

Budget & Finance Committee Meeting of 6 May 2026: Minutes / Report

The Budget & Finance Committee last met on 04-02-2026.

Attending Committee Members (Voting):

Eric Kondratieff, Chair (PCAL, History)
Sophia Arjana (PCAL, History, At-Large)
Daniel Boamah (Alt., CHHS, Social Work)
Greg Ellis-Griffith (At-large, CHHS, Public Health)
Said Ghezal (At-Large, CEBS)
Jim Lindsey (GFCB)
Blair Thomas (PCAL, Poli-Sci)
Rui Zhang (OCSE, Chem. & Biochemistry)

Attending Committee Members (Ex-Officio)

Shane Spiller (GFCB, Faculty Regent, Ex-Officio)
Jakob Barker (SGA)

Absent (Voting and Ex-Officio)

Anthony Paganelli (Libraries)
Gordon Baylis (At-Large, OCSE, Psych. Sci.)
Pallav Bera (Alt., OCSE, SEAS)
Bud Fischer (Provost, Ex-Officio).

Meeting Recap

The Budget and Finance Committee meeting focused on determining leadership for next AY (Kondratieff to continue as committee chair) and updates from Regent Spiller and SGA Rep Barker.

Key Takeaways

- Kondratieff to continue as committee chair for next academic year (quorum vote was unanimous)
- The Board of Regents approved the P3 housing deal (\$350 million in bonds over 40-50 years) to address critical dormitory infrastructure issues.
- Hilltopper Hall demolition begins May 11th, with Hugh Poland and Douglas Keen demolition starting June 8th.
- New 1,000-student residence hall groundbreaking planned for early Fall 2028.
- Net tuition revenue increased \$9 million year-over-year (from \$119M to \$128M).
- Discussion of Student Fees and much needed accountability from Deans' offices on where fees have been spent.
- SGA Rep Jacob Barker transitions next AY to SGA Vice President; will appoint replacement rep for B&F committee.
- Discussion of concerns about AI usage in coursework and the need for better learning outcome metrics.

Action Items

Kondratieff	Identify potential faculty regent candidates and encourage applications for October/November election. Work with other committees to develop learning outcome metrics that account for AI challenges.
Spiller	Request provost's report on college fee usage breakdown (student support vs. administration vs. faculty) at next board meeting. Continue monitoring housing project implementation and student satisfaction metrics.
Barker	Appoint replacement SGA representative to Budget & Finance Committee for fall semester. Consider drafting SGA resolution requesting college fee accountability reports from deans.
Committee	Consider topics for next academic year's focus, particularly around learning outcomes and academic quality measures Explore ways to implement employability tracking as quality metric across programs
Faculty (gen.)	Consider implementing more in-class assessments, physical materials, and no-electronics policies to combat AI misuse Explore bringing field practitioners to demonstrate appropriate professional AI usage Consider shifting assessment focus from completion/correctness to understanding/application

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Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting called to order by Eric Kondratieff (3:45 pm)

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes from 04-02-2026

2. New Business and Reports (Faculty Regent and SGA Rep)

A. Planning for Next Year's Committee

Discussion of upcoming AY committee membership and leadership. Most members to continue (Jim Lindsey will have a new role next year; Kerron Josheph to join us in the Fall).

No one volunteered to take over chairship; Kondratieff to continue as chair after affirmative vote by committee (we had quorum).

B. Budget Updates and Analysis: Faculty Regent Spiller

- I. **WKU Campus P3 Housing Deal Approval and Implementation:** Spiller provided comprehensive update on the Board of Regents' approval of the Public-Private Partnership housing deal.

Details

- o Board approved \$350 million bond deal to address untenable housing situation; Student Life Foundation being dissolved
- o Deal includes bond insurance for better rating (BBB, potentially AAA- with insurance); models based on 70% occupancy rate vs. current 95%
- o Management now reports to WKU with metrics on student satisfaction; university has more control over rents and can offer housing scholarships
- o Phase 1 includes new 1,000-student dorm with restaurant by 2028; Phases 2 and 3 contingent on Phase 1 success
- o No E&G or state appropriation money used; funded entirely through student housing revenue and bond proceeds
- o State Capital Allocation Committee unanimously approved the project
- o **Kondratieff:** Asked about bond investment opportunity and deal duration; Spiller noted 40-50 years.
- o **Lindsey:** Inquired about Regents and Normal Hall renovation timeline; Spiller noted one might come online sooner than projected

Conclusion

- o Demolition begins May 11th (Hilltopper Hall) and June 8th (Hugh Poland and Douglas Keen)
- o Campus will look dramatically different by fall semester
- o Future cash flows will return money to WKU after bond payments
- o P3 Housing Deal addresses critical recruitment and retention challenges

- II. **Budget and Financial Updates:** Spiller reviewed the Q3 financial statement and upcoming board meetings.

Details

- o Net tuition revenue up \$9 million compared to 2025 (\$119M to \$128M), demonstrating success of net revenue focus over enrollment numbers

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- Expenses remain flat; personnel unchanged, fringe benefits up \$1 million (due to WKU's increased contributions to healthcare insurance)
- Spiller cautioned that most tuition has already been collected but expenses continue through Q4.
- Personnel actions include football coaching changes, but with no increases to assistant coach budget.
- June 5th board meeting will include budget approval; must be approved by CPE before July 1st
- Multiple Board of Regents meetings scheduled through summer (May, June, August retreat)

Conclusion

- Financial position improved with increased net tuition revenue
- Budget approval process on track for June deadline.

III. Faculty Regent Election: Brief discussion about upcoming faculty regent position.

Details

- **Kondratieff:** Asked if anyone volunteering for faculty regent position
- **Spiller:** In discussions with one person; election should occur October/November for December board meeting. New regent could attend November 6th board meeting as observer (as Spiller did five years ago). Offered to provide realistic job preview and continue working with whoever assumes role
- **Kondratieff:** Confirmed associate professors eligible but wouldn't recommend assistant professors due to time commitment and tenure concerns
- **Spiller:** Noted psychological challenges of role could include occasionally standing up to administrators.

Conclusion

- **Election timeline:** October/November for December board meeting start
- **Spiller** willing to mentor his successor as Faculty Regent
- Position requires tenure security due to demands and potential conflicts with admin, BOR.

C. Discussion of Academic Quality and Assessment (learning outcomes vs. enrollment metrics)

Details

- Spiller: Expressed concern that deans' performances are assessed only on recruitment, retention, and graduation but not on learning outcomes. WKU could become a "degree factory" if only measuring throughput metrics
- Noted also that assessment data exists for SACSOC and AACSB but expressed zero faith in online exam credibility due to AI
- Kondratieff: Recalled Gordon Baylis's having been at two other schools implementing RAMP budge models that had to refocus on academic quality after initial years of using metrics similar to WKU's RAMP metrics.
- Ghezal: Suggested employability and gainful employment rates as quality metrics, noting that strong programs that are nationally prominent pride themselves on post-graduation employment rates.

Conclusion

- Need to develop metrics for learning outcomes and academic quality, not just recruitment and throughput.
- Employability data could serve as one indicator of program quality
- Assessment methods need reconsideration given AI challenges (refer the above to AQ committee)

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D. SGA Report and Q&A w/SGA rep, Jacob Barker

I. College Fees and Transparency: Student experience with new college fees, accountability for spending

Details

- **Barker:** Students see fees as another cost w/o understanding benefits or seeing physical results of spending. Suggested publishing a report showing where tuition dollars go (percentage breakdowns)
- **Spiller:** Reminded committee that provost promised in previous board meeting to provide report on fee usage (student support vs. administration vs. faculty). He plans to request this report at next board meeting.
- **Spiller:** Clarified that GFCB fees pay for internship coordinators, advisors, and student trips, not the building.
- **Kondratieff:** Suggested SGA pass resolution requesting fee accountability from deans

Conclusion

- Students need better transparency on how college fees are spent
- Provost committed to providing breakdown report
- SGA should formally request accountability reporting from deans.

II. Big Red Backpack Program: Barker provides student perspective on the textbook rental program.

Details

- **Barker:** Students automatically enrolled each semester; program works well operationally: Students pick up books from bookstore week before classes using phone number. Better value for students with many required books (pre-law, PCAL, humanities) vs. STEM students who can buy individual books more cheaply (on, e.g., Amazon). While the program removes worry about editions, timing, and format, it may not be cost-effective for all students.
- **Kondratieff:** Asked about physical vs. e-book preferences
- **Barker:** Prefers physical books for notetaking; preferences vary by student and available technology (iPads)

Conclusion

- Program execution is effective but cost-benefit varies by major and student needs
- Students appreciate convenience but some find independent purchasing more economical

III. Artificial Intelligence Usage by Students: Extensive discussion on usage, challenges, and potential solutions.

Details

- **Barker:** AI usage normalized among students w/o stigma; first response to difficult topics is "ask ChatGPT." Students incentivized to get highest grades with least effort; AI is most efficient path currently.
- **Barker:** Some students use AI as tool (flashcards, concept explanation) vs. outright cheating (on which, he shared example of professor catching AI-generated homework that didn't match course content).
- **Kondratieff:** Expressed concern students are "spending money to not get educated" and won't be prepared for proctored graduate entrance exams (e.g., GRE, LSAT, MCAT)
- **Barker:** Suggested changing grading from completion/correctness to understanding/application. He also recommended in-class assessments, random questioning, no electronics policies, and physical note-taking. RE: random questioning, he described successful techniques, i.e. assigning pre-class article questions with calling on students randomly, which invokes "public accountability"; also, use "no devices" policy in classes.

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- **Arjana:** Shared success with requiring quotes with footnotes (AI generates fake publishers and publications) and Ethan Hawke video about AI lacking authenticity
- **Boamah:** Asked if curriculum teaches ethical/practical AI use for professional fields.
- **Barker:** Estimated 80% of students are well-versed in AI; suggested bringing field practitioners to demonstrate appropriate AI use to majors in their field. Shared his Chick-fil-A internship example where AI speeds menial tasks but doesn't replace critical thinking

Summary of SGA Rep. Jacob Barker's Remarks

- AI usage is widespread and normalized without stigma among a majority of students
- Most effective deterrents: in-class work, physical materials, random questioning, "no electronics" policies
- Need to teach appropriate professional AI use rather than just prohibiting it
- Assessment methods should shift from correctness/accuracy to understanding and application

IV. SGA Updates and Transition: Barker's final report as SGA representative to B&F committee.

Details

- **Barker:** Elections completed about a month ago; new Senate already sworn in.
- Transitioning to vice president role; will appoint replacement to this committee.
- SGA mostly closed for summer; preparing for fall and Master Plan involvement.
- Meeting with Dr. LaRoche about serving as student representative for housing issues.
- 60th anniversary of SGA; planning homecoming reunion event and launching alumni fund.
- **Kondratieff:** Thanked Jacob for service and wished him well in new role

Conclusion

- **Barker** successfully served committee and transitions to VP role
- SGA actively involved in housing transition and 60th anniversary planning

E. Summary of Challenges discussed in Parts C. and D.

- Measuring learning outcomes and academic quality across diverse disciplines while AI undermines traditional assessment methods;
- Online assessment credibility compromised by AI availability;
- Students using AI extensively without understanding long-term impact on skill development and professional readiness;
- Preparing students for professional AI use while preventing academic dishonesty
- Lack of transparency about how college fees are spent, leading to student frustration;
- Balancing enrollment/retention metrics with academic quality standards.

3. Meeting adjourned at 4:54 pm.