

1 Western Washington University

2 **Campus-Level Policy for**  
3 **Considering Proposals for Elimination of or Major Reductions in Programs**

4 Prepared by University Planning and Budgeting

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6 While major program reductions or program eliminations will ultimately be determined  
7 through shared governance and an open and transparent budget process, a diligent review  
8 of the many possible areas for such actions requires an initial degree of confidentiality.  
9 There are many budget reduction possibilities that will be considered on an initial and  
10 exploratory basis but that will not -- in the end -- be chosen for implementation.

11  
12 In such situations, the news that such initial considerations are underway can result in  
13 irreparable damage. Indeed, such news can become a self-effecting policy where the  
14 mere mention of a possible action means that colleagues leave the program or do not  
15 accept appointments. The potential damage can last years.

16  
17 Consequently, in order to avoid unnecessary damage to our programs, the best interests  
18 of the university requires that our commitment to transparency be differently approached  
19 for such considerations. Where major and permanent program reductions or eliminations  
20 are being preliminarily considered, we will follow these steps:

- 21  
22 A. The Vice President responsible for area in which the reduction is being  
23 considered will inform the President.  
24  
25 B. The President will decide, after confidential discussion with representatives from  
26 relevant governance groups, such as the Faculty Senate President or the President  
27 of the Associated Students, whether **or not significant damage to the program**  
28 **would result from immediate and open university-wide discussions** of the  
29 proposed possible program reduction or elimination.  
30  
31 1. If it is decided in confidential consultation with the Vice Presidents and the  
32 appropriate governance group leaders, that significant damage will not result,  
33 then the proposal will be offered to campus in accordance with the steps  
34 outlined in the *Campus-Level Supplemental Process for Changing the*  
35 *2009-11 Budget*.  
36  
37 2. If it is decided in confidential consultation with the Vice Presidents and the  
38 appropriate governance group leaders, that open discussions would  
39 unnecessarily damage the program or the university as a whole, then the  
40 university will proceed as follows:  
41 a) The proposal will be analyzed fully but confidentially, involving those  
42 with relevant information as necessary but only as necessary. The

1 President is responsible for assuring that the proposal is fully analyzed  
2 prior to any further steps being taken.  
3

4 b) The principles and considerations identified in the document ***Principles***  
5 ***and Guidelines: Campus Supplemental Budget Reallocations*** will be  
6 used to analyze proposals for major program reductions or eliminations.  
7

8 c) If the assessment is that the program elimination or reduction should not,  
9 at this time, be made, then that is the end of the matter. There will be no  
10 acknowledgement that the program reduction or elimination was under  
11 consideration.  
12

13 d) If, after such confidential consultation, the assessment is that the  
14 program reduction or elimination is necessary, then the President,  
15 working with the appropriate Vice President, will proceed to share that  
16 conclusion with employees in the affected program. The President will  
17 initiate such procedures as may be called for under relevant provisions in  
18 contracts or handbook guidelines. ***Those in the affected program will***  
19 ***be informed face-to-face by the President or appropriate Vice***  
20 ***President, before any public announcement, and as soon as is possible***  
21 ***after the likelihood of such an elimination or reduction became***  
22 ***evident.***  
23

24 e) Given the rationale for this policy – that we must avoid unnecessarily  
25 damaging the university by publicly discussing program eliminations  
26 that might not happen – it logically follows that, once a major program  
27 reduction or elimination is announced, that step would only have  
28 happened because the president has concluded that it is necessary. The  
29 decision will not be revisited through the budget process. However, it is  
30 the obligation of the president to make explicit the analyses leading to  
31 the decision and their relevance to the principles guiding the more public  
32 **Campus-Level Supplemental Process for Changing the 2009-11**  
33 **Budget.** That will be done as all budget decisions are reported to the  
34 campus and recommended to the Trustees who have final decision-  
35 making responsibility.

36 *It is important to note that the above policy for considering program eliminations and*  
37 *major reductions does not in any way replace existing obligations in personnel contracts,*  
38 *union contracts and university policies regarding personnel actions. This budgetary*  
39 *policy will be fully compliant with state statute, university policies, shared governance*  
40 *responsibilities, the Faculty and Exempt Professional handbooks, and contractual*  
41 *obligations including collectively bargained union agreements. All of these continue to*  
42 *fully apply and must be adhered to in the implementation of any decision to substantially*  
43 *reduce or eliminate a program. The university is continuing to work closely and*  
44 *collaboratively with leaders of employee groups to seek flexibilities that work to the best*  
45 *interests of the continuing employment opportunities for current employees whose*

- 1 *current positions might be affected. Further, the university is developing a statement of*
- 2 *intentions and capacities to provide career and employment assistance for those who*
- 3 *would be laid off as a result of program reductions or eliminations.*