# Ideas for Managing Tight Budgets

## Share a Position

When securing a new or replacement position is unlikely, consider proposing a joint appointment between two academic departments or between an academic department and some other entity on campus. For example, the need for additional faculty in foreign language might be combined with the need for additional faculty to teach courses in international business, international law, or intercultural communication. Or, a chair might propose a position shared with an academic support unit such as the writing lab, learning center, academic advisement, or career services. In some instances, chairs might consider a joint appointment shared by two institutions in the same region. A shared appointment between neighboring institutions that, for example, share a 2-plus-2 or a 3-plus-2 articulation agreement could benefit student learning at both institutions.

## Revise the Curriculum

When institutions are unable to replace departing faculty, the workload for remaining faculty increases. The department can help restore faculty workloads and sanity by reducing the number of courses offered. This might be done by reducing electives, rotating some courses under a special topics course offering, and/or repackaging the course content while eliminating units of study that have become less relevant. Generally, any effort to structure the curriculum to more efficiently lead students through the major (or minor) will spare both faculty time and department resources. Such changes are likely to have the added benefit of improving student scores on assessment measures and increasing retention and graduation rate outcomes that will make any department more valuable to the institution.

## Eliminate Unnecessary Work

Chairs do faculty a huge service when they help them know which tasks can be eliminated. The department can effectively reduce existing workloads by eliminating courses, programs, and initiatives that have outlived their usefulness. Unnecessary work may exist in such ongoing initiatives as assessment, newsletters, department meetings, and student organizations. In sum, assess whether the benefits received warrant the faculty time and department funds spent on the activity. Knowing the

return on the investment of time and budget can be useful in deciding which tasks might be eliminated.

## Form Partnerships

Chairs can form mutually beneficial partnerships with other departments and offices on campus as well as with off-campus agencies. Departments might, for example, form alliances that permit the sharing of faculty and staff, the co-funding of mutually beneficial initiatives, or the exchange of professional expertise. Such partnerships not only help to extend scarce resources, they help to accrue additional visibility for the work being done in the department. Departments can sometimes stretch tight budgets by trading expertise with other departments. For example, faculty in the computer science department may help design a web page for another department in return for assistance in designing a survey instrument for assessing student learning. Picking up tasks that align more closely with department expertise in return for work that would widen a department's skill set can save time and frustration.

## Use Technology

Advances in technology make it possible to provide interactive experiences for students and faculty with professionals at other locations without leaving campus. Technology can also permit departments to teach more students in a single class section while providing differentiated instruction.

## Analyze Course Enrollment

Tracking course attrition can yield significant savings for the department. In particular, it is helpful to track the typical first-week drop rate for each course section and use this information to reduce the number of empty seats in each class. No matter the cap on a course, empty seats represent wasted resources. If the chair knows how many students typically drop a class during the first week, it becomes possible to prevent any loss by adding that number of students above the cap. This can be done in a way that does not create extra work for faculty by telling students on the wait list to attend the class from day one so they can be added to the roster should space become available.