

Questions for Provost/President
Session 1 on 2_21_13 Faculty Senate Meeting

1. Faculty are continually asked to “do more” without any additional compensation, additional resources, or administrative support. An active research agenda is difficult to pursue, achieve, and maintain with a 4/4 teaching load. When is the administration going to be supportive of the faculty and allow manageable teaching loads? I have been teaching here for more than 20 years and I have never seen the faculty moral and burn-out as bad as it is now.
2. Salary comparisons of faculty across all ranks at VSU as compared to other USG universities and comparable institutions are much lower on average. In addition the salary compression is becoming a real issue since the last salary adjustment was primarily for the rank of professor over six years ago. Are there plans for salary increases across the ranks and more importantly, does merit count for anything in such adjustments (i.e. productive faculty members)?
3. Clearly, faculty do not enter the field of higher education to get rich quick. That said, we have bills to pay, families to support, and so forth. The university is facing financial constraints, but we are too. When can we reasonably expect a raise in our salary?
4. Given we have had no raises in 5 years, our inflation-adjusted pay has fallen 10% during that time, and our take-home checks will fall an additional 2% this year with the end of the payroll-tax holiday. Are you aware that most faculty salaries at VSU come directly from tuition and are not state-budget line-items, and thus “locally” funded? We have had at least \$2 million of surplus local funds annually in recent years, and these have been spent on purchasing expensive equipment, but not a penny for raises. As VSU faculty salaries continue to be less and less competitive, how will you go to bat for us with the BOR on this issue?
5. This is my 4th year teaching at VSU. Each year I have LOST money by electing to stay employed here (no raises but insurance rates increase; this year a 2% social security increase). My peers from graduate school (who are scattered throughout the region) have gotten raises each year despite the economic recession in their states and at their institutions. The monies that are spent at the end of the year here at VSU on frivolous purchases when faculty continue to go without raises is unconscionable. I love teaching at VSU but I have a family to support and student loan debt to pay back. Can you tell us

if this is going to change soon, if not, I have to go back on the market to find a job where I can at least NOT LOOSE income each year.

6. Additional Social Security taxes paid to the federal government reduces take home pay and there hasn't been a raise in quite a while. Do you anticipate a raise for faculty anytime soon?
7. The reimbursement issue; it is a colossal problem; what steps have you, President McKinney, taken to ensure that our scholarship is not jeopardized by a most-vexing bureaucratic procedure? Related question: are you aware that an increasing number of faculty have a conspiracy theory about this? Namely, that the BOR is encouraging our frustration and hopes that fewer and fewer of us will apply for funds for travel. Is this not a travesty? How is the SACS going to like it when they find out that faculty travel and presentations are down? How are they going to like it when they find out the number of study abroad programs is down because of this onerous bureaucratic procedure? What is going to happen to the reputation of our school when word gets out that faculty are less scholarly and that students have fewer opportunities?
8. VSU has released nothing about the murder on campus. I have a night class and a couple of students were asking if it was safe to be on campus.
9. We had a meeting today in my department and some faculty were wondering about the status of the investigation on the student that died at the end of last year. They are concerned about how safety is managed in campus and they feel there is not appropriate/administration communication with the public. If there is anything being done on preventing and/or raising awareness to whatever it is that happened, they would like to know.

Answers to Question to Provost
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1. Questions addressing why haven't we received raises, when can we expect raises, don't you realize our salaries are low?

Dr. McKinney addressed the Faculty Senate through Skype. He is very aware of the fact that no one at VSU has seen a pay raise, in fact no public employees in Georgia has seen pay raises. Politically speaking he doesn't anticipate anything coming out of the Legislature or State House authorizing raises in a big sense. Does not anticipate any public entities like USG getting an increase in their appropriations earmarked specifically for raises. That being said, he laid out some background as it relates to some of the questions as they were written. Very much aware that for the last several years VSU has had a rather large operating surplus at the end of each fiscal year. This is a sign that as an institution we are financially healthy – on the other hand – when you run those kind of surplus' annually for a number of years that tells anyone that is objectively looking that we are right for some budgetary renormalization or reallocation. One of the things that I will be directing along with the new Provost to do in consultation with Financial Affairs, the Faculty Senate, Department Heads and Deans is to look at some kind of broad scale renormalization of budgets. We should not be in a position where we are making a mad dash to spend money at the end of the year because if we don't spend it we will lose it. That is money that we should be able to put frankly into your hands. We are one of only 5 USG institutions to have an A1 bond rate. We have a very high bond rating. We are financially secure. We are looked at by the USG as one of the best institutions in terms of how we are financially run. Because of that I am directing both Academic Affairs and Financial Affairs to conduct a marketing analysis that takes into account how far behind in terms of market numbers our faculty and staff's salaries have fallen. We will take that into our budget planning process – as we work our way up to the system office in March and have our annual budget hearing. No guarantees, but my hopes and plans are that we begin to invest more into all of you. It is not across the board – but what I hope to do is to phase it in over the next two to three years marketing sustenance so that we claim some equity back to the way our salaries look.

Dr. McKinney stated he would be happy to answer anything as a follow up or to clarify that.

Tracy addressed Dr. McKinney with a follow up: It is a rumor that faculty have brought to her attention so maybe you can address this – that there have been a number of staff on campus that have had their positions reclassified and with that reclassification comes pay bumps...

Dr. McKinney answered by saying that his understanding is that yes what has happened over the last several years there has been reclassifications. What we are going to begin doing is stop doing this in "drips and drabs" and do it in a systematic fair and more open kind of way.

Tracy asked is there a way faculty, she thinks what he is saying is that we are going to have to be innovative or entrepreneurial in order to get some kind of pay raise.

Dr. McKinney stated, No – fact of the matter is that what we are going to do is – I have directed Academic Affairs to do the analysis – take a look at how many of our faculty – how many of those salaries have fallen far below market – in other words - the market level by discipline and by rank – hoping to be able to put a plan in place that is budgetarily responsible that we can start bringing people back up to a level where you're being paid what the market would bare.

Tracy stated so taking some of that end of the year money – are you able to do that? Take the end of year money and put it into...

Dr. McKinney stated the problem with the year-end money is that all of a sudden it becomes one-time money when in fact over a number of years you find that you have a 2-3 million dollar surplus in your operating budget that says to me that we've got a recurrent surplus. We can take some of that and work it into our budget planning and reinvest into our people. Do that kind of market analysis for both staff and faculty. We would have less left over because it would be going into salaries.

Dr. Hull stated that one of things that they would be looking at is – and were gathering the data right now – when we get enough gathered so we can bring groups of faculty and administrators and everybody together to start looking - we will have to look at how much it will cost us – right now we have pools and that is how we are using some of that money – so you get scientific equipment; you get faculty travel and those kinds of things – we are fixing up rooms for people adding all kinds of things – what would happen is we would come up with a number that it would take to get whoever is well below market median – we are looking at how far up the ladder we can go to bring people up to market – we can't call it a raise – we can call it a market adjustment – if we do that and our enrollments continue to go down and we take in less then we will have less money at the end of the year and we will have dedicated let's say a million of it to faculty market adjustments and staff market adjustments - and that's fine - Worst case scenario in the next couple of years it could mean that the pools that you have been relying on would be reduced somewhat based on that. That is probably worst case scenario. There are plenty of pools and I think we could probably figure that out. Feel confident we can make some adjustments - do not know how high up the ladder we can go right now – the early numbers look like about a third of faculty are below market at a level that is significant and we have to look at how far up we go to bring people up. We will also look at compression with that it will not be simply a market issue and other things – it will be more than just a single number. We are already in the process with that – staff group is gathering their numbers right now – do not have an estimated total or how much we can do. Process will be worked out with all groups of you – feel good about that as one solution.

Paula McNeill from the Art Department addressed Dr. McKinney. She is wondering... it is related to salaries... it is related to the new hires. There are searches going on – Will the new hires possibly have an opportunity to negotiate salaries? Dr. McKinney directed this question to Dr. Hull. Dr. Hull stated that they have been using CUPA data and asking Deans and Department Heads to come in a first level minus 5% below the median. They are able to go up to median without any restrictions and if they need to go above that that's a conversation that we have with the Dean – have to look at all the other departments, the department itself, so what happens is you only have so much money and so if you go a little up here for a good reason- you are probably going to have to go under in another department or area – But we have been doing that and that is partially why a lot of our newer hires are very close or above market level right now.

Tracy asked Dr. Hull to explain what CUPA is? Dr. Hull explained it is a selection of schools that are like size and like Carnegie level – that have the same kind of majors that we do are selected – The SRA group on campus already do that – It is a national study largely. So you get national data from schools that are like you about what is the median salary for instructors, beginning assistant professors all the way up to professors. CUPA is College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. We started using this about 3 years ago as a benchmark.

Jason Allard asked Dr. Hull to clarify who will be involved in determining what the market value is? Dr. Hull responded that market value is determined by which schools you are identifying to be compared with and gathering the data around that. On the faculty side we are using SREB data (Southern Regional Education Board). It includes all the way up to Virginia, but not DC, all the way over to Texas. Instead of the select few we used last time (about 8) we went much broader still in the same Carnegie classification – more variety – feel like we got a better feel – 126 schools that we put in the data base to look at what the medians were – Will get to a place where we have a select group of people take another look at it probably 2-3 times. Will not be a singular decision – Input will be gathered.

Denise Bogart stated that in the original study that we did with MGT the Board was telling us what peer group to match up against. It was a much smaller selection of groups/institutions. But currently we are benchmarking against the Masters 1 Level Carnegie classification and it is much broader so the salaries are a lot better in terms of data being pulled from all those schools. Dr. Hull stated it is a complicated process in so many ways – it will not satisfy everybody. If you go with a median salary and try to get faculty up to median salary – that advantages some groups/disciplines. If you use the mean – that advantages a whole other set of groups. Typically what is used is the median. There will be a conversation and those are just numbers based on comparison. Then you look within the department and what has been going on there – how long someone has been there and all the other possible pieces of why salaries are the way they are or not the way they should be. There will be conversations held at the Dean and Department head levels. It will be done as faithfully as we can with as many eyes as possible without making it something that takes us five years to do it. Need to come up with a number that we can live with – a risk we will take that we are always going to have this much left over at the end of the year. Have to take in consideration people that are going to be promoted. This can be done.

Dr. McKinney wanted to emphasize a point that was brought up in one of the questions that he thought was a very good one – the fact as a University we are locally funded – tuition dependent in many ways. This conversation further underscores the importance of enrollment management. As we become more and more tuition dependent our revenue vitally depends on our ability to recruit, retain and ultimately when you look at the funding formula, graduate students. Making this investment in you I think will help us do that. Thinks it strengthens us – it is all a part of the financial picture.

Aubrey Fowler thanked Dr. McKinney for his time. The 10 minute session turned into almost half an hour.

Dr. Hull will answer 3 questions in three minutes. I promise they are quick and I think you will want to hear them.

1. The teaching load came up over and over. We have plans in April to sit with every department head individually and look at how they can potentially adjust teaching loads. The reason it has to go department by department is you may have to adjust curriculum when you offer things – may have to look at adjuncts – cannot add more full time people. There are lots of ways to look at reducing teaching loads, but it does have to be department by department. This is already in the works – we are doing that.
2. The travel nightmare you have experienced with putting your information into the system. The College of Education came to us sometime in November/December and said they wanted to try a pilot. They are using Graduate Assistants to input all the expense information for faculty. They are coming back to us in April and if that is working we will work through any refinements

and we are going to roll that out. We will fix that some way for you. We are very committed to that – nobody wants you spending time doing that –

3. A couple of people asked about the murder and why they did not hear about it. On January 11th it was on our website, in the newspaper, in the Spectator. That information did come out. We were not able though we knew what was going on early on – we were not able to reveal to the campus anything other than saying to you you're safe. We said that in lots of places. We are sorry it did not get down to whoever asked that question. We pretty much knew after Christmas week what we were dealing with. It took them a long time to gather enough information to insure that they could make a good case – they took longer than we expected. The student accused is in jail in Lowndes County – it was a boyfriend – that information was out.