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Campus Update from President Comerford

President Comerford <PresidentComerford@otterbein.edu>

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Dear Colleagues,

Summer is flying by it seems and we will welcome early arrivals back to campus in less than a month! I hope everyone is getting some good time to catch up, take a break, and/or make progress on a project that has waited too long. It is great to see so many smiling faces on campus again!

Here are a few updates just to keep everyone in the loop:

Enrollment & Budget

At this point, the “it’s still early” admonition about fall numbers no longer applies. We’ve held steady at around 589 new first year students for the past month. We have 86 deposits for new adult and transfer students and still have time to secure more. 1,519 returning undergraduates have registered. Graduate student registrations stand at 210 students.

The student numbers are about where we have expected them to be – down about 9% in returning undergraduates, up about 12% from last fall’s new students (remember, it was a small class), making for a change from fall-to-fall of about negative 5%. The concern for the budget now is mostly about room and board. While new first year students are signing up to live on campus in a proportion similar to pre-COVID classes, the small sophomore class and juniors and seniors not returning to campus residence have our room and board projections off by about \$2 million. We will be reminding students of our residency requirements, but I expect campus residency will not quickly bounce back to pre-COVID levels.

We will not make any additional expenditure adjustments until we see how fall census (including residency) actually looks and we have a chance to update our multi-year model. Remember that this year we will have some federal stimulus funds, but cannot plan on any such support for next year (FY23) and beyond.

Pre and Post

We are still a ways off from final numbers, but we know the ballpark for fall. It is interesting to make comparisons pre-pandemic (our last normal fall in 2019) and post-pandemic (fall 2021).

	Fall 2019 (estimates as of October)	Fall 2021 (estimate)	Change
Cont Undergraduate Enrollment	1,694	1,535	-159
Cont UG Discount	48.7%	49.1%	0.4%
New Students	717	693	-24 (-3.3%)
New UG Discount	58.7%	57.5%	-1.2%
Graduate Enrollment	344	311	-33 (-9.5%)
Tuition Annual Revenue	\$40,315,341	\$38,692,789	-\$1,622,552 (-4%)
Room and Board Annual Revenue	\$13,569,663	\$10,337,965	-\$3,231,698 (-23.8%)
Total UG Enrollment	2,411	2,228	-183 (-7.6%)

Total Operating Revenue (not including temporary federal aid)	\$65,767,665	\$60,639,113	-\$5,128,552 (-7.9%)
Salaries and Benefits	\$42,413,040	\$37,781,535	-\$2,631,505 (-6.1%)
Total Operating Expenses (including depreciation)	\$68,773,595	\$66,376,786	-\$2,396,809 (-3.5%)

We have about \$3 million in one-time federal aid that can be applied this year, but I'm sure you see the larger issue. Revenue has declined 7.9% while we have cut expenditures by just 3.5%. We need time to figure out whether some of that revenue decline will likely recover (i.e. room and board) by 2022/23 and beyond. Much more to come as we work on a multi-year projection!

Development Results

Congratulations to the Advancement staff and all those who worked with alumni and friends over the past year! The Otterbein Fund ended up raising over \$900,000, well above its goal of \$800,000 (and the conservative \$700,000 we put in the budget). Total fund raising for the year was \$5.1M, a significant increase over FY20's \$3.8M.

We used the *For Love of Otterbein* effort to ask for help, and I'm pleased to report that our alumni and friends are stepping up. 170 faculty and staff also donated – thank you! In addition, this past year we realized a significant increase in the engagement of our alumni, parents and friends. We are excited for these trends to continue.

IT Options

Thanks to the IT staff and the committee coordinating the RFP, we now have multiple options for how to meet our IT needs in the future. We are interviewing three companies that can manage the operation, with estimated costs between \$1.9 and \$2.5 million. That compares to an estimated \$2.3M to fund a full staff internally (which is still an option). Of course, there is a great deal of work to be done comparing services and looking for hidden costs or other surprises. We're also looking at cultural fit, staff transition, and other issues that will take some time to review.

Fall COVID Plans

I used the term "post-pandemic" earlier, but of course that's not really true. COVID is still out there, including the more dangerous Delta variant which is now predominant in the United States.

We know that vaccination is the key to safety and success in delivering a largely normal school year. All three available vaccines are effective in preventing serious illness.

Otterbein does not plan to require the vaccine of students, faculty or staff, but we must take other reasonable safeguards. Students who provide proof of vaccination will not be required to mask, be tested regularly, or have limitations on activities like study abroad. Students who do not provide proof of vaccination will be required to mask and be tested. We are working on a communication to students now.

We will also require all employees to respond to a survey about your vaccination status. Supervisors will know who has replied to the survey, but the responses themselves will be kept confidential. It is important we have this information to ensure 1) that our vaccination rate is adequate to provide campus protection and 2) that we can respond quickly should we have an outbreak that would affect vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals differently.

Those are the current plans, but know that things can always change. We will work to ensure everyone's

safety and our ability to provide as much normalcy in the school year as possible.

Strategic Investments

We spent much of spring looking past this year, past COVID and into Otterbein's future. Of course, we have to make investments of time and money now that will "pay off" in the future!

I am very excited about the *Every Student Will* initiative (tentatively to be known as "Cardinal Directions") and we are building undergraduate recruiting materials around it now. We are also searching for a new staff position on the Student Success and Career Development team to build the program, which would launch for new students in fall 2022. We all expect this will be a differentiator that improves both student recruitment and retention.

Also in the strategic plan is the commitment (first made in 2016) to hire a Chief Diversity Officer. We are drafting a position description that would encompass support of our growing number of students of color, connection to corporate DEI efforts, many gender equity and Title IX duties, and diversity in our employees. Look for this draft soon for feedback.

Finally, we are including in budget planning innovation funds allowing us to support efforts to grow existing programs or launch new ones. We will use a process where ideas can be proposed (using a pro forma document) and considered for their potential return. We will launch that effort in the fall.

I am sure some will think spending any new money is unwise right now, but I believe hunkering down for too long is harmful. We cannot cut our way to success. We have to move forward, find new students, support and retain the ones we have, and improve the Otterbein experience.

Sorry for the long message, but there is lots to share! Thanks for all you are doing!

Sincerely,



John Comerford, Ph.D.
President

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Otterbein.**