

Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to "At Western Carolina University, Teaching Count\$," by Hal Herzog,
2/1/00

Hal's focus on salaries and merit raises was researched and bold. This is America, where open discussion of income is far more taboo than talking about sex or religion, so I appreciated his courage. Hal has picked up well where Henry Mainwaring left off last year.

If I go on to compare the inequities in merit raises in Academic Affairs to those in Student Affairs, I would likely detract from Hal's focused argument and his positively proposed solutions. However, I might spark some bonding between employees of the two divisions.

If I go on to research this infamous BD119 by asking a librarian to help me interpret the data, I might have to treat for depression after the librarian recovers from the shock of seeing these salaries in print. (My clinical experience suggests that viewing extremely low AND extremely high salaries can result in feelings of hopelessness and despair.)

If I go on to note that SPA employees (which are the majority of positions here at Western) saw their first merit raise in about a decade as a 1% one-time merit "bonus" two years ago, I would not only detract from Hal's message, but also possibly spark some EPA-SPA sparring, I fear.

If I go on to note that **we have countless hardworking, full-time employees in housekeeping, support staff, and physical plant positions who make an annual income of less than 3 times the RAISES** that some of the faculty in the College of Business received last year, I might be fired on the grounds that I was starting a revolution.

And if I conclude this response with the cliché "inequities are part of life" or "everybody always wants more money," then I am beyond cynicism and hope. And I'm not. We need to identify places where changes are possible and meaningful and then work for them. Open discussion is the start.

In the meantime, can someone tell me who is in charge of the bell tower carillon? I want to have the civil rights' classic "We Shall Overcome" added to the play list.

Kudos, Hal.

Chris Gunn, Counseling & Psychological Services

Teaching awards turn us into back-stabbing, ego-centric, and petty prostitutes. Abolish them and any salary determinations based on them. Whatever happened to "learning" as the principal criterion to measure what we and our students accomplish? Learning takes place when students seek to acquire new skills, knowledge, and abilities with the assistance of learning facilitators (us). What if, instead of spending every possible moment with students in the process of facilitating their learning, we actively sought teaching awards by doing the things it takes to win such awards? Here's a radical alternative to teaching awards and teaching salary supplements. Due to the inability of the university to measure learning (we don't even attempt it), why not use hours spent with students as a determination for salary determinations. Not hours according to classroom meetings, actual hours.

John Moore, Communication and Theater Arts