I, Stephen Wester, being of sound mind and (reasonably) sound body, do hereby submit this narrative, which represents my thoughts on the three budget scenarios that FA was asked to evaluate. In the course of developing this document, I utilize enrollment numbers provided by the Associate Dean for Research (via Rita Delzer), financial information provided by BATO (via Margie Anunson), and the three sets of suggestions submitted to the Dean of the SOE (e.g., “Exceptional Education Department Ideas for Addressing Budget Crisis” – “The Edyburn Memo” – “C&I Cost Savings Proposals”). At the same time, however, while I am aware (as a member of the SOE) of both the Strategic Plan as well as Program Array, I did not consult either of these documents in developing this narrative.

This narrative represents my thoughts on the three budget scenarios that FA was asked to evaluate. While it was informed though conversations with individual FA members, it should be understand that it is my work product and as such suffers from the bias of my perspective. Further, I am a relative newcomer to UWM and therefore less able to analyze the history of the items mentioned in the documents. However, in accordance with the Dean’s instructions I did cover in brief pros, cons, dollar savings and risks of specific suggestions.

What follows is a list of each item mentioned in the documents, as well as my responses using the outline suggested by the Dean’s office. I focused on those with tangibles attached to them, and I offer these in no particular order. I have consolidated the narrative because many of the suggestions made in the three documents overlapped with others.

**Ed Tech**
The elimination of the Ed Tech positions was one of the suggestions strongly supported by individual FA members. In the context of significant budget reductions, individual FA members clearly prefer losing these positions to that of losing faculty or instructional positions. Therein lies the pro to this suggestion; the budgetary savings ($210,988) might prevent the loss of positions more directly involved with bring in tuition dollars. Yet, at the same time it is clear that (a) these positions clearly have their advocates within the SOE, (b) all four of the individuals in question have performed valuable services to the SOE, and (c) that service, and their overall duties cannot necessarily be assumed by other units on campus. Therein lies the con to this suggestion; other units on campus have been losing support and staffing to the extent that we would not be able to farm out the Ed Tech duties and receive reliable service.

**Conclusion**: Pros and cons aside, it remains unclear as to whether or not the SOE can support these four positions. Yet, perhaps the elimination of all four represents a significant risk given the degree to which SOE has come to rely on their services. It is possible, for example, that the four positions could be consolidated into one, the duties be more strongly defined, and outcomes be more concretely evaluated, without a significant loss in service. The risk of this, of course, would be that there would be a loss in services provided to students which would impact enrollment and/or retention.
Technology
In addition to the Ed Tech suggestions, two areas were identified as potential sources of savings. The first involved several PA positions aimed at supporting faculty in their online ventures. Savings from the elimination of these positions would be significant ($71,603). A potential con of this approach would be the loss of assistantship positions, as it was unclear to this writer who currently holds those PA positions. However, it seems as if the services provided by those positions are duplicated on campus; faculty might need to wait longer or look harder for them (through UITS for example), but it is preferable to losing instructional faculty or staff.

The second involved the elimination of the BATO IT support and a movement toward both “cloud computing” and individually developed work-required technology. Numerically, however, the BATO support is cheaper, leaving this writer to wonder as to the pros of this suggestion. UITS costs roughly $111K whereas BATO costs just over $104K. Further, BATO reports that it provides services not included in the UITS agreement – server and network support for example, as well as both hardware and software backing. Additionally, forcing individual faculty members to purchase and support their own platforms would produce significant cons, including (but not limited to) significant variability in the technology employed, and the applications afforded, as well as increased isolation of those faculty who may not be able to (or wish to) keep pace with technological advancements.

Conclusion: Although the SOE should continue to look for cost savings wherever possible, it would seem more cost effective to retain BATO IT services. Yet to be blunt it would seem the four tech positions identified in the suggestions could potentially be cut, with the services provided under those positions to be handled either through UITS or BATO IT.

BATO
A potential restructuring of BATO was another suggestion that was positively received by individual FA members. As was the case with Ed Tech, any loss of BATO services was seen by folks as preferable to the loss of individual faculty positions. Indeed, the cost savings would seem pronounced - $242,566, which is a significant pro to this suggestion. Yet, it is clear from the Assessment Report that the BATO services could not be duplicated for lower cost which means that those tasks BATO currently performs would have to either be subsumed into academic departments (already anticipating increased pressure due to staffing losses) or contracted out at higher costs – big con.

Conclusion: Historically, in times of budget crises it has often been the case that tension develops between faculty members and BATO, usually stemming from a lack of understanding of the respective roles played and disagreements as to the approaches taken. Yet it does seem that cutting ties with BATO would represent a significant risk, in that activities would then need to be contracted out – potentially at a higher cost which would be subject to future market-driven increases. In fact, while I tend to favor a more de-centralized approach to business services (with departments having responsibility for their own processes), after viewing the Assessment Report it seems as if BATO services could be expanded to include the business services currently performed in the academic departments and Dean’s Office.
**Leadership**

Two specific suggestions were made regarding leadership roles within the SOE. First, it was suggested that the UEDP Director position be eliminated and the responsibilities of that role be assigned to an Associate Dean. The rationale offered was the recent movements in the SOE to decentralize doctoral training by offering the Ph.D. within individual Departments. The salary and fringe benefits for two course buyouts and 1/9 summer allotted to the UEDP Director equals roughly $19K.

The second suggestion was that the four Associate Dean positions be significantly restructured, perhaps in the form of new duties more in line with our new economic realities or perhaps in the form of eliminating one (or more) of the positions so as to make us more consistent with comparable universities.

The pros of these suggestions are obvious; the savings from the position eliminations – about $19K for the UEDP position, and $50K per Associate Dean position – would be significant. Furthermore, restructuring the duties of any remaining Associate Dean would allow for the spirit of these suggestions – increased accountability, streamlining of services, closing of loopholes – to be met. The cons would be the disruption that would occur within the SOE during a contentious time in our history, as well as the increased workload for those Associate Deans which remain. The risks, frankly, are more hypothetical: would the SOE suffer if we move back toward a leadership model more consistent with a smaller, second-tier teaching institution? Furthermore, each of these individuals brings to the SOE their unique experiential set while we would be hard pressed to fully replace. The unintended consequences of eliminating or merging these positions would be the loss of these specializations.

**Conclusion:** It does seem that there needs to be a reorganization of the Associate Deans and how they contribute to the SOE need for instructional dollars. We no longer have the privilege of doing business the same old way. We instead must adapt, and therefore the duties of these offices – whether it is oversight, management of student needs, or research support, also needs to adapt. Furthermore, it does seem as if a more critical analysis of the four positions can be done (if memory serves it already is being done) in order to see what can be consolidated.

**Program Closure**

One of the more controversial suggestions made was that the Department of Exceptional Education be given a timeline for closing. This suggestion was rationalized by three converging trends: (1) students with disabilities are increasingly educated in the general classroom, which means the knowledge base needs to be more closely aligned with the preparation of teachers; (2) recent EXCED admissions have not been able to fill the cohorts at the post-bac, MS, or PH.D. levels; and (3) within 10 years, the majority of their existing faculty will retire.

The pros of this suggestion depend a bit on how it is implemented. A timeline for closure, for example, would give existing students and faculty choices regarding their future, while a more abrupt approach would not confer such benefits. Total cost savings of this approach – more of a merger than a closure while allowing attrition to run its course, would be $32K assuming we retain the ExEd support staff.
The cons would be a bit more esoteric. Certainly the loss of a concentration would impact our identity as a traditional SOE. In the words of one FA member: “How do we have a SOE without a department of Ex Ed?” Students would have to transition into other departments, and faculty in those areas would need to assume the duties formally held by ExEd members.

Conclusion: It is difficult to see how the SOE adjusts to the new budget reality without considering options such as this – whether it is at the level of the concentration, the department, or at the school. Enrollment trends are reshaping how we must do business so significantly that we may have arrived at the point of needing to suspend underperforming programs. The risk is that we become so focused on the bottom line that we lose sight of our constituents. Said another way, we need to consider long term as well as short term trends. If an enrollment drop is temporary, overperforming programs need to support underperforming programs (a common practice here in the SOE) so that critical populations be served. If the trend is obviously long term, harder decisions must be made.

Workload
Several suggestions were made in this regard. For example, it was recognized that movement toward a 3/3 teaching load is required by the current financial reality. Yet at the same time, many individual FA members recognize that the traditional unit-based approach to our instructional services is not enough to deal with our budgetary constraints. Merely adding another course to faculty calendars, for example, might not accomplish any savings if it is not paired with reductions to ad hoc expenditures or does not actually result in increased students services by faculty. Said another way, many individual FA members were less than sanguine about the increased teaching load having an impact on our budgetary woes given how, historically, it has been possible to “game” the system with buyouts or cross-listed courses.

Therefore, one of the more consistent recommendations made is that there by increased oversight with regards to the minimum number of students enrolled in a class. In effect, the goal would be to move away from seeing things in terms of classes offered and toward seeing things in terms of students served – with the unit of analyses being the number of students each individual faculty member would need to serve per semester in order to meet our monetary goals.

The pros of this are twofold. First, it would focus the allocation of faculty resources in the areas which attract the highest enrollment. Second, it would increase accountability within the SOE; faculty and/or programs with underperforming areas or classes would need to determine additional sources of revenue.

The cons, however, are in some ways mirrors to the pros. That increased accountability, for example, might result in the identification and closure of underperforming programs as well as the loss of affiliated faculty. Furthermore, the increased focus on high enrollment might lead to a decrease in instructional quality as well as a decrease in research productivity. Finally, it should be acknowledged that any such focus on over or under performing faculty/programs is likely to increase conflict within the SOE to the point that people might depart for, if not greener than at least different, pastures.
Another workload suggestion was that everyone (including administration and potentially academic staff) involved in the SOE take a hand in offering instruction to students. Indeed, if my memory serves versions of this are already being applied within the SOE. Courses that must be offered, yet cannot be covered by current faculty, are being contracted out to either faculty or staff in other areas who might have a calendar opening, an expertise, or a need to increase their student numbers. It was also suggested that: (a) that there be increased scrutiny of the SOE practice of offering buyouts for programmatic and administrative roles; (b) that there be increased scrutiny of the ad hoc expenditures; (c) that there be increased, and critical, scrutiny of submitted workloads to ensure that all instructors are following both the spirit and well as the letter of the changes to teaching.

The pros of these are significant. Having administration teach, for example, brings roughly $27K into the coffers, and ensuring that a program’s affiliated faculty are meeting the new numerical requirements regarding student enrollment before approving either buyouts or ad hoc expenses can only help reduce costs. Reductions in buyouts also produce savings (e.g., elimination of these for the UEDP Director position would produce roughly $19K). However, as before the cons are related to the pros. Increased administrative responsibilities on top of increased teaching requirements is rarely attractive, for example, so convincing folks to serve in those positions would be prohibitively difficult. Furthermore, the increased accountability over workload follow though, while needed in the long run, in the short run is likely to be contentious as well as finicky to the point of intrusive while also reducing research productivity.

**Conclusion:** I continue to believe that there need to be fundamental changes to how we conduct SOE business. While a pure profit/loss model might not be wholly appropriate for an academic institution, economic realities dictate that we consider a more fiscally-responsible approach. Difficult conversations need to be had, but more importantly difficult and potentially unpopular decisions need to be made regarding how we operate as a School. We need to increase our accountability to ourselves; yes, it may be the case that a minimum of 15, 25, or 30 students in a class is not feasible – but we no longer have that luxury. Folks have argued that, when an ad hoc instructor is paid $3500, there should be no reason that particular class loses money. At the same time, however, that $3500 should not be spent if faculty are not fully being utilized within both the academic program in question as well as the SOE. Greater attention must focus on a more appropriate unit of analysis, that is: what number of students each individual faculty members needs to serve in order to be fully contributing to the SOE?

**Parting Thoughts**

In the documents that were forwarded to FA review were several suggestions that I felt were more appropriately addressed at other levels - the elimination of copiers and the transition to a more digitally-based lifestyle. This seemed to be something better evaluated by others. IN the budget cuts of 2009, for example, the Department of Educational Psychology undertook a line-by-line analysis of their expenses and uncovered the significant expense associated with phone and voicemail services. Faculty voted that, in this era of email and cell phones, we could do without the university services. Individual departments might consider something similar when it comes to expenses such as copiers, innovative systems, and delivery of services.
At the same time there was a suggestion that the SOE take a more data-driven approach to budgeting, including the use of enrollment trends both locally and nationally, the employment of a budgeting model based more realistically upon an understanding of those trends, as well as the use of enrollment targets for specific programs. These would seem to be ideas that, while outside the purview of this review, bear more serious consideration. If we are to avoid the ongoing 2-year budget deficit-cut-grow-cut cycle we have been stuck in for the past decade we need to do a better job budgeting for our enrollments while at the same time mathematically predicting those enrollments. Resources can then be diverted to those areas which are growing, and those areas which are shrinking can make more informed decisions about their future (as opposed to having those decisions foisted upon them by external entities).

Furthermore, as we deal with this new reality it is important to remind ourselves that we are not McDonalds, nor is our job as faculty solely academic instruction. From my discussion with individual FA members it is clear that all of us value other aspects of our careers – activities such as research, science, service, and scholarship. Unfortunately, it is sometimes the case that more time in front of students (or an increased administrative load) results in a drop in both our publication rate, our citation index, and ultimately our impact ratings. As the importance of serving students-in-the-seats grows, therefore, we must not lose sight of innovative ways to grow our research identity. Moving forward I strongly believe that the SOE should consider some form of differentiated workload which would, when paired with accountability measures, meet the enrollment needs of the school while also supporting research productivity and service activities.