Opening Remarks:

The College is currently looking at strategies on financial aid and pricing for undergraduate tuition, due to the recession. In addition, the College is looking for opportunities to continue working on increasing transfer student applications and enrollment. In regards to Faculty and Staff, we look out to the next year without increases in salary and benefits. The College is looking at multiple budget models including several that could restore pension benefits, health insurance, and salary increases for both faculty and staff in future years. On a brighter note, donations for student scholarships have increased. However, there is much more work to be done on how the College strategically structures itself in the recessionary and post recessionary environments.

Questions asked by Staff:

1. How will the College seek compensation equity among faculty and staff? There seem to be double-standards for compensation for additional duties; faculty gets compensated, staff does not.

   Response: We need to look into some of those compensation practices.

2. What reductions are currently on the table?

   Response: It may not be possible to reduce existing operating budgets much further than we have; most budgets have not been increased for inflation over the past few years. Furloughs and reductions in faculty and staff salary pools are therefore being discussed.

3. What about reducing college financial aid for students who are on Pell Grants?

   Response: The pool of students who can pay for a private college education at Saint Mary’s and elsewhere has shrunk due to the recession and to demographic changes. Admissions are therefore broadening their approach so the College can enroll a good mix of students. Enrolling more than 25% of students who are Pell Grant eligible may not be financially sustainable as it currently stands.

   The Pell Grant is a “marker” for students who are needy. It is still uncertain what will happen with the Cal Grant this coming year, which could further reduce the
number of students able to pay for a Saint Mary’s education if funding levels are reduced.

4. There is a perception that faculty are not stepping up to the budget crisis in the same way that staff are being asked to contribute. Why can’t full-time faculty teach more?

Response: Numbers of full-time adjunct faculty and lecturers have been reduced and faculty work-load and class sizes are currently being reviewed by academic leadership.

5. How will budget reductions and efficiencies be determined? How do we audit these costs?

Response: Some of these audits have already been completed or are underway: Campus Ministry, Facilities Services, Human Resources, and Information Technology. These audits have provided benchmarking opportunities against other institutions. We do not currently have an internal audit function or a formal process to review all non-academic programs.

6. What role has the Administration played (or how will they play) in working to increase staff morale?

Response: The commitment of the President and Vice President for Finance in attending these types of meetings with staff and faculty is an example. Reductions in salaries and expenses have been and will continue to be across all levels of the campus. The President’s Cabinet and the Deans gave back 5% of their salaries this year. It should be noted that everyone is a valued employee.

7. Has the Budget Committee discussed the idea of asking for a percentage of savings from departments, letting each department determine where they will cut? And, has the Committee considered early retirement incentives?

Response: Departments/areas have been and will continue to be given the authority to meet the stated budget reductions targets necessary.

Not filling or re-hiring non-critical positions and retirement incentives are two strategies the Committee is considering. It should be noted that other institutions have offered faculty retirement incentives, but very few faculty have not taken the institution up on the offer. It should also be noted that the benefits (to the College) for faculty retirement incentives would not be immediately realized. Further, the College would not be able to re-hire critical staff positions which may fall under a retirement incentive option if it were offered to staff.

8. What is the strategic outlook for the College? Furloughs seem to be a short-term solution, how will we reduce or cut departments and/or programs that are outdated?
Response: The College is looking forward to positioning itself as a lean and focused institution in a post-recessionary environment. Some functions and departments have already been closed, such as Architecture & Construction and CLAM (Committee for Lectures, Art & Music).

9. If the College is considering furloughs and/or staff salary reductions, please provide concrete examples of how each scenario would work.

Response: We do not currently have the answers, however, furloughs for staff and faculty could buy the College time to evaluate future long-term reductions in other areas.

Closing Remarks:

Michael Viola, Chair of Staff Council thanked everyone for their attendance and great questions. He reminded everyone to e-mail comments, questions and suggestions to him (mviola@stmarys-ca.edu) or to Mel Hunt (mihunt@stmarys-ca.edu), Immediate Past Chair of Staff Council so that all staff concerns can be brought to the Budget Committee after the 1st of the year.