

December 13, 2019

University of Lethbridge Board of Governors passes 2019-20 Revised Budget

Yesterday, the University of Lethbridge Board of Governors passed the revised 2019-20 operating budget. The Board approved a revised budget following an in-year 3.2 per cent (\$3.4 million) reduction to the Campus Alberta Grant, as well as a one-year suspension of our \$4.2 million Infrastructure Maintenance Program funding. These reductions presented a significant challenge and I appreciate the effort that individuals undertook to present a balanced budget to the Board for approval.

As outlined at our November town hall and in the most recent budget message, a number of measures contributed to achieving a revised balanced 2019-20 budget. Record enrolment provided increased tuition revenue; 19 positions (academic and non-academic) were eliminated; the salary contingency was eliminated; the general contingency was reduced (\$500,000 remains); the Lifecycle Fund was reduced by redirecting funds from its capital replacement reserve; and Ancillary Services increased its contribution to the operating budget.

As many of you know, the University has navigated previous challenging scenarios using our Budget Values of People, Quality and Access. These values were wholly considered in balancing this year's budget and will be invaluable as we deal with a decreasing Campus Alberta Grant in the coming years.

I would like to recognize our community for their participation in this process whether through attendance (or via livestream) at our town hall or through questions or conversations about the budget with senior leadership. Such participation will continue to be invaluable. The University must now focus its attention toward the 2020-21 budget the provincial government will introduce in the spring sitting of the legislature. As mentioned at the town hall, senior administration will undertake small, focused budget consultations with our campus community to hear your thoughts about how the University can achieve future budget reductions.

Potential future strategies to navigate budget reductions include increasing tuition fee revenue through increased enrolment and tuition fee increases; increasing international student enrolment; only replacing essential employment positions; seeking new revenue opportunities; engaging in strategic workforce planning; and reviewing all operations and expenditures. Your input into these directions will be important to ensure we are accomplishing our mandate within our new fiscal reality.

We will learn more about budget directions in the coming weeks and months as the Government of Alberta continues with its budget processes, and as we continue to engage with elected and unelected government officials about ensuring our University continues to deliver on its mandate for the benefit of our students and the communities we serve. As we receive information from the Province related to budgets, we will share that information with our community.