

Questions <i>(all questions answered live during Town Hall)</i>	Answers
University Budget	
1. Why do you still use so much air conditioning in the summer if utility costs are a problem? I have to bring a sweater to my office in the summer and am freezing still. I wonder whether that could not be changed?	<i>Some of our facilities are difficult to manage. University Hall is very old, and if you change one level, it affects other levels. But we do have our Energy Centre being upgraded right now, for which we received a grant for \$20 million, and we hope that we'll be able to modernize our equipment and systems so that we can better address the living environment. We'll take this comment under advisement and speak to our Associate Vice President (Facilities).</i>
2. With the cost of power going up, has the university considered setting up solar or creating a solar farm on the South west campus land? Or a wind farm?	<i>Many years ago, we looked into this idea. It did not prove cost effective to do it at that time. We continue to look at this, and we'll take this under advisement and see if there are other opportunities to save on utilities and be more energy conscious.</i>
3. I would like to echo Dan's suggestion/question on solar energy.	

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<p>4. Safe to say AUPE, Faculty and APO's have taken hits for the U of L, from retirement to lay offs, and one point there was a hiring freeze a couple years back. Why are we seeing more upper level and senior exc's [executives] being hired. Why aren't dept's looking at amalgamating roles and responsibilities into current management roles?</p>	<p><i>We've eliminated senior administration positions by 19% in 2019-20 and 2020-21. It's important to note that we've not increased the size of senior administration, and have in fact reduced the size of this group. We have replaced some positions that we believe are very important after extensive consultation, including the Vice President Research. But we've looked very carefully at any positions that we've replaced. The one new position that we've created is the Executive Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Suffice to say that this is a critical area for our University, and we stand behind the decision to add that new position.</i></p> <p><i>In some ways, looking at senior administration positions is confusing. We've increased the number of Executive Directors, because some individuals at the APO level were given more responsibility, and so some of those positions were elevated to the Executive Director level. Those positions aren't increasing the total number of positions at the institution, but we needed to recognise the additional responsibilities of those positions. It looks like we've added senior administrators in those cases, but in other cases we've just recognised the work that they were doing.</i></p> <p><i>On the academic side, a big part of what we're doing as we work through the faculty structures conversation is asking those questions about whether we can proceed with fewer Deans, or amalgamate at the department / program level through consolidation, to have fewer of those senior level positions and moving some of that teaching capacity back into the institution.</i></p>

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<p>5. My understanding is the various Task Forces include budget cuts that are likely linked to people given all the work we have already done to optimize operations. Can Erasmus clarify his point he made when answering Jake please as he said if we are not successful with the Transformation then cuts may have to happen but that seems to be at odds with what the responses to reports from President's Exec tasked us with doing.</p>	<p><i>In terms of the previous question you reference, we want to ensure that the pathway we have in terms of finding the cost savings and efficiencies is the pathway we've chosen. The alternative is a really dire one for the University. It's imperative for us, in terms of the senior administrators release capacity and offset hiring that we're talking about in the faculty restructuring recommendations, to find efficiencies and innovation to ensure that we remain sustainable and viable. Reductions and cuts in employee positions are not top of mind, but we should be very clear in terms of the realities that we're facing that we have to have a balanced budget by March 2022, and therefore time is of the essence for whatever we want to do.</i></p> <p><i>In addition to the faculty restructuring work, there are 19 other task forces that have made recommendations for savings. For example, if there are fewer faculties, do we need all of the support units that we have? Perhaps some 12 month positions could be 10 month positions? Or can we reduce the number of administrative positions? We're hoping that attrition will mean we don't have terminations, but there are nuances in each of the task forces where we've asked them to consider efficiencies in operations or reducing the number of positions to do less with less.</i></p>
<p>6. Multiple people have said the University can not cut to sustainability, given the reported number of work force reductions, can we expect to see more staff reductions through the task force results?</p>	<p><i>The predicate is that we have to be successful, relative to the faculty restructuring and task force recommendations, finding \$4.4 million. The alternative is having those difficult conversations regarding employment positions, similar to those we've recently had. The aim is not to cut our way to being sustainable. But if we are not successful in terms of finding \$4.4 million through the transformational task forces, it would mean the equivalent of 27 faculty positions that would be on the line. It shows how important this juncture in our history is in ensuring that all of us put our minds together to help us find how to sustain a university as wonderful as ours. It is imperative because the alternative is that the difficult conversations with our neighbours and the community we serve. I really hope we don't get there, and instead find creative ways to help the University sustain itself.</i></p>
<p>7. Exempt Support Staff has also not received any salary increases for the past 7+ years (same as APOs and Senior Executives)</p>	<p><i>We fully acknowledge this, and it is important to recognise that Exempt Support Staff have been equally impacted in this difficult way.</i></p>

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<p>8. There has been news coverage of salary reductions for faculty. Are these anticipated for administrative staff as well?</p>	<p><i>Any discussions about negotiations will not happen at this Town Hall, because negotiations need to be respected as activities between two parties. In terms of what happens in relation to senior administration, the history of how we've positioned senior administrative salaries is very much aligned with what's been negotiated with various employee groups. Having said that, it's important to emphasize and underscore that senior administrators have been in the same position as APO's and Exempt Support Staff, without any salary increases, both cost of living or career progress/merit, since April 1, 2016.</i></p>
<p>9. With reference to the faculty restructuring and really all transformation plans, has there been consideration to the significant cost of rebranding, both in resources (people/time) and financial?</p>	<p><i>We recognise that as we move through these pieces, there might be some one-time costs, but the costs that we're looking at saving are generally continuing, on-going costs which supports the sustainability of our budget. So, we're trying to talk about the range of savings that may be realised, recognising that in distinct areas we may have a short-term cost to account for things like rebranding.</i></p>
<p>10. Question for Nancy. It is exciting to see that we will have south campus developed. Eventually, over the next few years, when U of L starts realising financial benefits, would the provincial government cut our budget even more? Will the government argue that we don't need as much financial support as others do? Hard to predict the future.</p>	<p><i>The Provincial government has already signalled that they want us to have less reliance on government grants. Whether we have additional revenue or not, we expect that they will cut our grants anyway. So, we have to be self sufficient. It would be nice to not have to rely on those grants, which are not reliable and fluctuate too much. We've experienced large increases and very significant decreases in the provincial operating grants, and we rely too much on them. It's very common in other provinces and in the United States, where government funding is down to about 25%. The more revenue generation we can do on our own, the more we'll be in control of our own future.</i></p> <p><i>When we've been in discussions with government recently about the Investment Management Agreements, the piece around revenue generation has been brought up regularly. It may not be a performance measure that has a potential negative implication, but it will likely be a transparency measure that aims to ensure that institutions recognise the importance of revenue generation.</i></p>

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<p>11. Have you thought of partnering with international organizations (\$\$) that work on pressing world problems that need research and innovation?</p>	<p><i>Yes. Right now, we're working with a few organisations based in India that are very interested in partnering with us relative to the exceptional uniqueness and strengths of this region, whether it's in environment, food, agriculture, business, education, or fine arts. There are many opportunities, and I appreciate this question. The more that we diversify our revenue sources and research resources, the more robust and sustainable our research programs will be. We're open to more conversations about partnerships, whether they be regional, national, or international.</i></p> <p><i>International relationships, including our relationship with Navitas, includes looking at the bonds and relationships we can form with international partners. We shouldn't forget, though, that we need to also establish relationships within our region, where we can see the impact we have, and we can answer questions that affect businesses, industries, and the community around us. Those relationships, too, will enhance our sustainability.</i></p>
<p>12. (at risk of shaking a can o' worms)... are there any creative collective bargaining solutions going on across the country, or the sector, that allow for greater flexibility in transformation? For example: flexible work sharing arrangements with reduced hours, allowing for different work-life balances but with reasonable employment security?</p>	<p><i>In terms of flexibility, there may be different examples of employment terms (i.e., 9 month vs. 12 month employment). How creative can we be to ensure that our critical points of failure are eliminated, so that people can go on leave and vacation without worrying about workload and coverage. How can we ensure that mental health supports are in place for those who need it? And ensure an environment where people can take vacation and services can still be provided? Those are some of the questions in terms of some of the administrative and faculty restructuring task forces that need to be asked. Being creative within our current realities will be important moving forward.</i></p> <p><i>If people have ideas or they think that there are different opportunities for their own areas or positions, we're very open to any suggestions, so please come forward with your ideas.</i></p>

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Programming / Course Delivery	
<p>13. I want to suggest that the University consider reimagining their destination university identity to include online, blended, hybrid, and flexible delivery of courses to keep up with the industry changes and meet the needs of potential students.</p>	<p><i>We've maintained our commitment to having as many students on campus as possible, as that's been our sweet spot in terms of enrolment. But we recognise the importance of doing exactly as this question states, and there is good work going on in this space across campus, with very good new courses being offered through online and blended approaches. It's also important to recognise, though, that we have a particular brand, and that brand is unlikely to significantly change over night. So, we have to balance the brand we have with the opportunities to grow and evolve as an institution.</i></p> <p><i>The reality is that close to 65% of our students come from away, and they make a choice to actually come to Lethbridge. So, we agree that one could look at the branding we have, but within the context of the data and evidence we have, close to 65% of students make a choice to come to the University and move to this community.</i></p>
<p>14. Are there resources or supports available for units interested in exploring modelling related to curriculum design and revenue generation?</p>	<p><i>Absolutely. If there are opportunities, even though there may be upfront costs, for projects that can generate revenue or create some exciting opportunities for the University, the University will consider that.</i></p> <p><i>Please reach out to anyone in the Provost's office for curriculum or academic program related ideas. We mentioned a credentials framework, and this question touches on that. This idea of looking at both the credit and the non-credit side of things, and how we better support those ideas that come forward. We've heard from many people that have ideas that aren't sure how to move them forward to the next step. So, there's a working group looking at how we create a set of toolkits and supports to help bring ideas along without having to do a lot of unproductive work.</i></p>

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Programming / Course Delivery	
<p>15. If you are considering which things we can stop doing, as mentioned by Erasmus, how will you ensure we remain a "Liberal Education" institution by protecting fields and programs that are always going to be inherently small and may never be able to make a profit?</p>	<p><i>As we've always indicated, that is the crux of the issue. Some people are looking at some of the metrics that are in the report, and considering if the tuition revenue that's brought in versus the operational costs. That argument shows that some units may not have economies of scale, but we are dedicated to the liberal education ethos and delivery, and we'll ensure that as we move forward and make very difficult decisions, that the quality of our programs remains very high. So, it's not just the size of a particular unit that really matters, it's how that particular size conforms as we move forward into possible collaborations or merging with other departments without losing that identity. The realities we face are difficult, and this feedback is important to hear as we move forward.</i></p> <p><i>Many fields have seen tremendous transformation in terms of language, structures of the discipline, and so on, and we've experienced the conceptual challenge of thinking about a field that one may have entered as an undergraduate student, that no longer really exists when one started in the area. Part of what we all have to recognise is that transformation from an academic program's perspective is natural and has been going on for hundreds of years. So as an institution, we have an opportunity to do this in a very positive way, to consider how we evolve as an institution so that we maintain the strength of our academic programming, but recognise that change is going to continue to take place.</i></p> <p><i>As we go forward, we have to ensure that the complexity of our curriculum is mitigated. We know that the pathway for our students to have unique experiences will be enhanced. It's important for us to let the world know who we are, and our programs will reflect that our structures are being used to conform to our new structures. The revised curriculum provides the road map for all of us to be proud of the University.</i></p>

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Programming / Course Delivery	
<p>16. Can we expect to see cuts to existing degree programs to save on funding some faculty positions?</p>	<p><i>We are very clear, relative to the faculty restructuring, that for now we are taking a look at the big buckets. Once that is done, we will look at other aspects of what programs are duplications, and in terms of curriculum, how can we ensure that there's a pathway forward. We've been really good at adding on to programs, but have not been very good at asking what we can stop doing as a University. Moving forward, we have to ask those questions because we cannot keep adding without asking the strategic question of what we can stop doing. If we're going to add new programs, we have to ask which programs are no longer relevant to the institution's goals.</i></p>
<p>17. Is grad School [School of Graduate Studies] included in 5/6 recommended Faculties? or is it a separate issue, along with Continuing ed and Professional programs?</p>	<p><i>As we indicated, the broad buckets we are talking about are around Arts, Business, Education, Health, and Science. The possible sixth one may be other academic units. This is where the feedback system we've instituted becomes very important. Some units do have priorities across campus, including the School of Graduate Studies. The question is, where does it reside operationally? The feedback system that we're looking at becomes critical and instructive for the University. What happens relative to Liberal Education? That's also a question where the ethos and delivery of Liberal Education is very important. This is who we are in terms of being unique. But how do we do it? Is it part of a sixth academic unit? All we know so far is that we are dedicated to hearing the feedback from the entire University to help us sort through these questions.</i></p>
<p>18. Will the university continue to support blended and online learning in terms of offering these learning formats? What type of investment is being considered to support instructors/faculty professional development in these areas?</p>	<p><i>The University's uniqueness relates to it being a face-to-face institution. We pride ourselves in being a destination university, and people come here to experience the unique environment that we have. We know that the COVID-19 experience led us to transition quickly to an online environment, but as we've become a fully vaccinated campus and made sure that our environment is safe, it is time to come back to the face-to-face learning format. Assignments are between professors and Deans, in terms of the enrolment and programs. It's very important that at least 90% of our Spring semester is in person, with approximately 10% online. We should ensure that we remain open to create the environment for all of us to have that experience which makes the U of L unique.</i></p>

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<p>19. What about adopting new academic policies to help reduce student time-to-degree, in effect expanding capacity for education within the institution, within the system ... pursuing course redesign that has demonstrated (at other institutions) significant reductions in course costs-per-student?</p>	<p><i>This is one of the pieces raised when looking at curriculums, including looking at what our degree-wide curriculum structures. As we start to align better alike units, is there an opportunity to find synergies that might help us to develop these policies, and how we can think about leveraging existing capacity or creating new capacity through these amalgamations and synergies? We welcome any ideas you might have on that front.</i></p>
<p>20. As an alumnus, I feel like my identity in relation to the university is tied to the departments of Geography and History (where I did my undergraduate work). I fear that such fundamental restructuring (the potential obliteration of departments and their replacement with nebulous larger structures) will really hurt our efforts at revenue generation through development and alumni relations. Alumni relations seems like the most immediate location to target revenue generation but isn't this going to be disastrous when alumni no longer have a home department?</p>	<p><i>While we recognise that alumni feel a close bond to the department that they were connected to, my [Mike Mahon's] experience was that it was very possible and worked well to be able to connect with alumni connected to their home department, but also to the broader faculty and the broader university. There's no question that as we move through this, we'll have to consider the implications of any kind of structural changes as they relate to alumni and development. Our new Vice President (Development) is very keen on supporting aspirations in terms of working with our alumni. This will be a front and centre consideration as we move forward.</i></p> <p><i>This feedback is very welcome. As we move forward, we will be cognizant of some of the challenges we face relative to these questions. Working with alumni and ensuring they see themselves represented in the University community will continue.</i></p>

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<p>21. If I understand communications so far correctly, it has been communicated that the main financial advantage of the planned restructuring is savings in terms of administrative savings. But I have heard many worries and rumors that really, what is being prepared is the ability to whittle down departments by not replacing retirees beyond "what would be possible if departments remained individualized."</p>	<p><i>What we have been presenting at Faculty Councils is that there will be some cost savings relative to the faculty restructuring. The narrative and the arguments we're using relate to the release capacity argument, where we're talking about academic leaders who are in administrative positions, and the cost savings that would be involved if those leaders are released back into the departments and faculties. The other argument we are making is the "hiring offset" argument. Fiscally, this means that if we can release some of these academic leaders in administrative positions back into the departments and faculties, we will not necessarily need to hire new faculty when someone retires. Relative to the departments being smaller in number, it is within the same construct that we consider what we can do to ensure we're efficient and fulfilling our mandate as a Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution. So, departments may be smaller or larger in terms of the amalgamations, but within that what is the administrative role that Chairs will play. How do we create environments for Chairs or department heads to have a say in the strategic directions of the department? We're gathering feedback about how to do this, as we've heard that we should leave it to the professionals to inform the decision-making process relative to the release capacity of academic leaders in administrative positions.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, we're talking about a range of savings, and recognising that it won't be equal and the same across all situations. We know that we have a number of people retiring and resigning, and that will only constitute significant savings if we don't replace all of those people. We have to look at our programming and what we need to offer students the programs that we've committed to offering them, so it won't necessarily be that no one gets replaced, but it's about where we can be strategic about that replacement. The kind of backfill previously mentioned, releasing senior administrators back into the faculties, is where we find some of those savings, so we can make strategic decisions about where we need to replace someone when they retire, and where we can find that capacity in other ways.</i></p>

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<p>22. When does the U of L become a satellite campus of U of A or U of C? I heard the government wanted that to happen.</p>	<p><i>I [Mike Mahon] don't personally see that happening. The government did have, in the Alberta 2030 discussions, discussions about amalgamations and the integration of institutions. Those ideas were soundly defeated by all of the institutions across Alberta. Alberta 2030 is now finalised, and there's nothing in that report that would suggest that this will occur. This doesn't mean that it's not critically important that we continue to position ourselves as a very unique, comprehensive research university that is different than the U of A and the U of C. I think that's one of the really important parts of our work to continue to ensure that we position the U of L to be who we are, and not be a smaller version of the U of A and U of C.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of the proposal by Lethbridge College to become a polytechnic, Lethbridge College has aspirations, as all institutions do, to grow and evolve. We don't see that having both a polytechnic and a university in a city the size of Lethbridge as making a lot of sense. We believe strongly that we should continue to grow and evolve our collaboration with Lethbridge College, as we've done for many years, but we will be quite firm on our position, which is that putting both a university and a polytechnic in a city of 100,000 people doesn't make sense from a financial or a student enrolment perspective.</i></p>

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Navitas	
<p>23. Why is a partnership with Navitas still being pursued? A rationalization would be appreciated that addresses concerns that Navitas will be based in Calgary rather than Lethbridge, with no structured way to funnel those who have completed the program to enrol in the U of L has not provided data on the success rate of its students does not provide financial aid or incentives to those enrolled at its facilities risks undermining existing units through the perception of duplication provides substandard labour contracts to precarious contract faculty whose teaching loads prevent them from providing the quality instruction cannot tailor a community-based experience with the quality instruction and supports that the University of Lethbridge already provides does not have adequate legal supports for students experiencing discrimination and harassment does not provide a culture of internal communication and knowledge between university community members, the students and Navitas.</p>	<p><i>These are similar to concerns raised during the initial round of negotiations, and the questions we intend to bring back to General Faculties Council as a starting point in February. That's where the evidence-based piece will come in. It's precisely about being able to answer these questions and recognising that we've had conversations with Navitas about how things could be structured differently moving forward to address some of the feedback from our faculty, but also recognising that some of the assertions here are historical. Further discussions will happen in February and include evidence-based data</i></p>