

Higher Learning Commission  
**Self-Study Questionnaire/Report for Non-Instructional Units**

Non-Instructional Unit: Budget & Finance

Individual(s) Completing the Questionnaire/Report: Randy Marnocha, Vonnie Buske, Al Haberman

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Describe in a paragraph or two what your unit does (i.e., the services it provides).  
The Budget & Finance (B&F) unit provides the entire campus with a complete range of budget & fiscal services to support their daily operations. It is the primary responsibility of B&F to maintain the fiscal integrity of the institution.
2. Who is/are the constituency/ies you serve, and approximately how many of each constituency do you serve annually? (e.g., students, academic departments, classified staff, etc.)
  - Internal constituencies include all UW-W students, faculty, academic staff, classified staff, LTE's and student employees, as well as all administrative and academic departments.
  - External constituencies include UW System Administration, the Board of Regents, the legislature, vendors, contractors, and the parents of our students.
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3. Overview and evaluate the adequacy of the human, physical, and fiscal resources your department deploys to serve students and meet other programmatic needs by answering the questions below:

**Human Resources**

Evaluate the general adequacy of the human resources (i.e., the # of employees (including student help) and their skills) relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

7 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

While funding patterns have changed, the numbers of staff in B&F have remained relatively stable over time.

Strengths - The Budget Office benefits from extensive knowledge and experience as both the Associate Vice Chancellor and the Budget Planner have over 20 years of financial experience at this institution. UW-W budgets are frequently used as examples for new budget personnel at the System Budget Office because of the consistent high quality of our budget submissions. The UW-W Budget Office is sometimes requested to provide training for new System Budget personnel. The last two people to train here are now the Assistant Vice President and Director of Budgeting at the System level.

The new Controller has shown an exceptional knowledge of state financial policies and has been very proactive in addressing potentially problematic areas. Staff in Financial Services are very customer service oriented and are able to perform under sometimes stressful situations. Staffing in Student Financial Services has been very stable with little turnover. The overall working chemistry within B&F is very good. B&F staff are constantly reminded of our focus on customer orientation and are encouraged to continue looking for ways to improve the services they provide. Student employees are carefully screened before being hired and add greatly to our ability to provide timely services.

Opportunities - There has been significant turnover and reorganization within the Financial Services area since 1996. We are on our third new controller in the past 8 years but the situation appears to have stabilized. Approximately 75% of the classified positions in that unit have also turned over in that time frame.

Employment opportunities with the State have become less attractive as the recent structural budget deficits faced by the State have kept pay raises very small or non-existent. Job security/stability is also an issue as the Governor has promised to cut 10,000 State positions during his term of office. Hiring quality new staff to replace exiting staff has been difficult and has resulted in extended searches and significant delays in filling positions.

Until the current fiscal year, funding for employee development activities such as conference attendance and workshops was very difficult to come by. Chancellor Miller's new Professional Development Plan offers help in this area by assuring every employee a minimum amount of development funding on an annual basis. While this is a step in the right direction, the costs (registration, travel, lodging, meals) of conferences, workshops, etc. are still sometimes prohibitive. Factors such as the structural deficits in both the current and upcoming biennia, as well as the recent legislative focus on travel costs may further reduce opportunities for employees to improve their knowledge base and overall performance.

### Physical Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the physical resources (e.g., office and storage space, supporting technology, other equipment) allocated to the unit relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

6 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

Strengths - The facility that houses the budget office was renovated less than a decade ago. The design called for a small conference room and a storage room within the budget office suite. Due to an institutional reorganization, however, the suite was shared with Institutional Research thus necessitating the conversion of the conference and storage rooms to office space. Even though the set-up is not ideal, it does make for a good working relationship between two offices that depend on each other for data retrieval and report preparation. The Financial Services and Student Financials' areas are set-up with modular workstations that can be reconfigured as needed. This tends to be very convenient.

The computer technology utilized by B&F is up-to-date, for the most part. A few of the computers assigned to student help are utilized until they no longer efficiently support software upgrades.

Student Financials has the most recently updated equipment which was needed to support e-commerce operations. Faxes, copiers, and high speed printers are networked so Student Financials can print bills, refund checks, and other mass documents in-house. E-commerce functionality is the standard - we offer real time ACH type and credit card transactions; electronic financial aid including entrance interviews, exit interviews, promissory note

delivery, and reconciliation with loan origination centers; and accurate, timely, and understandable financial reports to all users of these systems.

Weaknesses - The facilities we occupy tend to be rather crowded. Customers must typically wait in the hall if they can't be helped right away. Even though we regularly deal with confidential issues, privacy is very limited with the modular workstations. Replacement of computers is very slow and limited by budgetary constraints. Newer technology is needed to improve processing speeds. Some of our technology resources are very dependent on UWSA common systems funds. Unfortunately, our priorities and those of UWSA are not always the same.

There are a number of other software applications that would improve our efficiency and customer service. Installation of e-disbursement for financial aid overpayments and student refunds would help the accuracy of the billing process. An automated delinquent account collection system is needed to monitor collector performance. An imaging process to scan documents required of credit management, promissory note maintenance, and federal privacy and disclosure documents would also be helpful.

### Fiscal Resources

While recognizing that every unit would benefit from a larger budget, evaluate the general adequacy of fiscal resources allocated to the unit to serve its constituencies and achieve other programmatic goals by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

6 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

Strengths - For the most part, staffing has remained relatively constant since the last accreditation visit. Although the non-salary lines of the operating budget have decreased since 1996-97, the services offered by B&F have continued to improve and expand. Such improvements and efficiencies are reflective of the technology we have acquired. Use of electronic media tends to be much less expensive than the printing and postage costs of the past.

Opportunities - Funding for additional staffing would provide improved response times for our customers. Increased reporting requirements and accountability have added significantly to the workloads of existing staff. As a result, even with the improved efficiencies offered by technology, our workloads often prevent us from responding as fast as customers would like. This is especially apparent in areas such as travel where customers are waiting for refund checks to be issued. Even additional student help resources would be welcomed to accommodate some of the more mundane manual responsibilities while full-time staff could focus on issues of greater importance.

We anticipate that future budget cuts will limit our ability to retain current staffing patterns and to attain updated technology and equipment. We continue to look for ways to become more efficient, but without changes to processes to utilize better technology, it is difficult to become more efficient. Since enhancements are frequently beyond our control, we are limited in moving ahead to gain the efficiencies that will be needed to perform the same level of work with less resources.

4. In a paragraph or two, overview significant changes made in your unit since 1996 (i.e., the last North Central Association Accreditation Visit). (e.g., re-organized, key staff changes, change in purposes, etc.)  
In the last 9 years, there have been several reorganizations which have impacted B&F. Chancellor Miller initially reorganized the Budget, Planning and Analysis Office by splitting off the Institutional Research function into Academic Affairs and the Budget area into Administrative Affairs. Within Administrative Affairs, the Purchasing function and

Telecommunications have been removed from Financial Services and added to FP&M. Within B&F, a number of responsibilities have been shifted between the Budget Office and Financial Services.

Key staffing changes since 1996 include 3 new controllers and turnover of 75% of the classified staff in Financial Services.

In another paragraph or two, describe why these changes occurred.

Chancellor Miller initiated the combination of the Budget Office with Financial Services because it was an organizational model that he was experienced with and felt comfortable with. He didn't recognize the rationale behind having separate budget and financial areas under different divisions.

With the massive budget reductions assigned to UW-W at the beginning of the current biennium, it became necessary for restructuring to occur to make the most efficient possible use of our remaining resources. Although not ideal, at least from a physical standpoint, it made more sense to locate Purchasing at FP&M rather than in Hyer Hall. Since such a significant portion of the purchasing function relates to FP&M activity, it was decided to have Purchasing report to FP&M.

The shift of duties between Financial Services and the Budget Office was a matter of realigning of responsibilities to best utilize the expertise of the staffing in the combined unit. Budget transfers could be completed more expeditiously and with fewer approvals needed by routing them directly to Financial Services. Reporting done by the previous controller could be managed by the program assistant advanced in order to allow the controller more time to devote to higher priority issues.

#### MISSION & PLANNING

- In a paragraph or two, describing any significant projects/initiatives that your unit is planning or currently has underway, but has not yet completed.

B&F has two significant initiatives that are currently in process. The full implementation of e-commerce functionality into the Student Financials area will allow us to better serve our student customer base while becoming more efficient and timely. Real time processing will provide up to the minute information for our customers, something they have come to expect.

The second initiative is the building of the operating budget for 2005-06, the first year of the upcoming biennium. This preparation is especially important in light of both the structural deficit that once again faces the State of Wisconsin and the Governor's commitment to cutting 10,000 positions from the State's workforce. As a major State agency, the University of Wisconsin System will be asked to play a role in reducing the budget deficit and the State's payroll. As such, significant planning efforts will be incorporated into building the operating budget. Planning must include enrollment trends and projections, tuition revenue changes as a result of those enrollment trends, and prioritizing existing programs to identify areas which may need to be reduced or deleted to accommodate assigned budget reductions.

- Below are five "core values" the University identifies as central to its purposes and operation. Please evaluate the importance of each core value in terms of how each aligns with the purposes of your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the five values, with those values that align more closely to the purposes of your unit receiving more points).

Core Value	Importance (100 points)
Commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding	20
Development of the individual	20
Personal and professional integrity	20
Commitment to serve	20
Commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives	20
<b>Total=</b>	<b>100 points</b>

7. Each and every academic and non-academic unit engages in planning for the future. Review the list of variables below and evaluate the extent to which each of the following influences decision-making behind the planning process for your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the planning variables listed below, with those variables playing the larger role in your unit's planning efforts receiving more points)

Planning Variables	Importance (100 points)
The mission of the university or the unit	30
Academic assessment data/information relevant to student performance against learning outcomes	
Other data/information gathered relevant to performance (e.g., Audit & Review feedback)	
Societal/Cultural trends (e.g., changes in demographics, lifestyles, professions)	
Campus trends (e.g., changes in university-initiated needs and demands)	30
Technology trends (e.g., technology developments that affect delivery of service)	10
Professional trends (e.g., changes evident at other universities/colleges)	
Available human resources (e.g., # of employees, talents, etc.) within the unit	10
Available financial resources (e.g., budget, available and accessible \$)	15
Available physical resources (e.g., space, existing technology, etc.)	5
Other:	
<b>Total=</b>	<b>100 points</b>

8. Does your unit have a mission statement?  
 Yes  No

If you answered "yes," please list the mission statement here. or, if your mission statement can be accessed on the web, please list the URL here.

The mission of B&F is to assume primary responsibility for administration of the annual and biennial operating budget processes; participation in the development and implementation of fiscal, administrative, and academic plans and policies; and performance of fiscal/statistical research and analyses. We provide high quality, customer focused financial support services to students, faculty, staff and others served by the institution in fulfilling its mission of teaching, research, and public service.

If you answered "yes," please describe how, if at all, this mission statement plays a role in your unit's planning and/or decision-making.

The mission statement above clearly delineates the customer service orientation of B&F. Our planning is driven by the needs and priorities identified by constituencies all across the campus. Our decision making is focused on contributing to the overall success of the institution by utilizing our limited resource base to assure the efficient delivery of services needed by those constituencies to achieve their goals.

#### OPERATION AND PERFORMANCE

9. What are the major or measurable objectives of the unit?

The major objectives of B&F include keeping enrollment within manageable levels while continuing to meet student needs, maximizing the amount of academic fee revenue retained, and increasing the GPR budget base. We continually try to improve upon the services provided for our students through the implementation of new technologies to provide faster response times, more convenience, and real time transactions which are immediately reflected in student accounts. The financial needs of campus managers are constantly evaluated to determine what new technologies and reporting structures are needed to improve their operations. We want to provide strong grant management support to encourage faculty participation in grant writing activities. B&F has traditionally provided a very strong service component for our customers and they rely heavily on us to help them through problems

including position control, budgets, expenditures, and other financial management issues.

10. What outcome measures (i.e., data, information) provide evidence that your unit's objectives are being met?

The following outcomes provide evidence of B&F performance...

- 1) Enrollment levels that meet designated targets.
- 2) Academic fee revenues that meet or exceed Bull's-eye targets.
- 3) Increases in GPR budget base as a result of enrollment.
- 4) Changes in student billing/fee payment procedures that provide added customer convenience.
- 5) Implementation of new software designed to improve financial reporting structures.
- 6) Levels of grant activity.
- 7) Student usage rates for new technologies.

11. Related to question #10, does the unit regularly collect data/information to evaluate how effectively it serves its constituency(ies)? (This might include surveys of constituencies.)

Yes B&F has only recently started doing customer surveys but it is our intention to make surveys a regular part of our operations. No

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

- B&F is currently in the process of completing a round of surveys in preparation for the 2005 OPR. After completing the surveys, they will be added to our web page for convenient access.
- Student Financials is very proactive in surveying both student customers and their parents. Surveys are done each semester.
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12. In a paragraph or two, describe specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in the preceding questions. Please be specific.

A number of changes have been incorporated by B&F in response to our surveys. The Student Financials area, in particular, has been very responsive by incorporating the following changes to their operations...

- \*ACH deposits of refunds
- \*more flexible payment plans
- \*extended hours of operation at the beginning of each term
- \*\$100 enrollment deposit on a one-time basis
- \*migration to e-billing and e-commerce applications
- \*open access on Labor Day weekend

13. Please provide a list of services, if any, that your unit provides for constituencies that are external to the university.

- Subject to FERPA guidelines, Student Financials works with the parents of our students on bill payment issues.



18. List and prioritize no more than three primary strengths that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these strengths, you may wish to consider: What does your unit do very well? What good things do people say about your unit? How has your unit aided the campus in meeting its mission? In what ways has your unit "gone beyond the call of duty?"

After identifying each strength, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

1. Specific Strength: Utilization of e-commerce in Student Financials was instituted as a measure of efficiency and convenience and has been very well received by our students.
  - Supporting Evidence: The transaction volumes of customer e-commerce payment activities for credit cards and web checks are increasing. E-commerce payments were first allowed in 2002-03 when they totaled \$4,143,741.71. E-commerce payments moved to \$3,286,271.02 in 2003-04. For the current year to date, e-commerce payments total \$3,329,169.61.
2. Specific Strength: B&F utilizes web-based financial systems to provide end users with accurate, timely financial data.
  - Supporting Evidence: Financial Services has converted from our "purple pages" financial reporting structure to WISDM in order to provide a user friendly system that produces financial reports and detailed information in a variety of formats. Multiple years of data are available for each report.
3. Specific Strength: B&F offers very strong grant management assistance for faculty.
  - Supporting Evidence: PI's are given personal attention to assure that all expenses are in compliance with the federal regulations that control the grant activities. All financial activities from opening org codes and establishing initial budgets to closing out the grant are handled with the assistance of B&F.

### Concerns

19. List and prioritize no more than three primary concerns that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these concerns, you may wish to consider: What could be improved? What is done poorly? What do we, as a unit, avoid doing, even though we know it's important?

After identifying each concern, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Finally, identify one or more recommended actions to address the area of concern. This may include actions that your unit has already begun, actions being planned, or preliminary thinking about how to address the area of concern.

1. Specific Concern: Additional e-commerce applications are available which can improve efficiency and convenience. The initial cost of implementation and the on-going maintenance costs are sometimes prohibitive.
  - Supporting Evidence: The budget cuts during the current biennium have significantly reduced the ability of the institution to provide funding for new initiatives across campus. While these initiatives will ultimately pay for themselves in terms of improved efficiency, payback periods can be significant. Software purchases may require new hardware, some degree of customization, and long term maintenance contracts which seem to escalate over time.
  - Recommended Actions: Apply for Excellence Funds which can help with the initial investment on these applications. The efficiencies gained may be enough to cover the on-going maintenance costs.
  
2. Specific Concern: Enforcement of travel guidelines/regulations.
  - Supporting Evidence: The guidelines for reimbursement of allowable travel expenditures have remained fairly stable over time; the enforcement of those guidelines has varied. With the threat of another significant structural budget deficit looming, the State is closely scrutinizing travel related expenditures. It has become imperative to tighten review and enforcement to avoid the appearance of impropriety. Faculty and staff across campus are feeling the burden of this as they are being asked to produce additional documentation to verify their claims. Criticism of B&F has become very common as expenses which had previously been accepted are now disallowed and reimbursement checks are not as large as expected.
  - Recommended Actions: B&F has initiated travel training for faculty and staff. Training sessions to date have been well received but attendance could be better. If faculty and staff thoroughly understand the regulations before they travel, the amount of expenses disallowed will decrease and the processing time for reimbursement checks will improve.
  
3. Specific Concern:
  - Supporting Evidence:
  - Recommended Actions: