FY 2012 Salary Issues – Perspectives from the Iowa State University Faculty

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It is clear that the declining state appropriations have significantly impacted the Iowa State University Faculty during the last several fiscal years. The declining support has resulted in reductions in salaries through mandatory furloughs and also decreases in benefits; the average decrease in base salary for FY 2010 varied from 1.5 to 3.1%, depending on base salary. In FY 2011, the average adjustment in salary was 0.0%. Faculty salaries for the Peer 11 group increased 0.0 to 2.5% during the same period.

Faculty salaries at ISU continue to remain at the bottom of the Peer 11 group. The largest discrepancy between Peer 11 salaries and ISU is for Faculty with the rank of Full Professor. While Assistant and Associate Professors fare somewhat better, their salaries remain below the mean salary of the Peer 11 group. There is also considerable variation among colleges and Faculty in the College of Business and the Faculties of humanities and social sciences within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences have the lowest salaries when compared to the Peer 11 group.

One important ISU policy that has been adopted (14 January 2011) was the policy describing how salary adjustments will be made. This policy was an excellent example of shared governance and Faculty were consulted during the development of the policy and Faculty suggestions were generally included in the final policy. This policy provides a consistent rationale for salary adjustments and includes descriptions for adjustments based on performance, market or equity issues, and retention. Importantly, the policy describes a minimum salary adjustment. However, these adjustments are based on available funds which at this time are limited at best.

Another consideration contributing to Faculty dissatisfaction are additional costs that have been added such as co-payments for the health benefits. Given the poor position that ISU has within the Peer 11, there is an increasing concern that Faculty will seek better opportunities elsewhere. In many instances, the Faculty who will be recruited by other universities are prominent members of the academy who have demonstrated exceptional abilities. Losing Faculty of this type will have a significant impact on ISU. While there is not at present a mass exodus of Faculty, a number of Faculty have left creating the potential for significant problems in fulfilling the land grant mission.

Of greater concern is the possible erosion of Faculty morale. Anecdotal information suggests that all that has been previously mentioned in this report likely contributes to a declining morale. There is a pervasive sense amongst the professoriate that the excellent work conducted by the ISU Faculty is not understood nor appreciated by the people of Iowa and,
particularly, legislators. The Faculty at ISU are dedicated to teaching, research and extension/outreach and making significant contributions to the Iowa economy. The land grant mission is still an important consideration for Iowa and ISU faculty are dedicated to fulfilling that mission.

The students who graduate from ISU are the most important contribution to the Iowa economy and ISU Faculty remain stoic in their dedication to education despite the budgetary issues resulting from declining state appropriations. Recent success in attracting more students is important from an economic perspective but also has contributed to concerns expressed by the Faculty. Higher student enrollment and fewer Faculty has resulted in larger student numbers in classes, fewer courses being offered and fears that the quality of the education will be compromised. Recall that Faculty typically have two and possibly more responsibilities to fulfill; in addition to their teaching responsibilities, it is important for Faculty to maintain their successes in scholarly research and extension/outreach as well as obligations for service.

In summary, ISU Faculty have not received significant salary increases for the last several fiscal years. Faculty morale is not good and appears to be declining. Job satisfaction reflects the economic climate as well as the additional stress resulting from increased student enrollment compared to faculty numbers. Given the status of ISU Faculty salaries in our Peer 11 group, the likelihood that ISU Faculty will be seeking opportunities elsewhere is increasing which will have a significant negative impact on the academy. It is imperative that there is an increase in Faculty salaries in FY 2012.