Date: December 6, 2010  
To: Bruce Shepard, President  
From: Catherine Riordan, Provost  
Re: Recommendations from Three Budget Task Forces

Thank you for your patience as task forces worked to evaluate budget proposals and plans I brought forward in the most recent budget cutting exercises. Two task forces focused on Scientific and Technical Services and a third on the Music Library. Those intensive explorations over the past two months have rendered three sets of recommendations that I bring to you now.

I am deeply appreciative of the research and thoughtful analyses of these groups. The impact of these cuts and the time it took us to determine how to implement them illustrate how deeply the successive reductions in state funding are going. It truly ‘took the village’ to sort through the options. We owe a debt of gratitude to the many who contributed to these analyses, from the leaders and members of the tasks forces, the members of the UPRC, all those who provided feedback as ‘users’ of the various services, those who suggested solutions along the way, and the administrators and offices that provided evidence in support of the work of these groups throughout the process.

A. Scientific and Technical Services
Scientific and Technical Services (SciTech) supports teaching and research activities across campus through an instrumentation laboratory, instruction for students in the use of scientific instruments, and repair, maintenance, and construction of scientific instruments. SciTech experts and equipment are also tapped to a lesser extent for other equipment repair and maintenance by nonscience and nonacademic departments. Two task forces examined issues related to SciTech.

(1) Identifying and Assessing Immediate Critical Needs and Impact
The task force chaired by Brad Johnson conducted a thorough analysis of impacts through review of SciTech service data, input from faculty and students in three colleges who rely most on SciTech services, and conversations with funding agencies regarding the role of SciTech in the competitive evaluation of WWU research and instrumentation proposals. They reaffirmed the continuing need for SciTech services as critical to core instructional and research missions. The task force describes a well-functioning network of services and professionals in SciTech and across colleges that together provide diverse and specialized skill sets through a balance of local (e.g., departmental) and centralized (SciTech) technicians, equipment and laboratories. Testimonials by faculty in particular regarding their use of SciTech provide convincing evidence of the high value of its services and contributions to our core mission.
The $100,000 SciTech budget reduction was accomplished by the elimination of the operating budget, reduction of all staff positions by .064 FTE (approximately 17 days), and the elimination of one technical staff position in electronics.

To ameliorate the impact of these cuts on our core mission, the task force made a number of recommendations that I am in turn recommending to you.

a. Restore the remaining FY 2011 SciTech operating budget of $6,000 through which instrument parts and consumable supplies like gases are purchased. This year’s restoration will come from one-time budget transfers from the three colleges that use SciTech services the most: CST ($4,435), CHSS ($783), and Huxley ($783). In the future, operating funds will accrue in part from a Program Activity Assessment (see below).

b. To facilitate the management of staff time given these reductions, a scheme will be established through which SciTech service prioritizes requests as follows: (1) safety; (2) instruction; (3) research; (4) other. It is hoped all important tasks will be accomplished, but those lower in priority will not be turned around as quickly.

c. Until January 2012, SciTech will report to the Provost’s Office. Continuing opportunities for the director to contribute to instructional bottleneck areas will be explored.

d. The functioning of SciTech in light of these reductions and other changes on campus will be reviewed, as will the reporting relationship, prior to January 2012.

(2) Chargebacks

The task force chaired by Steve Sulkin examined the feasibility of a system of chargebacks to support SciTech. The possibility of implementing a system that would allow WWU to charge externally funded projects for SciTech services was deemed unworkable, primarily because of its implications for the substantial work SciTech carries out in support of instructional programs. Continuing without additional revenue to replace the operating cuts in particular was also not seen as a viable solution, as was adjusting upward the university’s overhead rate to include SciTech services because of the minimal amount of new revenue that would generate. Instead, a “Program Activity Assessment” was recommended and I am inclined to accept that recommendation and am forwarding it to you. It has the advantages of a minimal administrative load and assessments roughly in line with total use.

To establish this Program Activity Assessment, we would take the following steps.

a. Ask the task force to develop an implementation plan as they expressed willingness to do. Using the service statistics kept by SciTech, compute a five year average of SciTech services provided to each major campus unit (e.g., a college). Use that five year average and an hourly rate to calculate the Program Activity Assessment that would be transferred from the campus unit at the beginning of the fiscal year.

b. This additional revenue would support the operating budget.

c. Reevaluate this system no later than January 2013.
C. Music Library

This task force, headed by Brian Burton, conducted a thorough and fair analysis, identifying important strengths and weaknesses of the various proposals that allowed us to narrow our considerations down to two. The library’s proposal was fleshed out with detailed plans for how the music collection could be consolidated in the library. Working together, Music and Library faculty, led by Francis Halle, came up with a workable place to consolidate the music collection in the main library. It was more difficult to specify a sustainable plan for the specifics of the Music department’s proposal.

At the end of the day, it was Dean Cox and his staff who took the proposal offered by the Music Department and, working with Dean Guyette and Music Department Chair Sommers, put together a plan for how the current location of the music library could be maintained. This plan builds on reallocations of resources, staffing and priorities within the Music Department and College of Fine and Performing Arts. Those reallocations were adjusted in conversations between the deans, so that now all, including the music faculty, are convinced we have a sustainable solution.

Work on that solution began last week with a joint committee of the Library and Music faculty which met last week to recommend how the acquisitions budget would be cut in line with the Music Department proposal. Those recommendations for acquisition reductions are now in hand and will be implemented as soon as possible. One-time funds from CFPA will cover shortages resulting from the late date of this decision. The fact that this joint committee worked so well together to accomplish a difficult task strengthened our confidence in the sustainability of this solution.

It is that solution—making the reallocations, restructuring and other adjustments necessary to keep the Music Library in its current location—that I am recommending to you now.

Staff Adjustments. The Music Library staff and faculty are integral to this solution. The library will still be reduced by one staff member, which necessitated the reduction in hours that has been in effect since late summer. The remaining staff and faculty members will provide services to faculty and students critical for instruction and performance-related activities. Other nonessential responsibilities will be reassigned when possible. Positions for student workers in the library will be eliminated, effective in January. This reduction in student employment is regrettable but unavoidable.

Collaborative Leadership. A Joint Oversight Committee of the Library and Music Departments will be established to regularly review and advise on the Music Library functions and operations, including policies and procedures, new initiatives, acquisitions, and other matters deemed relevant by the committee members or other stakeholders. The members of the joint committee will be appointed by the deans, after consultation with faculty and staff in the relevant units. The two deans initially will serve in ex officio capacity on this committee to clarify expectations and to provide support in the initial stages of the important work this group will be asked to conduct.
**Looking toward the Future.** The attention now focused on the Music Library creates the perfect opportunity to think about the music library of the future, as it supports the future directions and opportunities for Western’s music program and library collections. Clearly financial resources will be constrained, but the desire and commitment to the library has never been stronger and it is that energy, combined with the commitments to collaboration that this process has elicited, that can help us to advance even in these tough times. The Joint Oversight Committee will be the vehicle to begin those discussions.

The future also holds opportunities for greater involvement of the strong partners within the Bellingham music community, which will be sought through increased linkages with community advisory boards of the College of Fine and Performing Arts and the Libraries. Deans of these units are already engaged in building these linkages. Many community members have already been very helpful in this decision making process.

**Other Considerations: Space.** The consolidation of off-campus lease space into WWU-owned buildings in order to save money was a backdrop for many of these discussions. The consolidation of theatre and dance space reduced pressure to bring VING functions into the Music Library space. Plans to migrate other off-campus functions to campus are progressing well and are accommodated in other buildings in the current tentative plans and so were not considered in this decision.

Need for music classroom technology and network upgrades were another backdrop for these discussions as they could have tapped the same college and department resources needed to sustain the Music Library in its current location. However, an alternative approach is underway: upgrades are being planned and funding sought by the Music Department (and college) as appropriate from student technology fees, classroom mediation and other campus funds. At least some of those upgrades will occur before Fall 2011.

There are a number of other possible uses for the space in the main library that would have been occupied by the music library. Those uses will free up pressures in other areas when off-campus operations are moving.

**Conclusion.** The recommendation I am now making is contrary to the approach being taken by many universities—which is to consolidate branch libraries. In my initial recommendation I trusted in this more typical reduction approach, which would also have had some positive impact on expanded hours and access for the campus as whole. I am still thankful for the very thorough work done by the leadership of the library in developing this plan. Subsequently, after representatives of the Music Department and Library met to map the functions of the music library on to the new space in the main library, I was reassured that this consolidation could work, addressing the essential needs of the music department, opening up access to the campus and providing longer hours.

But the willingness of the Music Department and College of Fine and Performing Arts to accommodate this cut largely from their own resources and sacrifices (like reduced library hours) kept us looking for ways to make the music proposal work. The work of the two deans involved, as well as some of their faculty and staff, finally yielded a sustainable proposal. It is that proposal that I recommend to you now.