NEEDS YOU!

Demands on Cash revenue (in millions of dollars) totals outlining the greatest expenses and sources of Cooper Union's budget. Below are the overall sub-

1. Summarize the financial situation.

President Bharucha explained that the Cooper Union has a structural deficit due to an "unsustainable financial model" that was first implemented decades ago. As you may know, Cooper Union's greatest source of income is the rent collected from the Chrysler Building. In 1989, such rent was forced to be dropped and there has been a significant deficit every year since. The President has been conducting research into Cooper's financial past and has so far found that there has been a deficit even since 1960. He intends to research further to find out exactly how long the deficit has been accumulating.

For Fiscal Year 2011 (July 2010-June 2011), the Cooper Union was faced with a $16.5 million shortfall. Of the $60 million expense budget, this was a 27.5% deficit, which will only grow due to inflation. Only about 20 minutes into the meeting, President Bharucha decided to open the floor to a question of his own asking for suggestions, but was met with interjections from the audience. An alumnus called for a meeting between the Board of Trustees and the Alumni Association, while another pressed the President for information about the construction of the New Academic Building. The latter prompted the moderator to direct the next, unscheduled question to the President.

2. Why was the NAB built if the institution did not have the money for it?

The President responded that he could not say much before, when the school spends more than it earns, the money from which the institution can draw. As stated earlier, when the school spends more than it earns, the deficit must be taken from the Endowment. The $16.5 million deficit is 33% of this accessible endowment; and continuing at this rate would entail the depletion of the Restricted Endowment in 2-3 years.

To improve the quality of the financial model and to look to solutions to the current crisis, President Bharucha announced his plan to create a Revenue Task Force (RTF) composed of alumni, students, administrative chairs, and other key people. This RTF will collect and analyze ideas and "recommend specific mechanisms that can be counted on to achieve stated (continued on back)
7. Can you address plans related to expansion more specifically? How does a school in a deficit continue to expand? What are proposed plans for such a program? The claim was that there is a very high fixed cost to running a small institution. Because of this, the President had previously reported plans of expansion. Clarifying what he meant by expansion, the President said that he is not looking to grow in any huge way. Rather, he is simply looking at new programs to improve the financial model. A student suggested that Cooper look to research grants for growth programs. It is true that the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Education have awarded money to the Cooper Union for research and education in the past. Unfortunately, Cooper currently does not receive many of these grants. President Bharucha wishes to increase the number of grants that Cooper obtains.

8. We know that being honest with the public about our finances would discourage outside donations but alumni have expressed interest in donating if it means to save the school. Alumni just don’t feel that they have been informed and think that Cooper is stable financially due to the past president. Can the administration be more transparent to them specifically?

One spirited alumnus spoke, saying that many of the Alumni felt detached from the organization. The President’s response was to pronounce his willingness to become as transparent as possible in ways that are critical to the institution with not only the alumni, but entire Cooper community.

9. When the CUNY schools decided to start charging tuition in the middle of New York City’s financial crisis in 1975, its prestige and the people applying/enrolling drastically dropped. While Cooper may not have been founded with the principle of free tuition, that is what it has become known for. How do you plan to prevent what happened at CUNY from happening to Cooper? The only way to truly prevent this from happening is to prevent tuition. The President stated, “if we can come up with a reliable, new revenue scheme of the equivalent of $28 million by Fiscal Year 2017, we won’t need to charge tuition.”

After these nine questions and an hour of meeting, the floor was opened, allowing audience members to outright ask President their questions. Emotions ran high as students, alumni, and professors alike fought against the application of tuition and attempted to obtain answers from the past and for the future.

Afterwards, when prompted for his overall outlook on the success of the ESC Open Forum, the President had this to say: “I think it was very healthy. I think that there is a lot of pent up anger and concern and anxiety, it’s understandable. Free tuition scholarships have been central to the cultural identity of the school for a long time. I think we should do more of these forums. I think that it is healthy that people express themselves. I certainly would like the opportunity to communicate with the group as my thinking evolves and to hear people’s ideas.”

**Walk-Work-Act-Out**

**By Martin Lawless (ME ‘13)**

Classes took to the outside on Wednesday, November 2, 2011 as students in all three schools worked in front of the Foundation Building. The purpose was to try and raise awareness about Cooper Union’s financial situation by immersing our studies and art in the city by “symbolically removing the walls of the institution and demonstrating the real core values of the institution and its real relationship to the city” as the large sign posted on a column read. The notice also informed the crowd that “the relationship between the students, faculty, staff, and our work is integral to this institution and is currently facilitated by the ideal that created the full-tuition scholarship.”

Professors even joined the gathering as architect Professors Turnbull, Gersten, Miron, and Anderson performed student critiques, while Professor Wolf posed physics problems that students completed alongside Electrical Engineering and Advanced Calculus problems on chalkboards. Art Professors Day Gleeson, Nikki Logs, Mike Esse, Ben Degene, Yuri Masnyg, Robert Boyd, Sharon Hayes, and Dean Sasika Bos were among those holding class outside and supporting the demonstration.

During the Walk-Out, students received much attention from passersby often stopping to talk about the work in front of them or the financial situation at hand. In that respect, the Walk-Out was successful in both integrating Cooper into the community and raising awareness. The demonstration earned the attention of the media: New York 1 News conducted short interviews with the students and professors and aired a segment on Wednesday’s evening news. The extent of NY1’s coverage on the event can be found at http://www.ny1.com/content/top_stories/150086/students-protest-cooper-union-s-tuition-proposal. The very feel of the Walk-Out was upbeat as students were more than happy to complete their assignments and studies while supporting the cause and without creating too much of a disturbance. The space was shared amiably with no arguments besides those on how to solve a particular math problem. Coffee was sold to the participants; the proceeds found their way into an “endowment” pot. Afterwards, many students stayed to help clean up, keeping up with the theme of amicability.

I had a chance to talk to Joe Riley, a third-year art student and one of the many organizers of the event. He appreciated the turnout and the unity of the Cooper community in the face of catastrophe. When asked for his thoughts on what the next steps for the student body should be, Joe responded that “we are beginning to come together now and we really need to focus on doing that and finding our stance on [the issue].” He went on to say that “we all just need to work together to start finding what we can do as students and also figure out how we can pressure the administration to do what it has to do.”

What do you think that the next steps for us, as a student body, should be? E-mail your own response to cooperpioneer@gmail.com and a few select quotes will be printed in the next issue.

**Use Your World-Making Skills to Disarticulate the Neoliberal Tuition Model**

**By Taylor Hand (Art ’12)**

The title isn’t an exact quote from Wednesday night’s Art Student Council meeting, but the concepts were all out there. What began as a private and intimate conversation with Sasika Bos, the Dean of Art, evolved (as most conversations do these days) into a discussion of the current financial situation, with a focus on responsibility, past and present. Many students want to embrace the “Revenue Task Force” (which, it seems, we might prefer to call by the less aggressive title “Revenue Advisory Council”) as an opportunity to be an active part of the effort to keep Cooper Union alive as we know it. Yet there is still a strong current of opposing feeling, that solving a financial problem of this magnitude is not within the purview of the students.

Students want to contribute ideas but they cannot be a replacement for the Development and Fundraising Department. The invitation to join the art school in this meeting was extended to Dean Bos as part of an action meant to demonstrate student solidarity. Last Thursday, during the Dean’s office hours, about a hundred students from the School of Art quietly gathered in the lobby outside of the Dean’s office. Dean Bos was invited to come see us, and an impartial student representative (elected in the previous night’s meeting) read to her a statement agreed upon by the students (also in the previous night’s meeting). Rebecca Mosena (A’13) respectfully introduced herself and asked, “What can we do together to ensure the full merit based scholarship for every student from here on out?” then invited Dean Bos to join us for the meeting on Wednesday, November 2. Those who participated did so silently so that the demonstration would not be perceived as an aggressive act, but rather a physical expression of unity and commitment.

Wednesday night’s conversation ended with a charge to the students to use our real talents in this crucial time: restoring confidence in Cooper Union by being “as someone said” “the best damn art school in the country.” Concurrently, we can use our own work and ideas to construct the narrative of who we are, and not allow the President or media to steer our identity.