

Statement on Faculty Compensation

Chase M. Billingham

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In our previous meeting, I remarked that the university's continued deferral on its pledge to address stagnant faculty compensation through its "market-based compensation" strategy amounted to a years-long campaign of "deferred maintenance" in the livelihoods of the people that make this university run. I would like to elaborate on that comment.

At the beginning of this year, Governor Kelly incorporated a 2.5% salary increase for all state employees into her annual budget. University employees were not included in that allocation; instead, she gave an additional \$10.3 million back to the state's university system. This amount was calculated to be equal to the amount of money it would take to give all of the state's university employees an equivalent 2.5% raise. Instead of fulfilling the governor's wish, however, the Kansas Board of Regents took all of that money and dedicated it toward deferred maintenance on university buildings. They then took an additional step of passing an additional order mandating that universities reallocate millions of dollars of their own money toward deferred maintenance of buildings. Most of that money at WSU is likely to come out of GU dollars, which is likely to push the administration's pledge to honor that "market-based compensation" commitment further into the future, thereby continuing to erode the standard of living of our severely underpaid faculty.

This is not sustainable. The failure to offer competitive compensation to faculty is the primary driver—not the only factor, but arguably the most important one—behind the departure of many of our best professors in recent years. KBOR has put the administration in a terribly difficult position, but simply saying that we will fund salary increases for faculty if and when we ever find an additional dollar at some point down the road is not adequate. President Muma said verbally that this is a priority of his, yet when he showed us the list of administration priorities for this academic year, it was nowhere to be found on paper. The faculty need to know that the administration takes this seriously.

Here is what I would like to propose. I recommend that the Faculty Senate issue a formal request to the administration to make a detailed presentation to the Senate on the status of its market-based compensation plan at a meeting later in this semester. Now that they have gathered data on the compensation status of every employee, it should be fairly simple for them to put together an analysis addressing this issue. I would recommend that the report include the following:

1. Data on the distribution of faculty salaries vis-à-vis their established market benchmarks, broken down by college and by tenure-track vs. non-tenure-track status.
2. The aggregate dollar figures that it would require to bring every faculty member, both tenure-track and non-tenure track, up to salaries at various levels vis-à-vis their benchmarks. This would include, for instance, the total number of dollars required to raise all faculty salaries to their respective market medians, the number of dollars required to raise all faculty salaries to their respective 25th percentile levels, and any other benchmark levels the administration deems appropriate.

3. The total number of dollars, for the sake of comparison, that the administration is anticipating they will have to reallocate out of university funds toward deferred maintenance of buildings over the next ten years. And
4. A plan that includes specific details about strategies that they intend to employ to find the resources necessary to address the glaring faculty compensation issues on campus. This might include, but not be limited to, new directed campaigns through the WSU Foundation, new efforts to persuade the Board of Regents of the pressing nature of the problem, and strategies to raise new revenues through tuition, fees, or any other relevant source that they find appropriate.

Faculty morale, faculty recruitment, and faculty retention hang in the balance. We cannot wait any longer. If there is appetite among the Senate for such a proposal, I would be willing to work with any other interested senators to take action on it.