



Faculty Forum

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Faculty Raises for 2001-02

There has been considerable confusion about the merit raises that were distributed for the 2001-02 academic year. Part of the confusion stems from inadequate communication from the administration, for which I wish to apologize to the faculty. In the future, each dean will send a salary letter to each faculty member outlining the process of distributing merit and equity salary increases. Part of the confusion stems from the complexity of the salary reporting process as it exists in the BD 119.

This year, every faculty member received at least \$625. This was considered to be a cost-of-living increase, not merit. Obviously, this did not cover the cost of living. In addition, anyone who was promoted to Associate Professor received an additional \$700 and those promoted to full Professor received an additional \$1,000. These have been the standard raises for a number of years and it seemed only fair to continue this. Therefore, all those promoted received one of these amounts as a form of merit pay.

In addition, it came to my attention very late in the salary process (October) that, after allocating funds for promotions, we had almost \$28,000 left that could be distributed to the faculty as merit and/or equity allocations. These funds came from positions that were used for part-time faculty and graduate assistantships and from full-time positions that were not eligible for raises (e.g., new hires). Unfortunately, we only had a few days to decide how to allocate the funds and who to allocate them to, as the salary information had to be submitted for payroll purposes.

The deans and I decided to handle merit pay the way it is always done, by reviewing the results of the annual faculty evaluation process. The deans had just a few days to review the AFE's and decide which faculty members were especially meritorious or had obvious equity issues (with the proviso that someone with an equity issue had to be meritorious, as well). We decided that merit pay would be allocated on the formula of \$600 for Assistant Professors, \$700 for Associate Professors, and \$800 for full Professors. Forty-one faculty members were given a total of \$27,800. Only 5 of the 30 academic department heads, spread across three colleges, received any of these funds. In the College of Business, the number of departments was reduced from 6 to 4. The administrative stipends were redistributed to take into account the changing sizes of the departments, without changing the total dollar amount allocated in the college. One faculty member received merit pay and promotion to full Professor. Other than him, the people receiving merit raises got \$1225, \$1325, or \$1425 (including the \$625), depending on their rank. The BD 119 is confusing in that it lumps all of the raises into one column. Therefore, those who received funds for promotion or revised stipends based on restructuring of departments could be perceived as receiving the additional merit allocations.

In regard to swearing someone to secrecy, I hope that didn't happen. I have often said that there are no secrets in a university--it is only a matter of time before everything is known. Unfortunately, some of that which is "known" is rumor or conjecture. I believe that openness helps to reduce misinformation, and, again, I apologize that we weren't proactive enough in

sharing information with the faculty. Obviously, all faculty salary information is available every year in the BD 119, but it is not the easiest document to interpret. In the future, the administration will make sure that faculty members who wish to know more about the salary process and its outcomes will not have to plow through this document unaided to find the information they need.

Let me close by saying that the Chancellor, the deans, and I take the salary problems on this campus very seriously. I received an email from Hal Herzog concerning my piece in the last Faculty Forum. With Hal's permission, I am sharing a portion of his communication. He said, in part, "I appreciate your thoughtful response to my Faculty Forum piece. As part of my research for the article, I looked at your charges to both of the Faculty Senate task forces on salary issues. . . .It is clear to me that your charges to the committees reflected a sincere desire on the part of the administration to get faculty input into salary issues. . . .As you point out, salary problems at WCU are difficult given both external and internal constraints. I am glad to see that you and Chancellor Bardo are taking the issue seriously."

I appreciate his remarks and wish to say in response that I still wish for faculty input into the merit pay process, as well as the equity issues that continue to plague us. I look forward to working with the Faculty Senate in the coming year to continue the dialogue and to search for solutions.

Rick Collings, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

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