



Council of Graduate Schools, Annual Meeting, Scottsdale, Arizona, December 2011

Managing Budget To Achieve Access and Excellence

Andrew C. Comrie

Dean of the Graduate College
Associate Vice President for Research

comrie@arizona.edu





Budget Cuts

Strike fear into our hearts

Our fear is not unfounded:

A **Google**™ search for “strategic budget cuts” is dominated by university and education links!

So, what can you do?...

The key is *Strategic Budgeting*

Your strategic plan must drive your annual budget process directly

Pro-actively allocate resources to achieve your strategic vision, rather than by “history” or power struggles among sub-units

Don't let the tail wag the dog!

Make cuts *not* where they are easiest or most convenient, but rather where they truly need to be made



**Strategic
Plan**

Budget
Cut \$



Your *strategic plan* enables you to implement your mission



**Univ of Arizona Grad
College mission is
three-fold:**

**Advance
– *Promotion***

Advocate for graduate
education, diversity, integrity
interdisciplinarity and funding

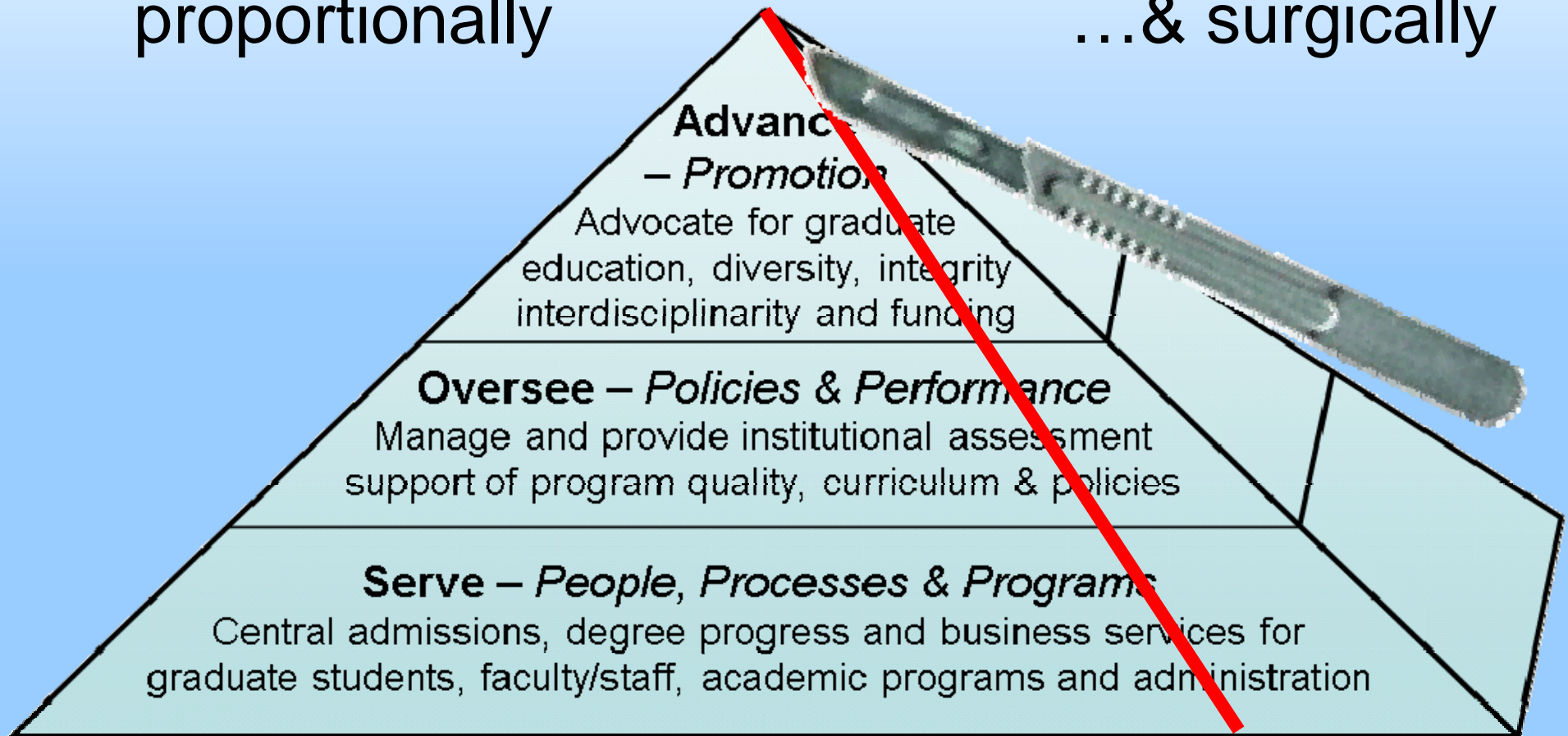
Oversee – *Policies & Performance*

Manage and provide institutional assessment
support of program quality, curriculum & policies

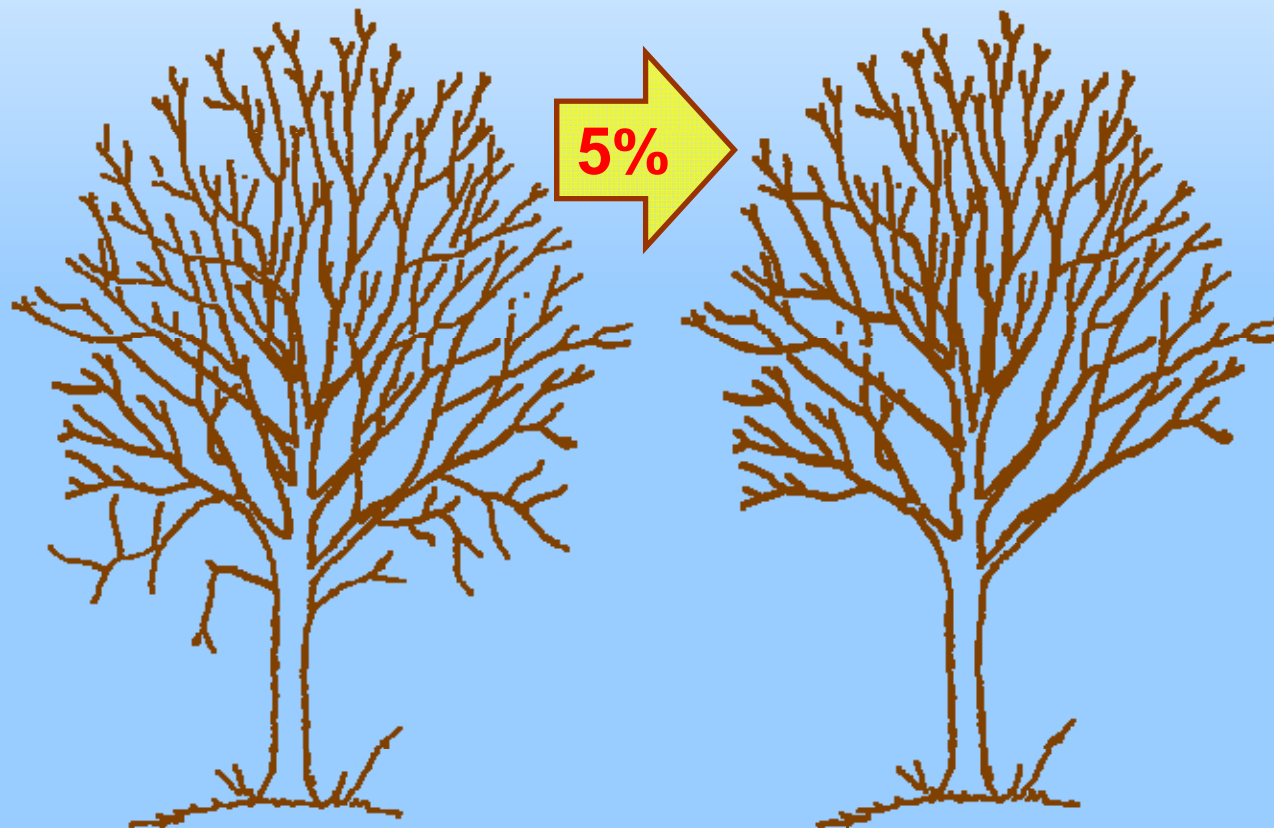
Serve – *People, Processes & Programs*

Central admissions, degree progress and business services for
graduate students, faculty/staff, academic programs and administration

Cuts need to preserve foundations and higher levels of your mission, proportionally ...& surgically



My preferred metaphor is *Pruning*, which improves your position for future growth



You will likely need to take actions with short-term and long-term outcomes

Some of those changes may be very tough to make, so...

“Never let a good crisis go to waste”

- Rahm Emanuel

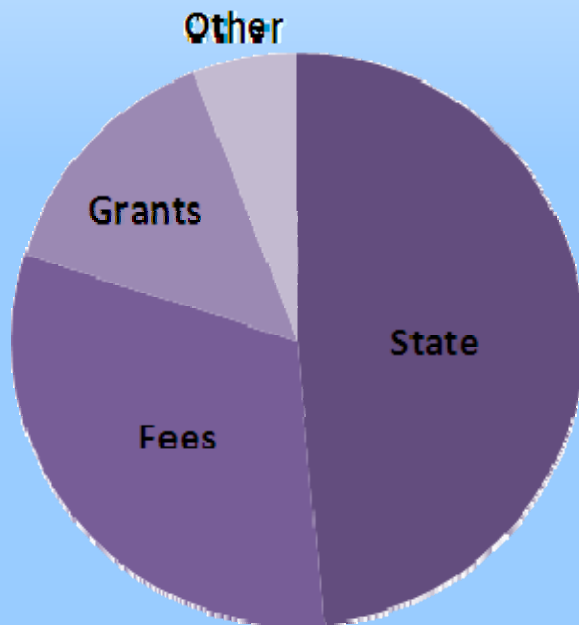
Make tough changes now
that are difficult to do in
better budget times



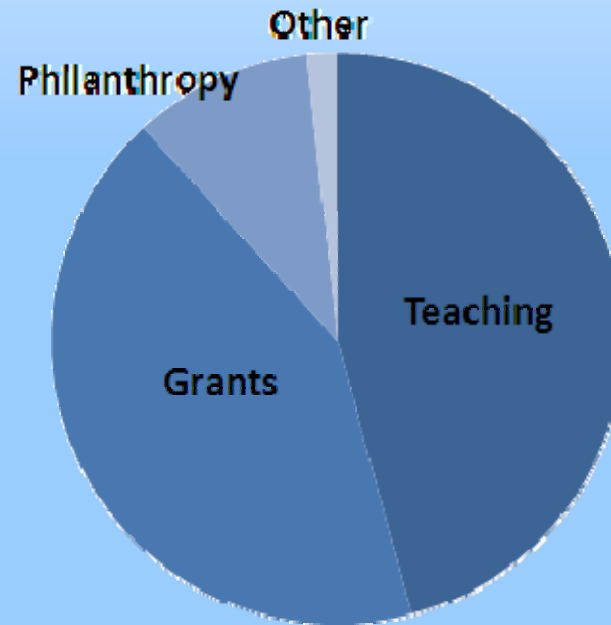
<http://www.noquarterusa.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/rahm-emanuel-120707.jpg>

Grow & Diversify Your Revenue Portfolio

Personnel & Operations

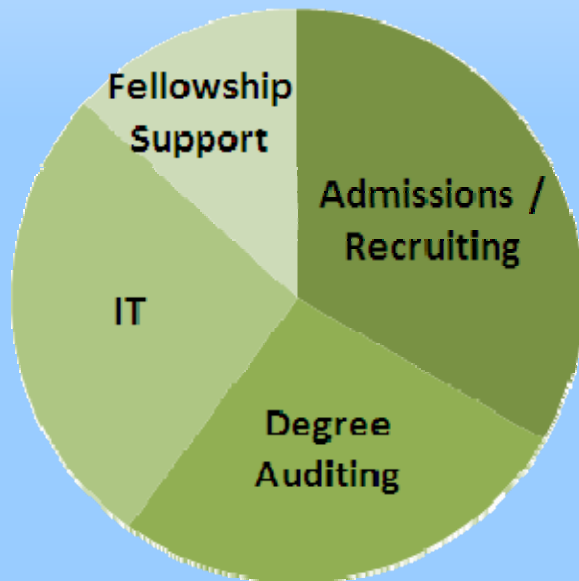


Student Support

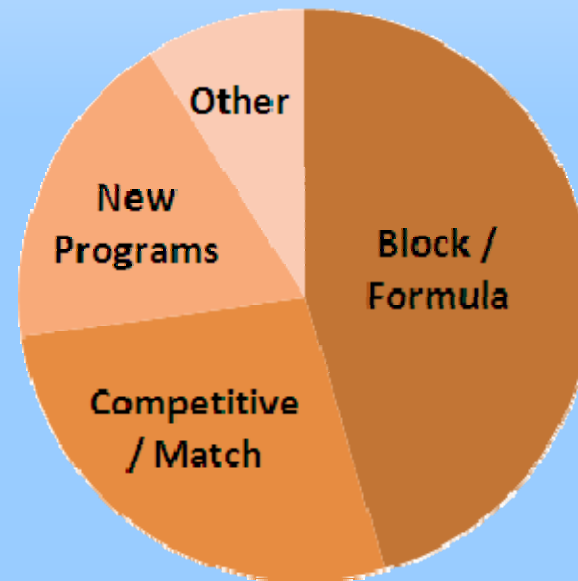


Shrink & Reallocate Your Expenditures

Personnel & Operations



Student Support



Do Things Differently

Cannot simply adjust income/expenses
and keep doing the same work

Change what you do so there is less
work overall – system efficiency

Streamline processes:

- Stop doing some things
- Reduce # steps
- Minimize # people in chain
- Keep only essential elements



<http://blog.smu.edu/forum/system-cogs.jpg>

UA Examples:

>30% total cut to state \$ in last 4 years

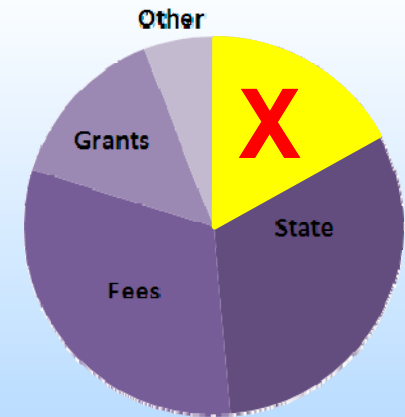
1. Longer-term actions:

• **Personnel & Operations:**

- Anticipated state cuts, increased income (application fees)
- Shifted to more use of IT tools (online services)
- Modified policy and procedures to streamline workflow (timing of forms and signatures, exam rules/response, expiry dates, etc.)
- Obtain grants to fund fellowship/diversity activities and staff (Sloan, MARC, IMSD, LSAMP, etc.)

• **Student Support:**

- Redesign internal funding approach (more competitive/strategic)
- Increase philanthropy (expand development activity)
- Seed more extramural funding applications (tuition waivers)



2. Shorter-term actions:

- **Personnel & operations:**

- Several employee lay-offs plus fortuitous attrition (total ~12% of staff)
- Admissions area now has 30% fewer staff, but close attention to procedures, workflow and IT tools has reduced Spring peak admission processing time from 6 weeks to 4 days
- Added(!) an IT position
- Changed TA contract oversight from 100% scan to a compliance expectation policy with spot-checks (reduction from 2 to 1 staff)
- Reorganize interdisciplinary program admin (core business services)

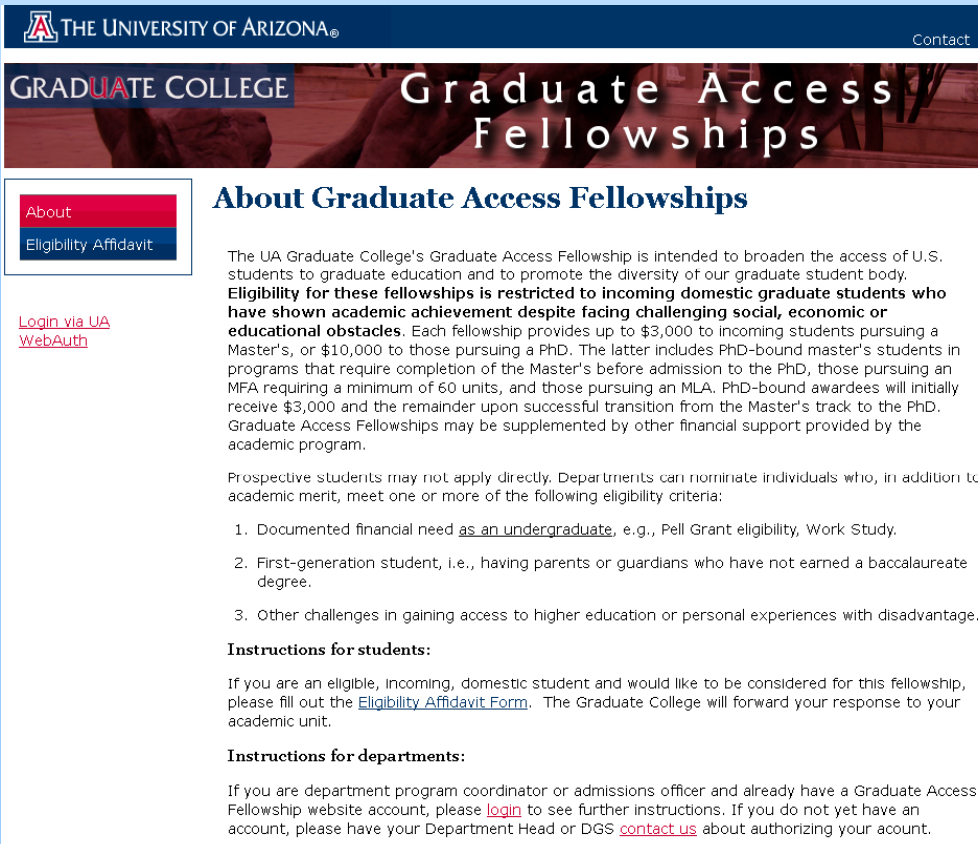
- **Student Support:**

- Grad program assessment to rate and prioritize programs explicitly (comprehensive, ~3 months, with academic deans)
- Closed/merged small programs with Provost
- Initiate high-end fellowships for leading programs

3. Access: An Arizona Issue:

- **Changes in the law**
 - No discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity or gender in student admissions or funding
 - Examples of practical implications:
 - Cannot list gender or ethnicity on dept admissions evaluation sheets
 - No fellowships for specific URMs or genders (Univ/state \$ only; exceptions for Fed law/programs, e.g. some Native American programs)
- **University reaffirms commitment to diversity**
 - How to maintain and increase opportunity and access?

- **Graduate Access Fellowships**
 - Increase funding
 - Broaden/redefine criteria for access, e.g.,
 - Pell-eligible? First generation with a college degree? Overcome other barriers to academic opportunity?



The screenshot shows the website for Graduate Access Fellowships at The University of Arizona. The header includes the university logo and name, a 'Contact' link, and the text 'GRADUATE COLLEGE Graduate Access Fellowships'. A navigation menu on the left has 'About' (highlighted in red) and 'Eligibility Affidavit'. Below the menu are links for 'Login via UA WebAuth'. The main content area is titled 'About Graduate Access Fellowships' and contains the following text:

The UA Graduate College's Graduate Access Fellowship is intended to broaden the access of U.S. students to graduate education and to promote the diversity of our graduate student body. **Eligibility for these fellowships is restricted to incoming domestic graduate students who have shown academic achievement despite facing challenging social, economic or educational obstacles.** Each fellowship provides up to \$3,000 to incoming students pursuing a Master's, or \$10,000 to those pursuing a PhD. The latter includes PhD-bound master's students in programs that require completion of the Master's before admission to the PhD, those pursuing an MFA requiring a minimum of 60 units, and those pursuing an MLA. PhD-bound awardees will initially receive \$3,000 and the remainder upon successful transition from the Master's track to the PhD. Graduate Access Fellowships may be supplemented by other financial support provided by the academic program.

Prospective students may not apply directly. Departments can nominate individuals who, in addition to academic merit, meet one or more of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Documented financial need as an undergraduate, e.g., Pell Grant eligibility, Work Study.
2. First-generation student, i.e., having parents or guardians who have not earned a baccalaureate degree.
3. Other challenges in gaining access to higher education or personal experiences with disadvantage.

Instructions for students:

If you are an eligible, incoming, domestic student and would like to be considered for this fellowship, please fill out the [Eligibility Affidavit Form](#). The Graduate College will forward your response to your academic unit.

Instructions for departments:

If you are department program coordinator or admissions officer and already have a Graduate Access Fellowship website account, please [login](#) to see further instructions. If you do not yet have an account, please have your Department Head or DGS [contact us](#) about authorizing your account.

Making It Happen

- Strategize & Assess, then Act

“Ready, Aim, Fire” **not** “Ready, Fire, Aim”



Strategize

- Strategic planning, not just budgeting
- Targeted cuts and reallocations, not across-the-board
- Strategy vs. tactics: Focus not on “losing the battle” (tactical budget cut) but on “winning the war” (strategic vision at multiple budget levels)
- IT additions will pay off in the medium/long term (tools/efficiency)

Assess

Nature of the cuts:

- One time or permanent base?
- Amount, timing, approach (crisis, speed-bump, reorg?)

Communications (to upper admin and to staff)

Your information needs:

- Students, Operations, Employees, Financial

Who is laid off?

- Often, your strategic weakest link is an underperformer
- Are you “managing around” someone? (“Hired for skills, fired for attitude”)

Refs:

David Maddox, 1999, *Budgeting for Not-For-Profit Organizations*, Wiley

Richard D. Irwin, 1995, <http://www.csuchico.edu/mgmt/strategy/module1/>



Use Scenarios

- Try 5-10-15%, use the high ones to force you to set priority areas/people
- Break out of “current” thinking, try an exercise:

Exercise: Radical Strategic Budgeting

1. *Imagine your “ideal” configuration of staff and resources. Think big and bold, aiming for excellence.*
2. *Now imagine a drastic cut, say 50%. In terms of staff and resources, what would you still do? What would you not do?*
3. *Take that plan, map it onto your ideal plan, and selectively add in some of the new things you really need to do.*

Even if you have to make deep cuts, the pillars of your strategic plan will support your success

