

SALARY SURVEY 2006

**BSU FEDERATION
OF TEACHERS**

AFT LOCAL 3537

WHY NOW?

It is a matter of historical accident that the BSU Federation of Teachers was reconstituted and rechartered at a time when the University is experiencing unprecedented growth. It is, however, a fortunate accident. One of the traditional functions of a professional union is to provide oversight by initiating independent analyses and evaluations of a shared body of data. In keeping with this tradition, we are pleased to release this, our first annual University employee salary survey.

We are neither so self-interested nor so naïve as to regard monetary compensation as the only, or even the leading consideration when it comes to assessing the overall condition of the University, which is our central concern. Salaries (and in particular, faculty salaries) are just one element in the comprehensive financial picture. But seeing clearly how this element figures into the larger picture can reveal otherwise unnoticed values and trends that affect the long-term health of the institution.

THE SURVEY'S DATA

The data source for our survey consists of four spreadsheet files that were provided directly by the Office of the Vice President for Finance and Administration. These are the “books” that the University enters into the public record and submits to the State Board of Education. The files contain employment information for every employee whose salary includes funds appropriated by the legislature (with one notable exception discussed below). The time period covered is FY04 to FY06.

The files were audited by Kay Allen, who has contracted with the State Board of Education to perform similar audits of the books for all of the state’s four-year institutions. Ms. Allen has some twenty years of experience in analyzing the financial records of colleges and universities, many of them much larger than BSU. Her audit produced seven reports; a State of Idaho Four Year Public Institutions

audit for FY02 to FY06 was also included for purposes of comparison.

SURVEY SUMMARY

The complete reports can be viewed at www.boisestate.edu/bsuaft. Unlike the records on which they are based, the reports contain no individual names or other identifying information.

We regard the following findings to be particularly salient.

1. Incomplete records

Ms. Allen notes in several reports that the records provided by the University are substantially incomplete in various respects, sometimes making authoritative analyses impossible. This fact should be disconcerting to University employees, students, and taxpayers alike. Fiscal accountability requires accuracy and thoroughness in data collection. There is no reason why the University's bookkeeping practices should inspire anything but the highest confidence.

A second, and perhaps more telling respect in which the records are incomplete is this: they contain no employment information regarding adjunct faculty. The union understands that there are likely additional practical challenges in keeping records on non-permanent faculty and that custom might excuse the exclusion. However, such records must exist, and we see no compelling reason to keep that information separate from the employment data for full-time employees. Indeed, we urge the University to assume a position of leadership on this issue and to acknowledge the crucial service adjuncts provide by integrating the two sets of books.

2. Stagnant faculty salaries

There are no surprises in the reports concerning faculty salaries. The average salary for all full-time faculty at BSU in FY02 was \$53,300; in FY06, it was \$53,800. Compare those numbers with the University of Idaho's: \$57,500 (FY02) and \$60,900

(FY06). In light of the increased cost of living in the Treasure Valley in recent years, the modest rise in the BSU average salary actually represents a diminution in real purchasing power. Equity funding will begin to address this problem, but it will fall far short of solving it.

Another noteworthy set of figures relates to issues of recruitment and retention. From FY02 to FY06, BSU faculty at the rank of Professor and Assistant Professor saw an average salary increase of 6.8%, while those at the rank of Associate Professor saw only a 1.8% increase. These figures are consistent with broad strategies of alleviating upper-end compression and inversion as well as recruiting high-quality faculty. Nonetheless, the disparity is striking and stands in need of explicit justification.

3. A top-heavy structure?

Sustainable growth depends on balancing critical needs and resources. We fear that the current trajectory will produce a University that is less capable of meeting student needs.

One bit of evidence for this is the ways in which the financial “pie” has been divided in recent years. In FY04, a fraction over 43% of the University’s total outlay went to faculty salaries; in FY06, not quite 41% of the pie went to faculty. Classified staff also got a smaller piece, dropping from 20.3% to 19.3% of total expenditures. At the same time, administrators received a larger helping: executive spending increased from 4.0% of total outlay to 4.2%, and managerial spending increased from 32.7% to 34.7%. One cannot make confident predictions based upon such a small sample, but if the trend holds, front-line student services will have been exchanged for administrative office positions. We believe that this trade-off is inconsistent with the University’s core mission.

A second disturbing trend is an increasing student-to-faculty ratio. In the Fall Semester of 1999, BSU had the highest ratio of full-time-enrollment student to full-time faculty of any of Idaho’s institutions of higher education (including the three 2-year colleges)

at 23.0:1. (LCSC was second-highest among 4-year schools at 19.0:1; UI was at 12.6:1.) In the Fall Semester of 2005, the picture was no better for BSU at 23.5:1. (LCSC was again second-highest at 18.6:1; UI was at 15.8:1.) BSU is lagging far behind her sister institutions when it comes to providing students with courses taught by regular faculty and (therefore) is far too reliant upon adjunct instruction.

CONCLUSION

Boise State is experiencing severe growing pains. Enrollment is under control, but the existing classroom space has long been inadequate. Additional office and lab space is desperately needed. It will take several years to catch up, but we commend the administration for addressing the space issue directly and aggressively.

But other aspects of the University's infrastructure are being stretched to their limits. Library holdings are not nearly what they ought to be for a research university. Travel support for conference commitments is offered on a competitive basis, when it ought to be available as a matter of course. Promising research is sidelined in favor of off-contract teaching, just to make ends meet.

Further, we are concerned that the available evidence suggests (though doesn't conclusively show) that front-line student services are being eroded by undue funding of administrative posts. There is no doubt that the University needs attentive, competent leadership during this time of transition; however, there is a genuine risk that the "scaffolding" that facilitates rapid growth will permanently obscure and overshadow the intended finished edifice itself.

We have no reason to believe that University officials are ambivalent toward overcrowded classrooms and substandard faculty salaries. However, we fear that quick-return projects lying on the periphery of the University's core mission are being pursued with greater vigor than are genuine solutions to the more familiar and long-standing problems.

We hope our next annual survey delivers a more upbeat report.

BSU FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

AFT Local 3537

2006-07 Local Officers:

- Dr. Tony Roark, President
- Dr. Robin Allen, Vice President
- Dr. Lynn Lubamersky, Treasurer
- Dr. Nick Miller, Secretary

Mission Statement of the AFT

The mission of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, is to improve the lives of our members and their families, to give voice to their legitimate professional, economic and social aspirations, to strengthen the institutions in which we work, to improve the quality of the services we provide, to bring together all members to assist and support one another and to promote democracy, human rights and freedom in our union, in our nation and throughout the world.

Benefits of membership

- Solidarity with fellow BSU faculty
- Legal services
- Insurance plans available (life, disability, home, auto)
- Mortgage and loan services available
- Discounted products and services through national retailers

Dues

Tenured and tenure-track faculty: \$8 per pay period
Adjunct faculty and special lecturers: \$3 per pay period

To join, contact Lynn Lubamersky: llubame@boisestate.edu



A Union of Professionals

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