

January 21, 2016

To: SUNY University Faculty Senate and Campus Governance Leaders

From: Tom Sinclair, Chair, Operations Committee

Re: Better Budgeting is Good Governance Report

Last year, the Operations Committee of the University Faculty Senate initiated a project to study the budgetary practices of the SUNY campuses. I am pleased to present the attached report that I co-authored with Chelsea Reome, a Masters of Public Administration student from Binghamton University. An earlier draft of the report was presented at the SUNY Voices conference at Onondaga Community College in March, 201. The report will be published with other Shared Governance papers in a SUNY Press volume in 2017 thanks to the drive and editorial leadership of Sharon Cramer.

The report contrasts a budgeting best practices framework for local governments promulgated by the Government Finance Officers Association with those employed by each of SUNY's four year institutions as well as 33 other institutions from nine states across the United States. We concluded:

...Most of the colleges and universities sampled within state university systems lacked transparency and best practice principles. There was a deficit of information regarding the budget process and stakeholder involvement, as well as minimal budget transparency made publicly available on the universities' websites. This held true for public universities both within and across systems. We also found that, regardless of structural or institutional arrangement, there was wide variation in budgeting practices between and within state university systems.

The Operations Committee hopes that you will be able to use the report to assess your own campus' budgetary practices and assist you in forming arguments that support transparent and effective budgetary practices as a tool for advancing strong shared governance.