

# *Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning*

Responses to "Salaries," by Henry Mainwaring, 2/1/99

Many thanks to Henry Mainwaring for providing the comparative data on salaries and for bringing this issue to the fore. It's clear that there are inequities within and between colleges that need to be addressed. I followed Henry's advice and did look at salaries. I wish I hadn't. It truly was a depressing experience. It's demoralizing to know that there are assistant professors on this campus who have comparable experience and who work in comparable disciplines but their salaries range from the low 30s to the mid 60s (almost twice as much!). It's demoralizing to know that there are full professors with 25 years of teaching experience who are paid less than assistant professors with a few years of teaching experience. It's demoralizing to know that many of the faculty carrying the largest burden of the University's general education requirements are among the lowest paid on the campus. It's demoralizing to come to the conclusion that almost regardless of your performance, you'll get the same raise. Most people don't come into academe because of the money. But it's certainly a reason they leave. If Western wants to keep and attract first class faculty who are eager to take the University to the next level, it needs to address these inequities post haste.

**Anonymous**

Dr. Mainwaring's article precisely lays out a major problem facing WCU now and in coming years. We have had success (to some extent) in bringing young talented scholars into our ranks. However, due to the availability of superbly prepared and energetic candidates, we have insisted on standards clearly much higher than those by which older faculty such as myself were hired, tenured, and retained. The salaries of older faculty who have energetically developed and maintained their niches of expertise have (ought to have?) risen commensurately. They are not the issue here. Others, however--like myself--have become generalists, developing our talents in a variety of ways, not always particularly visible (i.e., extra department service, extra tutorial hours with students). I have not usually regretted my choice, and have in fact accepted that such a direction merits fewer raises and limited promotion. My primary concern was to benefit my students, my department, and the university as a whole. Yet I did find myself embarrassed in the last round of personnel considerations to be bringing new faculty into my department at a salary higher than I am presently making after 25 years here. Part of me says, "Well, time for me to go away. Clearly you are not competitive any more." Another part, however (and I hope the more rational) says, "You are serving a highly valuable role in the department. Why shouldn't you make at least slightly above what new hires are being offered?" The answer may be simply economic. Years ago I asked a new Chancellor why new Accounting positions were paying over twice those offered in my department. "They're worth it," I was told. "PhDs in your field are a dime a dozen." If market economics is the primary factor in salaries at WCU, I guess some of us older generalists SHOULD just go away.

## **An Older Perspective**

Thanks to Henry Mainwaring for taking the time to expose the gross inequities which characterize the distribution of salaries and salary increases at WCU. Regardless of what we know about the allocation of budgets, positions and benefits, there is something seriously wrong with a reward system that allows a faculty member to receive a salary increase (\$5,825) that is one third the entire salary of a part-time lecturer. Part-time "positions" should begin receiving yearly salary increases and the expedient, one-time increase every ten years should be reconsidered. **Linda Kinnear, English**

I strongly agree with Henry on salaries at WCU. I would, however, go further to suggest that across-the-board increases should outweigh merit increases. Merit is much too subjective, arbitrary and subject to abuse, as most of us have seen. If a person receives little or no merit raise, it sends the message that he or she has little or no value to WCU.

**Gary White, Geosciences and Natural Resource Management**

## **Responses to "Salaries," by Henry Mainwaring, 2/1/99, continued**

Henry'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. If I go on to compare the inequities in merit raises in Academic Affairs to those in Student Affairs, I would likely detract from Henry'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 data, I might have to treat for depression after the librarian recovers from the shock of seeing these salaries in print for the first time. 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" last year, I would not only detract from Henry's message but also possibly spark some EPA-SPA sparring. 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 that "inequities are part of life" or that "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. Bravo, Henry.

**Chris Gunn, Assistant Director, Counseling & Psychological Services**

Henry, you old pinko trade unionist, don't you know those profs with the real high salaries are working a lot harder than the rest of us--and their students are learning a lot more too.

**Bruce Henderson, Psychology**

I was disappointed that Henry's article didn't include information about the faculty of the library. The librarians are regular faculty but the university community keeps forgetting to include us as such despite the fact that we go through the same promotion, tenure and even salary increase process that other faculty do.

**Jill Ellern, Hunter Library**

Henry Mainwaring's "Salaries" essay is a first step in a conversation that could bring to public attention an aspect of faculty life that has remained undercover. Rewards (and other dysfunctional aspects of Western) will not be attended to properly until this "conversation" becomes widespread and public. As it stands, most faculty do not believe that such a conversation is even possible; the norm has always been not to raise such matters publicly. Western is a place where, according to William Bergquist, influenced by Argyris and Schon, we ". . . never or rarely encourage the disclosure and discussion of discrepancies between espoused theories and theories-in-use." This is true of both faculty and members of the administration, although the private conversations among faculty are often passionate and rich in understanding. Until many of us are willing to admit publicly that the espoused rewards and rewards-in-use are not compatible, and those responsible for salary decisions are held accountable, not much can change. Work is underway regarding the measurement of teaching, but there is much evidence to support the conclusion that well developed, existing performance criteria are often ignored. A classic article in my discipline that addresses both organizational behavior and rewards is Steven Kerr's "On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping for B." The title tells it all. As you can imagine, countless members of the faculty have approached me about Henry's essay, and virtually all of them have praised Henry for his initiative. I have yet to hear any arguments that support the salary disparities on our campus. As a result, a resolution concerning salary inequities will be presented to the Faculty Senate at its February 18 meeting. This resolution will enable us to examine where faculty salaries are at this point in time and to make recommendations where needed. Maybe Henry's article can facilitate a more public conversation among the faculty, department heads, deans, and others about justice and equity!

**Terry L. Kinnear, Chair of the Faculty**