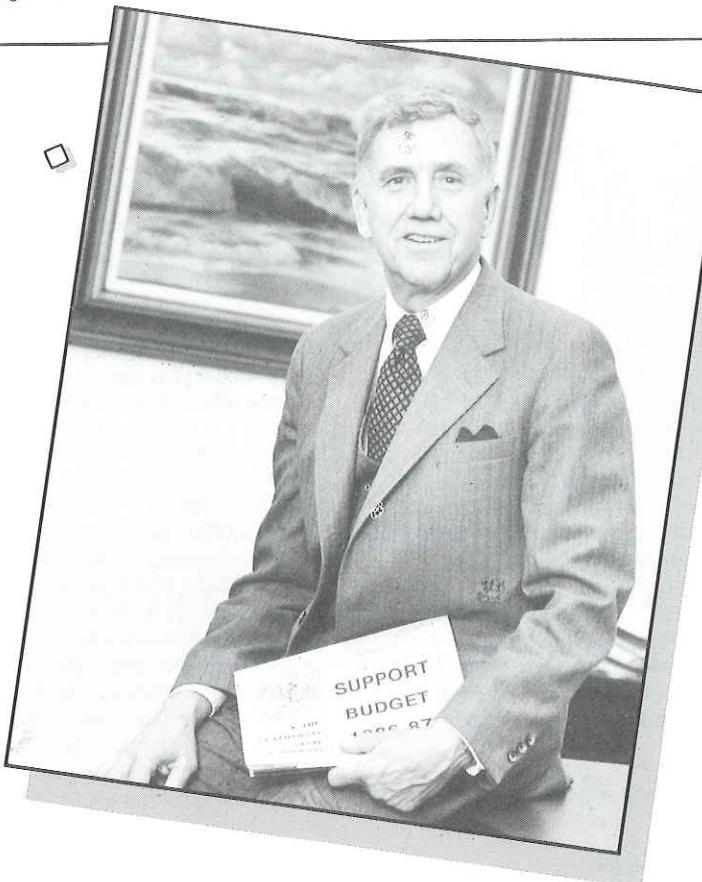


William Coughran

Director of Budget and Finance



Ask what it costs to run a thriving regional university that serves more than 17,000 students and William Coughran will be able to tell you. "Our operating budget was about \$100 million this year," says Coughran. "Next year it will probably exceed that amount." As the chief financial officer of the institution, he is responsible for developing an annual university-wide budget that encompasses virtually every aspect of CSU, Fresno.

Coughran admits that administering millions of dollars is "certainly a challenge. Our goal is to ensure that allocated funds are distributed fairly and utilized effectively so the university can deliver the best possible educational program," he says. "And then, of course, there is the PG&E bill!"

Coughran, who received both his B.A. and M.A. in business administration at Fresno State College, began his 30-year career with the university in 1949. "I was hired as the college's accountant," he recalls. "At that time there were about 2,500 students and maybe 90 faculty members. The business office — which included purchasing, personnel, accounting, and the whole finance structure — had a total of six employees."

During the next three decades, Coughran observed his alma mater evolve into a major state university. He acquired broad experience in university administration in such positions as housing director, personnel director, assistant director of business affairs, and assistant vice president for academic affairs.

Currently, as budget director, Coughran serves on the board of directors for the CSUF Association, the CSUF Athletic Association, and the Agricultural Foundation of CSUF. He is also a professor in the Department of Management and Marketing.

During the past 30 years, what factors best prepared you to be CSU, Fresno's chief financial officer?

The factor that has helped me prepare the most was having the opportunity to work in various areas of administration, which gave me some important insights into the university. Obtaining tenure as a professor of management was also helpful. After completing my doctorate in business, I went through the tenure evaluation process. That experience enabled me to understand our basic mission of educating students. A further benefit of the evaluation process was that it improved my relationship with the faculty. For example, now when I deal with the Faculty Budget Committee — or faculty leaders in general — I am able to empathize with their position. By the same token, I have earned some credibility. Now they believe that I understand what they are striving to accomplish. We can work together toward achieving our common goals. I hadn't counted on that process affecting my attitude to the extent that it has.

How would you define your role on campus?

The most important part of my job is developing the university-wide budget, which is used as a planning and control device to run the university. It is divided into four major portions — instruction/academic support, institutional support, student services, and athletics. After the budget is received, funds are distributed to those four areas, where they will then be broken down into sub-units. Then, throughout the year, our office is responsible for monitoring expenditures to ensure that the money is being utilized effectively. It is equally important that we don't overspend or show a lack of fiscal responsibility.

As budget director, what is your biggest challenge?

Trying to keep everyone informed about our fiscal picture is a big challenge. We are fortunate that President Haak has established an open environment. I would