

I *This chapter examines factors that influence higher education finance, trends in revenue and expenditures of institutions of higher education, and current strategies used to meet financial challenges.*

The Financial Environment of Student Affairs

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Woodard, Love, and Komives (2000) observed the following about the contemporary financial environment of student affairs: "The higher education woes of the past thirty years have challenged every sector of higher education to rethink long-term sources of funding for campus programs and activities" (p. 71). Various strategies have been employed to deal with this situation. Public colleges and universities have attempted to compensate with reductions in state government support by raising tuition and fees at accelerating rates (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1999b). Private institutions, too, have raised their tuition and fee schedules at a rate higher than economic barometers such as the consumer price index (Clotfelter, 1996). Students, the primary focus of student affairs programs and activities, have been affected directly. Since financial aid programs have not kept pace with the cost of attendance at colleges and universities (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1999a), many students have had to assume increasingly larger debt to attend college (Fossey, 1998). More students, at all income levels, are borrowing more money to attend college (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002). From a policy perspective, serious questions are being raised about the extent to which students from modest economic backgrounds will have access to institutions of higher education in the future (Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal, 2001).

Student affairs units function in this environment. Student affairs has been conceived as providing programs that promote inclusiveness, celebrate differences (Brazzell and Reisser, 1999), and encourage student involvement outside the classroom (Kuh, Schuh and Whitt, 1991). But as more diverse

students are admitted to institutions of higher education, student affairs practitioners will not only need to “expand their knowledge for working with these learners but also to find better and more cost effective methods for doing so” (Gibbs, 1999, p. 62). Without an appropriate resource base, student affairs units will be hard-pressed to fulfill their obligations to their campuses and students.

This chapter has been prepared to frame the economic environment in which institutions of higher education in general and divisions of student affairs in particular operate. First, attention will be directed toward selected trends of the general environment in which colleges and universities operate. Then revenues and expenditure trends will be examined. Finally, strategies that institutions are using to readjust their budgets to the financial environment will be identified. This information should provide a framework for subsequent chapters.

Selected Trends Affecting Student Affairs Finance

Several aspects of the contemporary environment have had a significant influence on the financial operations of student affairs. Five are discussed here: institutional mission, austerity, accountability, federal mandates, and technology.

Institutional Mission. Lyons (1993) observed that the mission of the institution is the “most important factor that determines the shape and substance of student affairs” (p. 14). Little has changed since that assertion was published. An institution’s mission statement guides day-to-day practices and informs student affairs professionals as they develop policies and implement new programs (Barr, 2000). In addition, mission statements can be very helpful in determining how to adjust and shape programs. For example, as the composition of a student body changes, new programs might be initiated while other programs may have to be scaled back or eliminated. The influence of the institution’s mission on student affairs operations is unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future.

Austerity. One consequence of the challenging financial environment is austerity, which “causes legislatures, state coordinating boards, and even consolidated boards to look more critically at institutional roles, at the availability and distribution of functions and programs, at effectiveness, and at educational operational costs” (Berdahl and McConnell, 1999, p. 72). Barak and Kniker (2002) observed that higher education normally receives more careful scrutiny in difficult economic times, and the attention paid to the financial management of student affairs very well could be a consequence of the prevailing austere environment. As Reisser and Roper (1999, p. 114) asserted, “Increasing accountability to the public for educational outcomes, the need to cut costs, reduced funding from external sources, and declining enrollments on some campuses are among the innumerable pressing issues confronting education as leaders.” The pressure to be more accountable has

led to a more data-driven environment, in which assessment becomes an increasingly important activity.

Accountability and Assessment Activities. Assessment, according to Schuh and Upcraft (2001), is an activity that is undertaken for two reasons: accountability and improvement. Accountability takes into account such issues as linking planning goals and outcomes, meeting the needs of students, and providing evidence that learning goals have been achieved by the time students graduate. Implicit in all of these activities is the careful use of resources, which are limited and are likely to be scarce now and in the future.

An aspect of the assessment movement that has received increasing emphasis has been developing strategic indicators and engaging in benchmarking as an administrative practice. Taylor and Massy (1996) advocate the development of strategic indicators that “allow an institution to compare its position in key strategic areas to competitors, to past performance, or to goals set previously” (pp. xi–xii). Benchmarking, according to Bender and Schuh (2002, p. 1), is “one approach that higher education leaders can employ to measure the extent to which institutional goals and objectives are being met.” Benchmarking is a way of demonstrating accountability to various constituencies and a way of shoring up what Blimling and Whitt (1999, p. 7) have called “waning confidence in higher education’s ability to make a difference in the lives of students and society.”

Federal Mandates. Woodard (2001) has identified a number of federal mandates that have had “serious budgetary implications” (p. 247). Among these are Title IX, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Campus Security Act of 1990. Title IX bans discrimination on the basis of sex. What this means, in essence, is that opportunities ought to be equal for men and women. In intercollegiate athletics, this has had the effect of creating a number of intercollegiate sports teams for women, thereby engendering additional costs. FERPA has resulted in making additional information available to students and their families. The ADA and Section 504 have mandated that all services, programs, and facilities be made available to students who, in the years before the legislation was passed, may not have had access to such institutional opportunities. The Campus Security Act requires that certain kinds of information be shared with the campus community and reported to various stakeholders. These mandates, while laudable in their intent, have come without commensurate funding. So institutions have had to generate the funds to satisfy them. In some instances, student affairs has taken the lead on campus in meeting the requirements of the mandates.

Technology. Technology is another factor that has resulted in increasing costs. Upcraft and Goldsmith (2000) identified a number of ways that technology has influenced the work of student affairs, from career services Web pages to online applications for admission and financial aid to degree

audit programs to be used in academic advising. All of this technology provides improved services for students, but Upcraft and Goldsmith point out that there is a potential for “economic bifurcation” on college campuses: “Those who had access to computers prior to college and those who can afford their own computers will have an edge over those who have no experience with computers prior to college and who cannot afford them” (2000, p. 223). In addition, the cost of providing contemporary computing equipment, fax machines, photocopiers, personal organizers, and other forms of technology represents a substantial investment that was not a budget consideration two decades ago. Not only is introducing technology to the workplace expensive, but keeping it up to date and making good decisions about strategically purchasing new technology are challenging and difficult activities.

Current Revenue and Expenditure Trends in Financing Higher Education

Among the most important strategic indicators for an institution of higher education are its revenue and expenditures structures (Taylor and Massy, 1996). Looking at these indicators, taken together, is a good way of understanding the financial health of a college or university. Let’s take a look at the revenue and expenditures trends in higher education since 1980.

Revenues. The *Digest of Education Statistics*, published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reports revenue trends for higher education on an annual basis. In the most recent edition of the *Digest* (2002) at the time of this writing, two important revenue trends are apparent. First, tuition and fees, as sources of revenue, have grown increasingly important over the years. Taken in the aggregate, tuition and fees have grown from 21 percent of current funds revenue for degree-granting institutions in 1980–81 to 27.9 percent of revenues for degree-granting institutions in 1995–96. When just public institutions are considered, growth was from 12.9 percent of current funds revenue in 1980–81 to 19 percent in 1996–97. These data are reported in Table 1.1. Private institutions have also shown growth in their reliance on tuition and fees as an income source. In 1980–81, private not-for-profit institutions derived 35.9 percent of their income from tuition and fees. By 1995–96, the percentage had grown to 41.5. These data are presented in Table 1.2.

When one examines current fund revenue sources by Carnegie type for both public and private not-for-profit institutions, the difference in the range of dependence on tuition and fees as a revenue source is apparent. Some of the Carnegie types rely very heavily on tuition and fees, while others derive more income from other sources. The range for public institutions in 1996–97 was from 15.47 percent of income for Research II universities (using the Carnegie typology at the time) to 31 percent for baccalaureate institutions. These data are presented in Table 1.3. Private not-for-profit institutions rely even more heavily on tuition and fees than their

Table 1.1. Percentage of Current Fund Revenues Derived from Various Sources for Public Degree-Granting Institutions of Higher Education, Selected Years, 1980–1997

Source	1980–81	1985–86	1990–91	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
Tuition and fees	12.9	14.5	16.1	18.0	18.4	18.4	18.8	19.0
Federal government	12.8	10.5	10.3	10.8	11.0	11.1	11.1	11.0
State governments	45.6	45.0	40.3	36.8	35.9	35.9	35.8	35.6
Local governments	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.7	4.0	4.0	4.1	3.9
Private gifts, grants, contracts	2.5	3.2	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.3
Endowment income	.5	.6	.5	.6	.6	.6	.6	.6
Sales and services	19.6	20.0	22.7	23.4	23.4	23.1	22.2	22.2
Other sources	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.7	3.1	3.3	3.3

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 328.

Table 1.2. Percentage of Current Revenues Derived from Various Sources by Private Not-for-Profit Degree-Granting Institutions of Higher Education, Selected Years, 1980–1996

Source	1980–81	1985–86	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96
Tuition and fees	35.9	37.8	39.4	39.7	40.2	40.9	41.4	41.5
Federal government	19.0	16.8	15.7	15.6	15.2	14.8	14.7	14.1
State governments	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.0	2.1	1.9
Local governments	.8	.6	.7	.7	.7	.8	.6	.7
Private gifts, grants, contracts	5.0	5.2	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.6
Endowment income	5.2	5.4	5.3	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.8	5.3
Sales and services	23.5	23.7	23.3	23.7	23.6	23.7	22.6	21.6
Other sources	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.8	5.4

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 330.

public counterparts do. The range for these institutions is from 13.1 percent of income resulting from tuition and fees to 53.5 percent of income for master's institutions. These data are given in Table 1.4.

Expenditures. This discussion is framed by the definitions of student services used by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). *Student services*, according to the NCES (2001), is defined as “funds expended for admissions, registrar activities, and activities whose primary purpose is to contribute to students’ emotional and physical well-being and to their intellectual, cultural, and social development outside the context of the formal instructional program. Examples are career guidance, counseling, financial aid administration, and student health services (except when operated as a self-supporting auxiliary enterprise). Include the administrative allowance for Pell Grants.”

Expenditures for student services, according to the NCES, have been remarkably stable from 1980–81 through 1996–97. For public

**Table 1.3. Percentage Distribution of Current Fund Revenues for Public Degree-Granting Institutions,
by Source of Funds and Institutional Type, 1996-97**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	<i>Federal Government</i>	<i>State Government</i>	<i>Local Government</i>	<i>Private Gifts and Grants</i>	<i>Endowment Earnings</i>	<i>Educational Activities</i>	<i>Auxiliary Enterprises</i>	<i>Hospitals</i>	<i>Other Current Income</i>
Research I	15.47	14.68	28.03	.48	6.42	1.03	4.38	10.13	16.59	2.79
Research II	23.95	11.03	39.58	.22	5.38	.82	3.19	13.11	0.00	2.72
Doctoral	23.44	8.48	41.94	.68	4.73	.75	2.21	11.72	.07	5.96
Master's	27.55	5.74	45.74	.61	2.14	.23	1.78	12.76	1.11	2.33
Baccalaureate	31.00	6.99	42.72	.75	2.58	.21	1.46	12.01	0.00	2.29
Associate of Arts	21.36	5.29	43.69	18.87	1.04	.08	.72	5.85	0.00	3.10

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 332.

Table 1.4. Percentage Distribution of Current Fund Revenues for Private Degree-Granting Institutions, by Source of Funds and Institutional Type, 1996–97

<i>Source</i>	<i>Research I</i>	<i>Research II</i>	<i>Doctoral</i>	<i>Master's</i>	<i>Baccalaureate</i>	<i>Associate of Arts</i>
Tuition and fees	13.1	24.0	43.8	53.5	36.3	46.7
Federal appropriations	0	0	0	0.7	0.1	0.1
State appropriations	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.4
Local appropriations	0	0	0	0	0	0
Federal grants and contracts	13.4	6.1	5.1	3.5	2.3	5.5
State grants and contracts	0.5	0.6	1.2	0.9	0.8	1.8
Local grants and contracts	0.6	0	0.2	0.1	0	0.1
Private gifts and grants	10.5	12.5	11.1	11.5	15	15.6
Investment return	28.8	29.2	16.3	13.6	29.4	11
Educational activities	3.9	0.3	4.4	0.7	0.5	1.5
Auxiliary enterprises	4.8	10.8	8.8	11.9	12.4	8.0
Hospitals, independent operations, and other	24.1	16.4	8.8	3.2	2.1	9.9

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 333.

degree-granting institutions, 4.6 percent of current fund expenditures were spent on student services in 1980–81. This grew to 5.0 percent in 1996–97. These data are presented in Table 1.5. Private degree-granting institutions spent similar percentages of their budgets on student services. In 1980–81, these institutions spent 4.4 percent of their expenditures on student services. By 1995–96, this figure had grown to 5.4 percent. These data are presented in Table 1.6.

As was the case with revenues, institutional type has an effect on the percentage of expenditures for student services. In 1996–97, the range for public degree-granting institutions was from 2.51 percent of current funds expenditures for Research I institutions to 9.84 percent at associate of arts degree-granting institutions. In terms of the actual range of dollars spent in 1996–97, baccalaureate institutions spent the least, on average (\$744 per student), on student services, whereas doctoral universities spent the most (\$861 per student) on student services. These data are provided in Table 1.7

Private Research I universities spent the smallest percentage of budget in 1996–97 on student services (2.9 percent), while private associate of arts institutions spent the most, 16.3 percent of their budget, on student services in 1996–97. But when the percentages are converted to dollars spent per full-time-equivalent student, a slightly different picture emerges. In actual dollars, associate of arts institutions spent the most per student, \$2,517, while Research II universities spent the least, \$1,390 per student. These data are summarized in Table 1.8.

One other pattern worth noting emerges from these data. On average and regardless of Carnegie type, private institutions spent more money per

Table 1.5. Percentage of Current Fund Expenditures of Public Degree-Granting Institutions, by Purpose, 1980–1997

<i>Purpose</i>	1980–81	1985–86	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
Instruction	35.1	34.5	33.7	33.2	32.8	32.6	32.6	32.3	32.1
Research	9.0	9.0	10.1	10.1	10.1	10.2	10.2	10.1	10.1
Public service	4.1	4.0	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6
Academic support	7.2	7.4	7.5	7.4	7.3	7.4	7.3	7.5	7.5
Student services	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.0
Institutional support	8.4	9.0	8.6	8.5	8.7	8.5	8.6	9.0	9.0
Physical plant	8.7	8.2	7.2	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.6	6.7	6.6
Scholarships and fellowships	2.5	2.5	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.9	4.0	4.3	4.4
Mandatory transfers	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2
Auxiliary enterprises	11.0	10.8	9.7	9.7	9.6	9.7	9.7	9.5	9.6
Hospitals	8.0	8.5	10.0	10.6	10.6	10.4	10.2	9.9	9.6
Independent operations	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 343.

**Table 1.6. Percentage of Current Fund Expenditures of Private Degree-Granting Institutions,
by Purpose, 1980–1997**

Purpose	1980–81	1985–86	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
Instruction	27.0	26.6	26.4	26.6	26.5	26.5	26.7	26.8	27.0
Research	8.5	8.0	8.1	7.7	7.5	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.7
Public service	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.4
Academic support	5.7	5.7	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.7	5.7	5.7	6.1
Student services	4.4	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.9	5.1	5.4	5.1
Institutional support	10.1	10.7	10.6	10.7	10.6	10.2	10.3	10.2	10.6
Physical plant	7.7	7.1	6.4	6.2	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.0	6.1
Scholarships and fellowships	6.6	7.5	8.7	9.2	10.1	10.6	11.0	11.3	11.4
Mandatory transfers	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.4
Auxiliary enterprises	12.1	10.8	10.1	9.8	9.3	9.1	9.0	8.8	8.9
Hospitals	9.4	9.7	9.3	9.4	9.9	9.8	9.7	9.3	8.5
Independent operations	5.5	6.0	6.1	5.9	5.8	5.6	5.0	4.9	4.6

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 344.

Table 1.7. Expenditures of Public Institutions per Full-Time-Equivalent Student, by Purpose and Institutional Type, 1996–97 (\$)

<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Research I</i>	<i>Research II</i>	<i>Doctoral</i>	<i>Master's</i>	<i>Baccalaureate</i>	<i>Associate of Arts</i>
Total educational and general	24,020	16,226	15,481	9,755	7,543	7,180
Instruction	8,085	5,945	5,837	4,337	3,039	3,403
Research	5,876	2,797	1,758	325	119	8
Public service	1,895	1,294	937	359	282	175
Academic support	2,332	1,732	1,636	950	792	619
Student services	817	764	861	785	744	754
Institutional support	1,609	1,330	2,090	1,208	1,074	1,143
Operation and maintenance of plant	1,550	1,163	1,135	920	785	725
Scholarships and fellowships	1,394	973	992	697	570	290
Mandatory transfers	463	229	235	175	140	64
Auxiliary enterprises	3,213	2,568	2,270	1,458	1,089	466
Hospitals	5,216	0	29	125	0	0
Independent operations	62	4	0	7	0	18

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 340.

Table 1.8. Expenditures of Private Not-for-Profit Institutions per Full-Time-Equivalent Student, by Purpose and Institutional Type, 1996–97 (\$)

<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Research I</i>	<i>Research II</i>	<i>Doctoral</i>	<i>Master's</i>	<i>Baccalaureate</i>	<i>Associate of Arts</i>
Total expenditures	79,240	30,398	23,803	14,494	17,141	15,490
Instruction	21,288	10,096	8,721	5,452	5,748	5,115
Research	14,776	2,956	1,454	247	146	103
Public service	1,819	305	1,101	227	125	71
Academic support	4,878	1,795	2,839	1,286	1,339	819
Student services	2,267	1,390	1,579	1,641	2,053	2,517
Institutional support	5,588	3,483	3,688	2,452	2,998	2,777
Operation and maintenance of plant	562	665	548	532	827	1,065
Scholarships and fellowships	527	565	559	462	880	554
Auxiliary enterprises	5,739	4,382	2,691	2,010	2,900	1,325
Hospitals and independent operations	21,796	5,301	623	184	124	1,145

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, tab. 341.

student on student services than public institutions did. This is true for other expense categories as well. In the final analysis, private institutions simply have more money to work with than their public counterparts do, the implications of which have been analyzed by Alexander (2001), who asserts that a two-tiered system of higher education may be resulting from this phenomenon. Without question, what emerges from his data are two tiers of compensation for faculty.

Selected Strategies to Address the Financial Climate

A number of strategies have been adopted by colleges and universities to address their financial problems. We shall examine several of them.

Using a Cost-Centered Approach to Budgeting. In this approach, a unit is thought of as its own revenue and expenditure center. In short, every unit or department “pays its own way” (Woodard, 2001, p. 261). This works best with auxiliary services, such as student housing or the campus bookstore, but it can be applied to other units in student affairs, such as health services, counseling centers, or other units that generate their own revenues. A variation of this type of budgeting is responsibility-centered budgeting, which makes each academic or service unit “financially responsible for its own activities” (p. 262). While this approach assigns responsibility to each unit for its financial health, it can also place units in competition with one another for resources on campus.

Cost-centered or responsibility-centered budgeting can be adopted simultaneously with the second strategy, moving various student affairs units off the campus general fund, defined as the tuition that students pay at private institutions or tuition plus state appropriations at public institutions.

Reducing Student Affairs Dependence on General Fund Revenues. Recognizing that there is wide latitude in how institutions define their “general fund,” moving student affairs units from being funded by the campus general fund to dedicated student fees and fees for service is an approach that many institutions use. As noted, this approach is often adopted in concert with taking a cost-centered or responsibility-centered budgeting approach. In practical terms, this might mean that a counseling center would be funded by a dedicated fee that all students would pay each semester and that additional fees would be charged to users of the center, perhaps after a certain number of free visits. The same approach could be used at health centers, where visits to see health care providers would be provided without charge, but students would be charged for laboratory or pharmacy services.

Outsourcing and Privatization. Outsourcing and privatization are other trends that are affecting student affairs specifically and higher education in general. Palm (2001) has identified a number of reasons that institutions are engaged in these activities, including to reduce costs, to free up resources for other purposes, and to obtain resources not available internally. Monetta and Dillon (2001, p. 31) conclude that “it is common, and in many cases desirable, to convey management responsibility for some campus services to a private partner when the benefits derived from the relationship outweigh the risks of continued self-operation or when the partnership is likely to enhance service quality or reduce costs.” Outsourcing and privatization provide different opportunities and challenges for student affairs leaders who administer these relationships with off-campus vendors. These trends are likely to continue in the future.

A variation of the theme of developing partnerships with off-campus entities is described by Askew (2001). She identified a number of partnerships that were formed by campus organizations and programs with off-campus organizations to enrich and enhance the experience for students and community members. Among these are the America Reads program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the Bridge to Hope program at the University of Hawaii, and the Blackburn Institute at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa.

Fundraising. Fundraising is an activity that developed as a consequence to the tightening financial situation of higher education and is a potential source of additional revenues for specific initiatives in student affairs. Jackson (2000, p. 610) observed that “student affairs programs now have the opportunity to help their institution finance projects that may not have been funded by external sources a decade ago.” He adds that student affairs staff should gain support for programs similar to the approach taken in academic affairs.

A Final Word

The financial environment in which colleges and universities function has been challenging for a number of years and is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. As a consequence, student affairs leaders will have to be creative and bold in their approach to generating adequate resources to underwrite their programs, services, and learning experiences in the future.

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