

Minutes of  
THE FACULTY SENATE OF  
ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

This meeting of the 2020-2021 Faculty Senate was held at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 30, 2020 on WebEx. The following members were present:

Dr. Alejandra Carballo	Dr. Sean Reed
Dr. Jon Clements	Dr. Scott Jordan
Dr. Michael Davis	Dr. Randy Kelley
Dr. Pam Dixon	Dr. Jeremy Schwehm
Dr. David Eshelman	Dr. Asim Shrestha
Dr. V. Carole Smith	Dr. Jamie Stacy
Dr. Shellie Hanna	Mr. Steven Junker
Dr. Newt Hilliard	Dr. Brendan Toner
Dr. Efosa Idemudia	Dr. Masanori Kuroki
Dr. Cynthia Jacobs	Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon
Dr. Sean Huss	

Guests: Dr. Barbara Johnson, Mrs. Pat Chronister, Mrs. Alice Batch

**I. Call to Order**

**A. Approval of the minutes** - from the November 10 meeting. Motion to approve from Dr. Jeremy Schwehm. Seconded by Dr. Sean Huss Motion Carried.

**II. New Business**

**A. Curricular Items**

<https://www.atu.edu/registrar/2021CatalogCurriculumProposals.php>

Motion to *consider* all items together from Dr. Jamie Stacy. Seconded by Dr. Jeremy Schwehm. Motion Carried. Motion to *Approve* as a whole by Dr. Shellie Hanna, seconded by Dr. Michael Davis Motion carried.

**B. Faculty Senate Budget Sub-committee update (Dr. Sean Huss)**

Dr. Sean Huss described the Statement from the Ad Hoc Faculty Senate Budget Advisory Subcommittee, citing underfunding of academics, overspending on scholarships, and overloads on faculty, pointing out that the

position of the committee is that the faculty have the responsibility of stewardship over the environment at ATU. The Faculty Satisfaction Survey reflected significant dissatisfaction of the faculty with respect to the budget restructuring plan. The report will be attached with the minutes of this meeting. Motion to *endorse* the report by Dr. Shellie Hanna, seconded by Mr. Steven Junker. Motion carried.

### C. Election for Senate Restructuring Committee Representative

Dr. Jon Clements indicated that Mr. Brent Etzel was elected to serve as a representative of the faculty. The Senate needs to elect a representative as well. Dr. Sean Huss nominated Dr. Newton Hilliard. Dr. David Eshelman seconded. Motion to close nominations by Dr. Jeremy Schwehm, seconded by Dr. Shellie Hanna. Motion carried by acclamation.

## III. Old Business

### A. VPAA update (Johnson)

1. There will be an **Orientation for new students** on Friday, January 8 from 9-9:45. Deans will let us know if they need our help with this.
2. Feb. 11, 12 and 13 (Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> is a Saturday) will be the dates for **Time out for Tech**. This will be in person.
3. January 6 will be **Professional Development Day**. The hope is that departmental meetings will happen in the morning. **The President and VPAA updates** will take place on January 7. Dr. Johnson requests that faculty try to keep their schedules open on January 7 with the hope that we can begin to form some working groups to discuss academic planning. She is requesting help pulling this together, especially with respect to forming Breakout Sessions virtually.
4. **Some good news:**
  - i. Student Support Services received a grant for teacher education majors – 140 students, low income, first gen., etc. will benefit from this.
  - ii. We started an **Academic Coaching** initiative for students who were conditionally admitted.

- iii. **ReUp** – A third party provider, is contacting students who have dropped out in recent years, trying to get them to come back and finish their degrees.
- iv. We have another initiative via **Student Success**, assisting with an effort to encourage readmission for students who withdrew this fall.
- 5. The VP for Advancement needs a representative for the **Search for a VP for Administration and Finance**. Dr. Clements volunteered to help find a representative for this committee.
- 6. With respect to **Spring classes** – depending on what is happening with Covid-19, it is possible that we may start the semester online. We should be vigilant with communication during the holiday.
- 7. Dr. Johnson thanked the **Ad Hoc Senate Budget Committee** for its work regarding the restructure. Dr. Johnson indicated that she has met with the Deans. They have categorized Bucket 5 items into 3 categories. She now has to continue to prioritize those categories based on info. supplied by the VP of Admin and Finance.

#### **B. IRB Updates (Hilliard)**

Dr. Newton Hilliard indicated that this is ATU's response to comply with Federal Guidelines and it looks good. Motion to approve the proposal as presented by Dr. Shellie Hanna, seconded by Dr. Jeremy Schwehm. Motion Carried.

#### **C. Shared Governance Standing Committee Update (Eshelman)**

Nothing to report at this time

#### **D. Faculty/Board of Trustees Communication (Clements)**

Dr. Clements reminded that this communication is designed to help the BOT understand Senate past, present and planned activities. Dr. Eshelman reminded that the document shares policy initiatives, curricular innovation, the Senate response to Covid-19, and a hope for further communication. Motion to accept document for BOT from Dr. Sean Huss, seconded by Dr. Newton Hilliard. Motion Carried.

#### **E. Concerns related to the primacy of academics / Provost (Eshelman)**

Nominations were requested for the **Faculty Choice Award**. This is award will be selected for an administrator who has shown great support for academic issues.

Dr. Shellie Hanna nominated Dr. Barbara Johnson. Dr. Sean Huss seconded. Dr. Jon Clements nominated Mrs. Pat Chronister. Dr. Carey Ellis Laffoon seconded. The Senate will vote on this during the next meeting.

#### IV. Open Forum

##### A. Student Evaluations Process (Reed)

1. Enrollment isn't accurately configured at the time of student evaluations because it does not reflect the number of students who have dropped the class. This affects the response rate generated.
2. The evaluation e-mail goes out to students just prior to the final drop date for the course.

Dr. Clements indicated that the Senate will request that Dr. Wyatt Watson attend a meeting and speak to this issue. Dr. Efosa Idemudia indicated that a faculty member has contacted Dr. Watson, and he referred that person to the Senate. Dr. Jeremy Schwehm indicated that he believes this issue may have been settled in the past. Dr. Clements asked Dr. Schwehm to follow up on this.

##### B. Budget Restructuring

Dr. David Eshelman suggested that we might want to push for a formal communication by the President with the faculty between the time that the Executive Council has approved the budget restructure plan going forward and when that plan goes to the Board of Trustees. Dr. Sean Huss made a motion to move from Open Forum back into General Session and Dr. Jamie Stacy seconded. **Motion Carried.** Dr. David Eshelman made a motion that *the Senate would empower a committee to write a letter to Dr. Bowen asking for a presentation from her to the campus community at large explaining the restructure. This presentation should take place after the President, with her Executive Council, has approved the restructure, and before it goes to the Board of Trustees.* Dr. Sean Huss offered an amendment suggesting that the current **Ad Hoc Senate Budget Committee** would be an appropriate committee for this charge. Dr. Eshelman concurred with the amendment. Dr. Jeremy Schwehm seconded the motion. **Motion Carried.**

##### C. Dr. Erica Wondolowski

Dr. Wondolowski asked whether or not there has been any discussion of adjusting scholarship and/or service expectations for tenure-track faculty due to covid-19 and the

significant increase in teaching prep. She indicated that, in the faculty handbook, the Essential Functions of faculty are not explicitly listed, and that this is very important re: ADA and workplace accommodations. Dr. Wondolowski asked where or not there a list somewhere, and if so, whether or not this list might be added to the handbook for consistency and transparency. Dr. Sean Huss and Dr. Jeremy Schwehm described that DPTC's are now charged to account for Covid issues, and Dr. Huss indicated a willingness to follow up with ADA issues.

#### **V. Announcements and Information Items**

The next faculty senate meeting will be Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 3 PM.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Dr. Michael Davis, seconded by Dr. Jeremy Schwehm Motion Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jon Clements, D.M. President



Sean Reed, D.M.A. Secretary

## **Findings on Academics and University Funding (Statement by the Ad Hoc Faculty Senate Budget Advisory Subcommittee)**

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In the face of financial distress, the faculty of Arkansas Tech University are willing to take decisive action to assure the survival of our institution, working with Academic Affairs and the leadership of the various colleges to identify money-saving efficiencies. As frontline workers in our sustained interaction with students, the Faculty Senate Budget Advisory Subcommittee takes a broad view of the current crisis as well as the necessity to ensure the achievement of the University's core mission of education. We pride ourselves at Tech on doing more with less, and this is especially true of academics, where faculty have consistently stepped up to expanded responsibilities in order to foster student success. We submit that academics—an arena which already functions with great financial efficiency—must be bolstered rather than weakened, and that doing so appropriately holds the key to saving us from insolvency.

In this document, we will show how academics at Arkansas Tech is already operating in a highly efficient manner. We will also show how academics, central to the University's mission, yields a strong return on investment, and that supporting academics is not just an existential obligation of the University, but financially sensible as well. We will demonstrate that the present crisis has not been precipitated by academics, which has been under-funded for some time, but that the University may be saved by a proper embrace of what all universities are called to do—teach.

The findings of the committee, grounded in data and further discussion below, are:

1. ATU's spending habits have been misaligned with the reality of its funding.
2. Instructional spending per FTE is already the lowest in our peer group.
3. Academics has, in the last decade, received lower proportionate spending increases than other ATU divisions.
4. University spending on scholarships is especially out of line with peer institutions; spending on scholarships and recruitment shows a steep and disproportionate increase in recent years, without clear returns.
5. The teaching load at ATU has already increased enough to constitute a threat to student success and exceed handbook expectations for a full teaching load.
6. Academics generates university funds in the form of tuition; cuts to academic programs are liable to reduce university revenues.
7. The handling of the financial crisis thus far has created a toxic climate of anxiety, suspicion, and eroded trust in campus leadership.
8. This committee is not persuaded that our president's insistence on the "bucket exercise" is an appropriate solution to the current crisis.

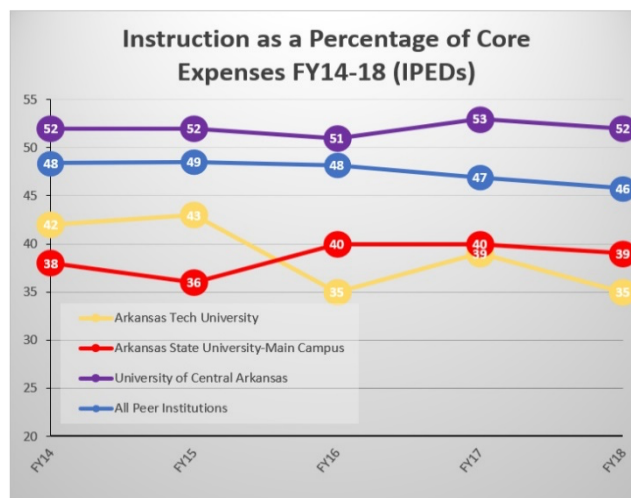
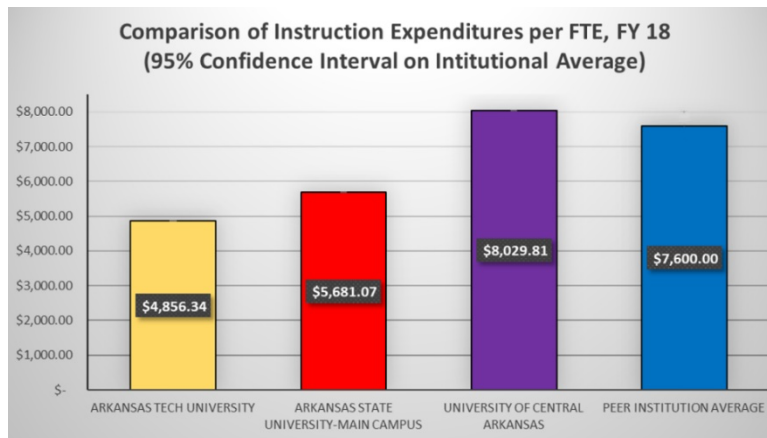
## DATA AND DISCUSSION

### 1. ATU's spending habits have been misaligned with the reality of its funding.

We recognize that Tech is underfunded, with an operating budget \$30 to \$50 million below comparably sized institutions. (Within our group of 40 peer institutions, universities of similar size to ATU [i.e., ATU FY 18: 8,785 FTE students  $\pm$  1,000 students] had an average operating budget of \$179.6 million compared to ATU's \$136.3 million.) Our concerns lie with the administrative stewardship of these funds: we have spent money like we are a university of 8,700 students, while in reality Tech is only funded to support around 6,000-7,000 students. This has major consequences for university operations and priorities.

### 2. Our instructional spending is already dead-last among peer institutions.

Related to item 1, our allocation to instructional spending has suffered as we have attempted to offer the non-academic amenities that some feel are expected for a university of our size. As a consequence, our instructional spending per FTE falls *last* within our group of peer institutions. As a percentage of our core expenses, instruction is evidently below fellow Arkansas schools and our peer group. Our allocation to instruction has also been going down over time.



**3. Spending increases in Academic Affairs have been significantly lower, in the last decade, than increases in other divisions.** While Student Affairs has seen an increase of 7.35%, Academic Affairs (excluding concurrent) has experienced slower growth in spending (3.97%) over the same timeframe. Breaking these spending trajectories (from 2011-2020) down further:

- Monies allocated to the colleges for core university functions have fared even worse, at 3.65% increase against an average university growth rate of 4.99%.
- A higher average annual spending increase of 4.5% for “other AA instruction & support” is primarily related to academic computer support. Computer support has increased by 5.5% annually which translates into a \$1.06 million increase from 2011 to 2020. Note that concurrent expense (or “off-campus” instruction expense) was excluded from the AA totals because concurrent enrollment revenue is directly offset by the same amount in concurrent expense and thus it is not controllable by Academic Affairs. Concurrent expense has experienced a 14.5% annual increase (\$1.8 million increase over 10 years).
- In the VPAA category, the average annual increase in spending has been 5.53%. The largest increases in this category include: the Technology Center (8.64% or \$181,800); the Advising Center (7.67% or \$311,700); Academic Affairs Graduate Assistantships (7.95% or \$232,200); Accreditation fees (10.9% or \$37,000); and Institutional Memberships (6.77% or \$18,900).

	Total Academic Affairs (excluding concurrent)		VPAA		Colleges Combined		Other AA Instruction & Support (excluding concurrent)	
	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc
	2011		2011		2011		2011	
	33,575,130		4,437,361		26,661,875		2,475,894	
2020	47,683,847	3.97%	7,200,190	5.53%	36,805,663	3.65%	3,677,994	4.50%
Inc/(Dec)	14,108,717		2,762,829		10,143,788		1,202,100	

	Total Student Affairs		Residence Life		Public Safety		Student Health Services		VP&SA & Other	
	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc
	2011		2011		2011		2011		2011	
	8,479,111		5,418,103		793,609		236,188		2,031,211	
2020	16,059,872	7.35%	9,965,921	7.01%	1,505,818	7.38%	1,530,368	23.08%	3,057,765	4.65%
Inc/(Dec)	7,580,761		4,547,818		712,209		1,294,180		1,026,554	

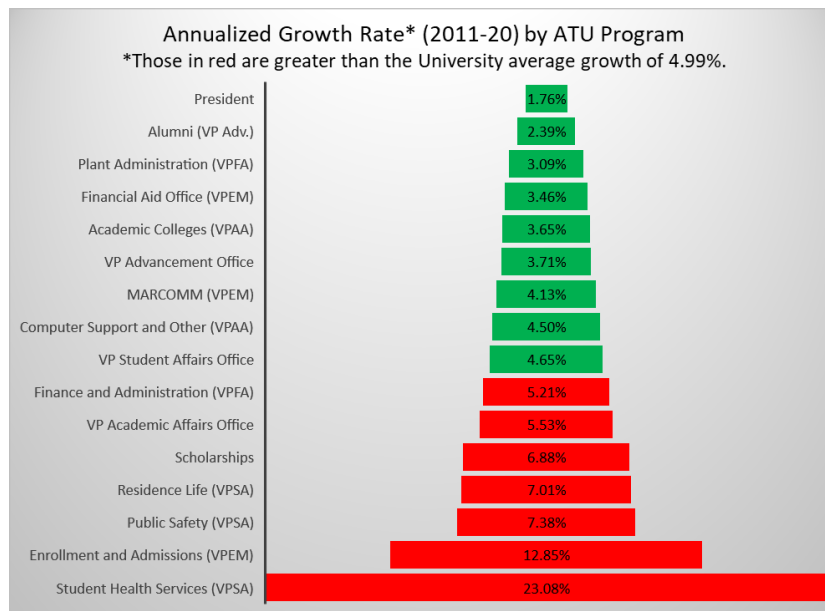
- Student Health Services has seen an annual average increase of just over 23% from 2011-2020. Residence Life and Public Safety spending have both increased by just over 7% annually from 2011 to 2020. The VP&SA and miscellaneous related spending has increased by 4.65% on an annual basis. (Both Residence Life and SHS are supported by student fees; if spending were controlled in these areas, those fee increases could have been shifted to tuition increases—without raising the cost to the student at all.)
- The President’s Office has increased its spending most in the area of legal counsel. Expenditures in this area have increased from \$140,991 to \$284,108 over the past 10 years. This represents an average annual increase in expenditures of 8.10%. Furthermore, in some years over \$100,000 has been spent on consultants or “special projects.”



	Total Finance/Administration		General Finance/Administration		Plant Administration	
	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc	\$	Ann % Inc
<b>2011</b>	9,897,117		4,607,886		5,289,231	
<b>2020</b>	14,236,070	4.12%	7,278,655	5.21%	6,957,415	3.09%
<b>Inc/(Dec)</b>	4,338,953		2,670,769		1,668,184	

- The largest contributors to the general finance/administration expenditures increase of 5.21% between 2011 and 2020 are: Technology, with an 8.28% increase (\$1.14 million); pensions/leave/faculty & staff waivers, with an 8.68% increase (\$330,000); Human Resources with a 9.01% increase (\$294,000); and Purchasing, with a 7.37% increase (\$239,000).

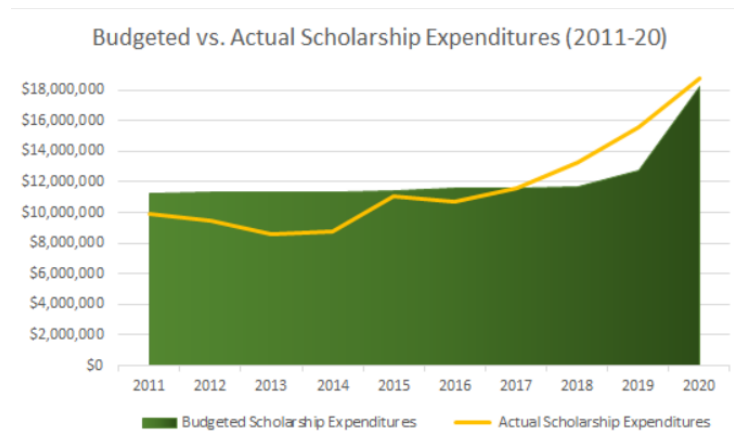
The full scale of growth disparities in division budgets is visible in the chart below:



#### 4. Our costly spending on scholarships is out-of-line with other institutions of our size.

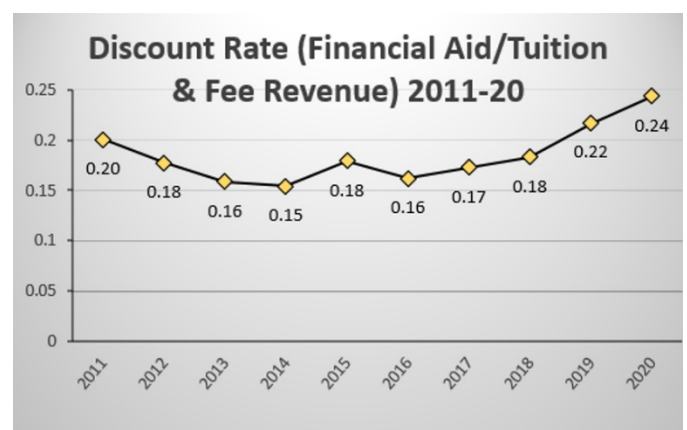
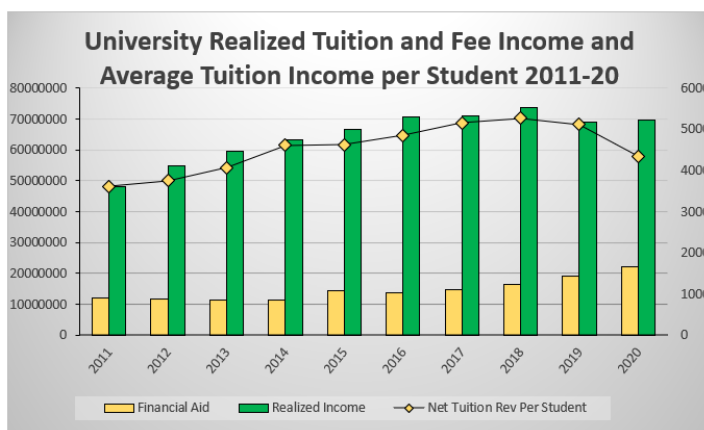
	ATU Funded	
	Unrestricted Scholarships Budget	Unrestricted Scholarships Actual
<b>2011</b>	11,000,181	9,629,584
<b>2012</b>	11,000,181	9,184,551
<b>2013</b>	10,925,181	8,237,074
<b>2014</b>	11,317,713	8,288,008
<b>2015</b>	11,317,713	10,624,125
<b>2016</b>	11,492,713	10,174,022
<b>2017</b>	11,492,713	11,051,730
<b>2018</b>	11,624,553	12,640,744
<b>2019</b>	12,636,448	14,929,213
<b>2020</b>	18,172,235	17,520,150
<b>2021</b>	17,100,917	

Our spending on scholarships per FTE is 10<sup>th</sup> highest in our peer group—the same group in which we spend less on instructional spending than any other institution—and has been steadily increasing since 2014. In addition, in 2018 and 2019, ATU **overspent its scholarship budget by \$1.016 million and \$2.3 million respectively**, even though the budget had increased by \$120,000 in 2018 and by \$1.012 million in 2019. Between 2011 and 2020, the average annual percentage increase for ATU funded scholarships was 6.88%. In this period, actual expenditures for scholarships increased by \$7.89 million. The total increase in scholarship spending over the past three years (2017-2020) was over \$6.4 million.



As a result of scholarship spending, **our net annual tuition per undergraduate student has decreased by \$919 since 2018**. As shown in the chart below, the average scholarship spending per student has risen from \$1,392 per student in 2011 to \$2,612 in 2020. The \$6.4 million increase in scholarships over the past three years has caused the **net tuition revenue per student** (tuition – ATU funded scholarships) to **decrease from \$5,267 in 2018 to \$4,348 in 2020** while undergraduate tuition has risen from \$226 to \$232 per credit hours over the same time frame. (See data and visualizations below.)

	Undergrad Headcount	Graduate Headcount	Total Headcount*	Avg ATU Unrestricted Scholarship per student	Undergrad Tuition Per Hour	Undergrad Tuition for 30 hours	Net Tuition Rev Per Student
<b>2011</b>	7,148	754	7,902	\$ 1,392	\$ 167	\$ 5,010	\$ 3,618
<b>2012</b>	7,342	861	8,203	\$ 1,341	\$ 170	\$ 5,100	\$ 3,759
<b>2013</b>	7,358	887	8,245	\$ 1,325	\$ 180	\$ 5,400	\$ 4,075
<b>2014</b>	7,465	903	8,368	\$ 1,352	\$ 199	\$ 5,970	\$ 4,618
<b>2015</b>	7,582	863	8,445	\$ 1,340	\$ 199	\$ 5,970	\$ 4,630
<b>2016</b>	7,285	841	8,126	\$ 1,414	\$ 209	\$ 6,270	\$ 4,856
<b>2017</b>	7,111	1,049	8,160	\$ 1,408	\$ 219	\$ 6,570	\$ 5,162
<b>2018</b>	6,733	950	7,683	\$ 1,513	\$ 226	\$ 6,780	\$ 5,267
<b>2019</b>	6,789	814	7,603	\$ 1,662	\$ 226	\$ 6,780	\$ 5,118
<b>2020</b>	6,239	719	6,958	\$ 2,612	\$ 232	\$ 6,960	\$ 4,348



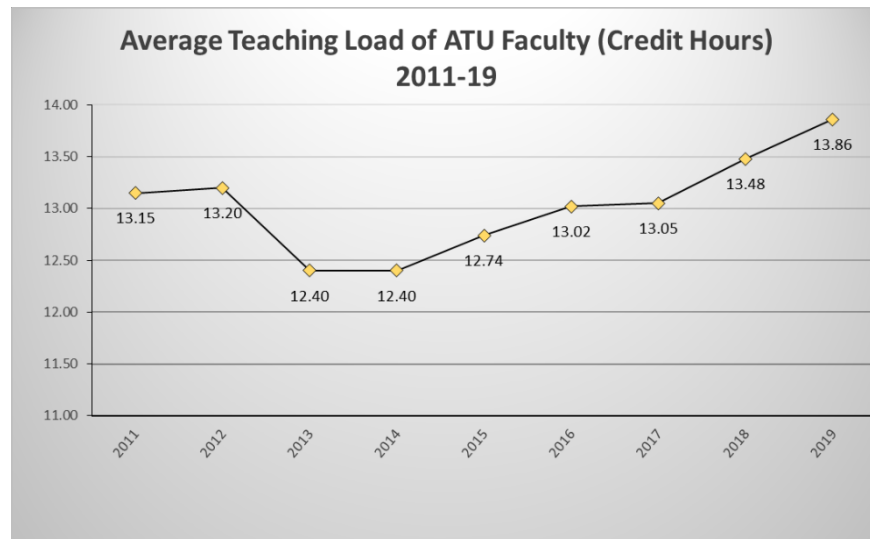
Similar to scholarship spending, the actual expenditures for student recruitment (transfer and incoming freshmen) increased from \$748,780 to \$2,223,334 between 2011 and 2020; this translates into an ***average annual increase in spending of 12.85% over the past 10 years.*** The cost to recruit a new student has risen from \$225.81 per student in 2011 to \$638.34 per student in 2020. The majority of this increase has occurred from 2016 through 2019.

Actual Admissions/ Recruitment Exp	Actual Avg Cost Per New Enrolled Student
\$ 748,780	\$ 225.81
\$ 794,652	\$ 214.77
\$ 887,153	\$ 239.51
\$ 957,190	\$ 269.78
\$ 953,035	\$ 263.34
\$ 1,151,299	\$ 328.94
\$ 1,296,295	\$ 397.15
\$ 1,481,129	\$ 480.11
\$ 1,942,906	\$ 660.40
\$ 2,223,334	\$ 638.34

Likewise, Marcomm expenses have increased from \$1.3 million in 2011 to \$1.9 million in 2020. This increase means that ATU's marketing costs have increased by 4.13% on an annual basis over the past 10 years.

**5. Tech already exceeds the expected teaching load of 12 credit hours per full-time faculty.**

This high teaching load is in conflict with the *faculty handbook*, and has increased across the last decade, in keeping with the University's failure to prioritize and adequately fund instruction. The average teaching load at Tech is currently at 13.86 credit hours per semester for full-time faculty.



**6. Cuts to academic programs will harm the ability of ATU to generate revenue.**

Just because an academic department shows a “net loss” by one metric it does not mean it would make financial sense to eliminate it. Doing so would decrease ATU’s revenue without necessarily decreasing its costs. As illustrated below using the Music and Electrical Engineering departments, operating profit would decrease if either or both departments were eliminated. Since revenues exceed direct expenses for both Music and Electrical Engineering, eliminating the departments would, in fact, *decrease net revenue* by \$268,131. This is because the total amounts for the “allocated” expenses (deans/faculty development, other academic support, and graduate academic support) do not change in total when a given department is added or eliminated. This financial dynamic must be fully understood before any cut could be proposed that would not do more harm than good: when any department shows a “positive contribution margin,” but none of the allocated costs change, elimination of it will lower net revenue/expense.

	Russellville Total	Music	Electrical Engineering	Dropping Music & EE	Net Change
Total Revenue -	\$ 66,996,153	\$ 1,643,926	\$ 934,890	\$ 64,417,337	\$ (2,578,816)
Less: Direct Expenses of Departments	(24,511,372)	(1,540,830)	(769,854)	(22,200,688)	2,310,684
Contribution Margin	\$ 42,484,780	\$ 103,096	\$ 165,036	\$ 42,216,649	\$ (268,131)
Less: Dean/Faculty Development Allocation	(2,223,078)			(2,223,078)	-
Less: Other Academic Support	(6,078,735)			(6,078,735)	-
Less: Graduate Academic Support	(231,478)			(231,478)	-
Net Revenue/Expense	\$ 33,951,489	103,096	165,036	33,683,358	\$ (268,131)

It is worth re-emphasizing that academic opportunities, in the form of classes offered, are the primary “product” that the University creates, and thus a primary source of revenue. Reducing those opportunities in short-sighted efforts to save costs will create a concomitant reduction in what the University can offer, and thus its ability to create revenue. On the other hand, faculty who know their own programs, curricula, and students are likely best positioned to identify genuine inefficiencies in their programs and recommend zero-cost measures to eliminate those inefficiencies.

#### 7. Campus culture, in the wake of “buckets” exercise, is increasingly toxic.

The data below come from a survey assessing faculty responses to the ongoing budget crisis. The following data are reported on a scale where 1=strongly dissatisfied and 6=strongly satisfied. Mean scores are in **bold** type and underlined.

- Participants indicated varying levels of dissatisfaction with the timeline of the budget restructure (**2.58**), as well as faculty representation (**2.71**) and involvement (**2.73**) in the budget restructure process.
- Mean scores for the University President’s oversight of the budget (**2.63**) and management of the University budget (**2.31**) indicate low levels of satisfaction in these areas. Satisfaction with the University President’s communication during the budget restructure process was also low (**2.82**).

The following data are reported on a scale where 1 = not at all confident; 6 = extremely confident. Mean scores are in **bold** type and underlined.

- Results show low levels of confidence in all areas. Means scores do not show confidence in any of the items related to University leadership that the survey presented.
- The most confidence was indicated in the University’s future (**3.36**).
- Participants were not confident in the direction of the University (**2.88**), the financial health of the University (**2.56**), or the long-term financial viability of the University (**3.12**).
- In regard to the University President, mean scores show low levels of confidence in the President’s knowledge of the student population (**3.08**), the President’s leadership through the budget restructure (**2.82**), the President’s long-term vision for the University (**2.84**), and the least confidence (**2.79**) in the President’s focus on the academic mission of the University.

## **8. This committee continues to disapprove of the “bucket exercise.”**

The committee’s assessment of that exercise arises not from a failure of understanding, but one of persuasion. We understand *what* the bucket exercise is and *how* it proceeds. We also have a thorough understanding of the University’s budgetary distributions in the present and since 2011, and of the stakes of the current crisis. However, ATU’s president has not convinced us that the bucket approach is appropriate to the problem at hand; on the contrary, it has sown bitterness, anxiety, and despair among the same faculty members striving to keep classes afloat in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. We question whether the current administration—which oversaw our descent into financial distress—is the right one to lead us out. If our leaders insist on the bucket exercise, then our topmost leaders themselves should be subject to special scrutiny, and be prepared to explain why they are not candidates for Bucket 5.

**To summarize:** Arkansas Tech spends too little on academics, the revenue generator of the institution which is also the heart of any university. We spend too much on other ventures that do not befit a school of our size, in particular a scholarship program that should be evaluated for potential waste. The crisis at present is being handled in a way that breeds toxicity. The University has strained the limits on faculty labor as it is; “do more with less” is not an invitation to infinite expansion of workload alongside a relentless contraction of resources. Faculty who are overburdened with work in underfunded academic systems are not equipped to meet student needs, and we cannot claim to be a university that is truly centered on student success, as stated in the Strategic Plan, if academics continue to be financially de-prioritized.