

# Town Meeting Math

## A Review of Aunt Martha's Speech on Student Retention and Faculty Rewards

During the 12-Feb-09 Town Meeting at USM, a meeting to discuss the University's 2009-10 budget crisis, president Martha Saunders told those assembled that the past year at USM has been dedicated to "strategic enrollment planning." As a result of the study done by USM's **Strategic Enrollment Planning Committee (SEPC)**, it has been recommended to Saunders that USM needs to put in place an *Assistant Provost for Student Success*. According to Saunders, the institution "badly need[s]" this position and she is looking forward to "work toward funding" it. Given the current crisis, however, Saunders iterated that the USM **Strategic Enrollment Action Team (SEAT)** had been given other priorities until brighter economic days.

To bring home to those in attendance the importance of student acquisition/retention, particularly given the likelihood that eyes were rolling at the mention of a massive expansion in university administration, both in action currently *and* called for in the future (see above), Saunders informed the crowd that the recruitment of 250 *new students* would provide 5 new faculty lines. To that she added that 950 *more* would provide for raises across the 2 campuses. These statements are evaluated further by the equations below:

$$\begin{aligned}(1) \quad & 15 \times 2 \times 250 \times \$205 \times 2 = \$ 3,075,000 \\(2) \quad & 15 \times 2 \times 950 \times \$205 \times 2 = \$11,685,000\end{aligned}$$

In equation (1) above, 15 is equal to the hours taken in a semester by each new student. When doubled ( $\times 2$ ) we have the annual number of hours taken. Across 250 students, we get aggregate hours taken by these new students, which, when multiplied by \$205 (the per-hour tuition charge at USM), yields tuition revenue (per year) from the new group. Given that Saunders told the crowd that the USM budget is broken down into tuition/fees at 26%, MS appropriations at 27%, grants and contracts at 33%, and all else at 14%, the latest sum above is doubled to account for MS appropriations attached to these new students (of course, other adjustments for this factor could be considered). Note that the equation (1) total is \$3.075 million, which at 5 faculty lines means that each faculty line would consume \$615,000. Sound reasonable? Of course not. Let's cut equation (1) total back down to just tuition revenues, or \$1.5375 million. That sum yields a per-new faculty line total of \$307,500. Does this sound reasonable? Still no.

Let's assume the salaries plus fringes on each of these new lines comes to \$100,000. That's \$500,000 total, which leaves \$1.0375 million. At \$200,000 in salary plus fringes on each line (sound right?), the total expense is \$1 million, leaving \$537,500. So, is the *Office of the Assistant Provost for Student Success* going to consume (annually) somewhere between \$0.5375 million and \$1.0375 million? For some reason, perhaps from following the way USM works, that sounds possible.

Let's turn to equation (2), yet let's eliminate the MS appropriations part (i.e., the last " $\times 2$ ") given our experience in the discussion above. Doing so leaves a total of \$5,842,500. If \$5.8425 million is spread out over 750 faculty, more than USM really has, that's an average raise of \$7,790. Do you believe that one . . . an average raise of \$7,790? Even for fair-haired CoBers, that's a pretty good take. Assuming the average raise is closer to \$4,500, there is \$2.5 million left for the Saunders administration. Sound about right? Probably so.

Let's ponder this question. Is student acquisition/retention, and the additional tuition revenues that come with it -- something that the Saunders administration seems to have tunnel vision

about -- the gateway to a different kind of "fun money?" If so, do you think history professor Bill Scarbrough was on to this with his probing comments and questions at the Town Meeting? Here's another one. If 250 *new students* are attracted (by lower standards?) to USM and somewhere between \$0.5 million and \$1.5 million *new dollars* are committed to bigger administration (new assistant provost et al.), what kind of crisis will USM face as these *new students* begin to "wander off" just like the old ones have?