furloughs and working that into the system, HR staff having to enter everything, etc. I know it is not as simple as waving a wand and making it happen.

If furloughs are implemented – it would seem to make most sense to have the college just choose which days to be closed, perhaps recognizing further savings by not having associated operational and cleaning costs with the buildings on campus.

I hope this makes sense. Let me know if it does not.”

“Good morning everyone,

Helen raised a good question but I did not hear a follow up. If we are giving up our COLA this year, is it gone for good? Or, it could be reinstated when things are back to normal?”

“Ok, then, I would prefer that staff are able to choose the days that they furlough. Maybe encourage everyone to use more than a few days on the last two weeks of December when we're not open anyway.”

“HCEA sees some operational complications if all exempt staff and all classified staff above a certain pay rate are not working on the same regular weekday work day while instructional effort is assumed to proceed as normal. That said, we are unclear about whether the furlough is being differentially applied based on pay rate. “

“First, good meeting yesterday! I may need some clarification...are you are stating that the COLAs that have been in place since July 1 for the classified staff will be ending and the faculty COLAs will be negotiated? It was my understanding from the meeting that the classified staff would keep their COLA, but would face an 8-day furlough to save the college the equivalency of the 3% COLA (\$225,356). A 3% COLA represents 0.0031% of the entire operating budget. I feel

the Executive Cabinet needs to weigh that in the value proposition of this decision. Would the furloughs for the exempt and classified staff in addition to the COLA reductions?

I would agree that both measures (reduction of all COLAs and furloughs) need to take place immediately to help meet the target budget goals. My fear is that we are hoping that the State of Washington only reduces their contribution by 15%...what happens if it is 20% or more? I also feel strongly that each department/division needs to have the opportunity to restructure and possibly eliminate positions that are truly a Reduction In Force based on a decrease in enrollment, under-utilization of the campus or a lack of need for a program/personnel.

As far as the reduction of COLAs, I would also suggest studying the reductions on a staggered decrease and how that may impact the budget:

Classified:	0.5%	\$42,559	Faculty:	0.7%	\$141,047
	1%	\$85,118		1.4%	\$282,095
	1.5%	\$127,678		2.1%	\$423,142
	2%	\$170,237		2.8%	\$564,190
	2.5%	\$212,795			
	3%	\$225,356			

My final comment, is that I think it is a good idea to go to the Board of Directors to provide \$2.5 Million in one-time funding. However, I would hope that there is a plan going forward to recoup those expenses in the future through increased revenue from enrollment or a reduction in operating expenses. If we are not able to identify how this budget gap will be filled in the future then we are only prolonging our financial turmoil down the road. "

"Thank you for the clarification. I would be in favor of all of these budget cutting measures. "

"I was going to suggest starting with voluntary furloughs for exempt employees. I believe that many of us would volunteer, if it means saving somebody's job. The one thing about exempt employees and furloughs, is that unemployment benefits might not be available if it is just for a day. Thank you"

"Ask employees to voluntarily furlough and see if they can get the necessary cost savings before looking at furloughing all staff. Our college has historically been very generous with shared leave and I believe you may find the same by requesting volunteers."

"There is a question of whether employees paid through grants or S&A funds would need to be furloughed since their furloughs would not impact the bottom line but would only save grant and S&A funds. Please let us know the reasoning behind the decision."

"Give exempt their COLA and furlough them for the same days the college anticipates furloughing classified. The equity optics will go much further in keeping our campus community supportive of one another. Exempt staff with no COLA's and no furloughs will not be received well by others who are affected."

"Please evaluate what would be the difference in savings between furloughing all staff including Executive Staff making over \$53,000 and not furloughing those under \$53,000. People need to see the savings and understand the reasoning for not following Governor Inslee's recommendations."

"There was a large voice of concern that Highline having waited to initiate these furloughs has cost both staff and the college funding available through the shared work program. All other WPEA represented colleges did take advantage of the program and started furloughs at the beginning of July. Please explain to staff why the delay and what options are still available in the event of furloughs."

Per WPEA representative early retirements are approved in our current contract under 41.22 and OFM has approved early retirements for this year. If this information is correct than please inform staff of this option and what will be the cost savings to the college if individuals chose early retirement.

"Suggest the college if they wish to be more equitable, reevaluate the vacation benefits and carryover differences between exempt and classified. The cost savings could be substantial if exempt benefits were trimmed to meet the same requirements as those classified employees. Early payout when exempt members leave the college for other positions outside of Highline is greater than that for classified in majority of cases." "

"WPEA members have seen the draft for next contract cycle and the state is opening with no COLA's, and no step increases. This will be totally unacceptable for our Highline members who many find it difficult in the best of times to meet their monthly obligations. Especially if they are furloughed this fiscal year."

"Personally, if there are going to be staff reductions regardless if furloughs are enacted, then do them sooner rather than later and don't furlough. It will be a morale buster to have furloughs and then tell people we are still short so now they will be laid off. People are already worried and the uncertainty is not helping their mental health."

"All programs/staff need to be evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness and not just profitability. We need to evaluate programs that are offering same or overlapping services and consolidate those to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and allow as many programs to survive as possible. "

“These are extremely tough times for so many in our campus community and even those making over \$53,000 are struggling to make expenses because food, utilities, and rents have increased and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Many of the staff are single, or single parents, or married with children and the other spouse has been laid off. We need to name resources available to assist our staff and students as they struggle with these uncertain times. “

“Please disclose all cost savings on new spreadsheet with definitions and time frame for these reductions to occur and whether they are temporary (how long) or permanent.”

“Create campus-wide strategies to increase enrollment and retention.”

“Offer continued remote work from home to free up office space once school returns to 100% opening. This would save on rental expenditures for Bldg. 99”

“First and foremost put the needs of students before any staff, faculty, or executive council needs. Without the students we do not have a reason to open the doors and won't be financially solvent to do so since it is from their attendance that we stay employed. “