

TEMPLE ASSOCIATION OF
T A U P
UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONALS
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Why TAUP's Members Reject RCM, Part II: Specific Criticisms

In yesterday's [e-Bulletin](#), *An Open Letter to Provost Epps and CFO Kaiser: Why TAUP's Members Oppose Temple's Current Budgetary Model*, I articulated the broader reasons why our members reject RCM. Today, I'll look at their specific criticisms.

Let's first review the data from the numerical responses. One question that elicited very strong responses was, "I believe RCM budgeting has changed the way my department/program operates."

- Taking the bargaining unit altogether, only 4.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement and 64% agreed or strongly agreed.
- 83% of the tenure-track faculty agreed or strongly agreed, a significant number given the broader and deeper experience this group has in departmental and program budgeting.

So our members believe that RCM has had a significant impact. But how do they judge that impact? In a word, negatively.

- In response to "**I believe RCM budgeting over the past 3 years has made Temple better,**" **only 2.9% agreed or strongly agreed**; 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Again, the numbers from tenure-track faculty are noteworthy: 67% of them disagreed or strongly disagreed. NTT faculty, Adjunct faculty, librarians, and academic professionals had a higher percentage undecided, a function, perhaps, of the smaller role they play in fiscal processes. But even among these groups the percentage disagreeing strongly outweighed the percentage agreeing that RCM has benefitted Temple.

We also asked a question geared toward one of RCM's promised virtues—**transparency**.

- Responding to "I have experienced more transparency in the budgeting process with RCM," **only 6.7% agreed or strongly agreed**; 51% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Again, the tenured and tenure-track faculty were more decided in their opinions, with nearly 66% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Again, the other constituencies, though they had a higher undecided percentage, were significantly more likely to disagree than agree that RCM has increased transparency.

These numbers paint a stark picture of dissatisfaction with RCM. That picture is intensified in the discursive responses to: "*I have the following specific concerns about RCM budgeting.*" This elicited **130 replies**, and while some of the phrasing and foci may have differed, there was, again, a remarkable degree of uniformity. There were **only three positive comments**, and one of them then made it clear that the negatives far outstripped the gains. Many respondents decried RCM for:

- **Discouraging cooperation** between disciplines, departments, and colleges, since incentives have been ramped up to keep credit production in-house, though fairness obliges me to say that a grant I and

some co-investigators from Boyer, Paley, and Theater Film and Media Arts received from the Presidential Humanities and Arts Research Program is one example of an attempt to cut against this tendency.

- **Lacking the transparency** promised at its implementation.
- **Heightening pressures to up class size** beyond pedagogical viability.
- **Pressuring them to admit students** who lack the preparation or skills to thrive in certain programs, **to water down classes** out of fear of losing students, and to bring to market degree programs and certificates of questionable rigor.

The overarching complaint is that RCM has strongly accentuated a troubling trend found throughout academia to subordinate academic values to financial ones. The respondents acknowledge that money and fiscal prudence are necessary for Temple to succeed; but they clearly feel that RCM is putting the fiscal cart before the academic horse. Many pointed out the particularly raw deals given to Boyer, Tyler, and CLA by the “hold harmless” budgets, by specific formulae for assessments, and the lack of differential tuition; deleterious effects were also reported in CST and CPH. Many respondents worried over the devaluation of smaller and more labor-intensive programs over those that generate more revenue more cheaply.

Perhaps the phrase that best captures our members’ view of RCM is “dollar signs, not students”; it encapsulates the worry frequently expressed by our members that RCM is doing damage to our ability to perform our jobs as well as we would like for our students. It’s a phrase we at TAUP often repeat because it’s true: “Our teaching conditions are our students’ learning conditions.” We know what increasing class sizes will do to our ability to give our students the attention they need. We also know that when classes are packed with students in order to run fewer sections, it’s often our adjunct and NTT colleagues who pay the price. The workload of a class becomes more demanding, while their jobs are more vulnerable to being cut. How do we build a faculty to carry on the work of the institution if we are diminishing the number of work opportunities? Will efforts to increase graduation rates be undercut by the pressures that come with RCM?

We know, Provost Epps and CFO Kaiser, that you have sent out a survey of your own on RCM, though [we have not heard much about the results](#). We wonder how the responses from your survey compare with our findings. We know, too, that you have reached out to faculty individually and in focus groups; and that you have hired Deloitte to advise you as you review RCM. As you engage in preliminary data analysis and present your findings—the tasks identified for this Summer--we hope serious consideration is being given to faculty voices. We believe that ***RCM should be set aside as a failed experiment***. Whether or not this happens, we urge you to factor in the responses we have summarized here from faculty, librarians, and academic professionals.

In tomorrow’s e-bulletin, I will conclude with a few suggestions about RCM.

Steve Newman
President

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