Faculty Compensation: Thank You

The figure below shows the 10-year evolution in University populations (administrators including those with faculty rank, full-time and part-time instructional faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and staff) measured relative to a 2001 baseline. All data come from the University’s Office of Institutional Research factbook.

The increase in the number of students and administrators represents growth in the Clemson enterprise. However, over this 10 year evolution, the number of instructional faculty has remained constant (or even slightly declined). The effect of a larger number of students on faculty workload is rather obvious. The increase in the number of administrators also signals increased load inasmuch as the uptick in administrator numbers can signal increasing regulatory requirements. Those administrators not associated with regulatory burdens often signal other initiatives with increased faculty obligations, requirements, and participation.

In short, Clemson faculty are doing more. Given the uncertain economic and austere fiscal
climates of the past few years, faculty have been doing more for less compensation in real terms. While Clemson faculty avoided the fate of many workers during the Great Recession, it is nevertheless the case that the University still sits in a competitive national and international landscape, and that economic security concerns represent recruiting and retention challenges. I’m sure those challenges became clearer to the Board as it reviewed the Huron report’s market comparisons.

We thank the Board for its careful consideration of the Huron report, and for its commitment to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding Clemson faculty on a competitive market basis subject to appropriate performance. I am also grateful to the University administration for encouraging and supporting the collaboration of the past, present, and future Senate leadership in the development and implementation of this performance-based market-targeted compensation process.

**Impact of Growth**

I know that the Board has expressed some concern about the distinctive character and quality of the university given historical growth. I would offer to the Board three comments from my perspective.

First, whatever growth has occurred, the recent compensation process is another example of how Clemson remains a distinctive institution in its realization of a model of shared governance and leadership.

Second, the Senate has not expressed any concerns about the quality of education delivered by our faculty or the “small feel” of the University. How is this possible if faculty numbers have remained flat, but numbers of students have not? Faculty are employing a number of strategies: common freshman courses for majors, physical common study space in academic buildings, 4-year contiguous advising, participation in living-learning communities, involving small groups of students in scholarly/creative activities, and hiring the right faculty. I have seen first hand how these efforts promote close knit relationships between students, and between students and faculty. Parents of prospective and graduating students alike comment to me frequently on the unique welcoming family feeling of the campus that they easily sense in even short and infrequent campus visits. I believe our distinctive character remains intact.

Third, there are some faculty voices concerned about administrative growth over the past 10 years. Specifically, their concern is that this is an organic expansion of administration and concomitant stretch of scarce resources with no productive ends in the core academic enterprise—essentially an analog of the well-known phenomenon observed in urban studies where growth of municipal employees significantly outpaces population growth. I would assure the Board that this is a common concern of faculty nationwide and not just a Clemson phenomenon. At this time, I believe that faculty need to better understand how much of this growth is driven by regulatory requirements before drawing any conclusions.
Huron Report and Other Initiatives

The Senate is also at work addressing other recommendations in the Huron report. I sensed the Board took a particular interest in the idea of a University Professor title that would recognize and reward our excellent senior faculty, and in the idea that these University Professors would have a special relationship with or receive special recognition from the Board. The Senate Policy Committee is currently working on a draft of such a title, and I hope they might be able to provide that to you for your review and comments before the end of the academic year.

The Senate is also working to address areas of concern identified in the recent 3rd party COACHE survey of faculty. These concerns primarily relate to benefits, mentoring, and professional development. I thank Provost Helms, Associate Provost Aziz, and Vice Provost Jackson for their support in these ongoing efforts.

Finally, I would note that Board members can more closely follow the workings of the Senate via our monthly electronic newsletter, which is conveniently available at: http://www.clemson.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/president-newsletter.html

Respectfully submitted,

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