

April 14, 2016

Dear Faculty Senators,

At the April 21 faculty senate meeting, you will be asked to vote on a Class C resolution that asks the administration and senate leadership to work over the summer to come up with a "simpler alternative" to replace the salary policy proposal that has been developed over the past few years. You'll also be asked to vote on the newly revised Class A salary policy legislation, with modifications to make the changes that were discussed at the last senate meeting: adding an "opt-out of tiers" provision for colleges, and clarifying that variable adjustments can also be used to reward performance. These two proposals can be found in the Senate agenda and its attachment, on [this web page](#).

The introduction to the Class C resolution attempts to explain the reasons for introducing it. As people who have been intimately involved with crafting the Class A salary policy proposal, we'd like to offer an alternative point of view.

Before we list our misgivings with the Class C resolution, we feel it's important to address a couple of common misunderstandings about the Class A legislation that is also before you.

- Some people have been claiming that "most faculty do not want tiers," or that "all colleges except Arts & Sciences will opt out of tiers." There is no evidence to support this. The people who are claiming this seem to have been listening mostly to deans. It's true that the A&S dean is the only dean who has publicly said he want tiers for his college. Because a major purpose of the proposed salary policy is to shift a small but significant portion of authority over faculty salaries from the provost and deans to the faculty, this is understandable. However, the new "opt-out" provision that has been added to the proposal gives faculty in each college the opportunity to opt out by a majority vote. We have plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that there are lots of faculty members in colleges other than A&S who believe strongly that this salary policy, including the tiers, is necessary for them. But these are just anecdotes. The only way to know for sure is to send the proposal out for a faculty vote. If it's true that most faculty members don't want tiers, then the policy will be voted down.
- It's also important to be clear about what happens if colleges do vote to opt out: It's only the tier portion of the policy that's subject to an opt-out vote. If a college faculty votes to opt out of tiers, they will function under all the remaining aspects of the new policy: 12% promotion raises (replacing 7.5%), the CPI-based market adjustments (replacing the 2% "regular merit"), and variable adjustments (replacing "additional merit" and "unit adjustments," but much more flexible). So over the long term, even those colleges that opt out of tiers will have a better policy to work with than the current one.

We've prepared a [website](#) that contains lots of information about the Class A salary policy proposal, including an updated list of Frequently Asked Questions.

Now to address the Class C resolution. As we see it, here are some of the problems with the salary policy outlined in the Class C resolution:

- The only provisions of the alternative proposal that will benefit the vast majority of faculty are the replacement of the 2% "regular merit" by a CPI-based "market adjustment," which might sometimes be larger than 2%, and the change in promotion raises from 7.5% to 12%. These might be useful improvements, but they could be effected very easily by a change in an Executive Order, independently of whether the code is changed. And by themselves, they are far too small to make a significant dent in compression for most faculty over the course of a career. (See the next bullet point.)
- The supporters of the Class C resolution have done no financial modeling to determine whether this proposed policy will be of any help in solving compression problems for typical faculty members. In contrast, the Class A proposal has been extensively and independently modeled over the course of several

years. [Here are the results of a simple comparative model](#), showing the likely salary outcomes for most faculty after 36 years under the Class C proposal vs. the Class A legislation. Of course, any long-term model is extremely sensitive to assumptions, but as the second page of the attached document shows, the most pessimistic scenario under the Class A policy is roughly equivalent to the most optimistic scenario under the Class C proposal.

- The other significant change from the existing salary policy is that deans are allowed (but not required) to skim some of the Additional Merit money and/or add more money from their own budgets, to fund unit adjustments, retention raises, and a new category called "tier advancement raises" of 8%-10% each. Although these have the word "tier" in their title, they're much more like pre-emptive retention raises, because they're supposed to be only for those with an "extraordinary record of accomplishment," and are limited to three advancements at the Associate/Senior Lecturer level and three at the Professor/Principal Lecturer level, no less than 5 years apart.
- Because of the much higher bar for receiving these "tier advancement raises," they will basically function as an easier and more transparent way to reward "stars" in place of pre-emptive retention raises. The criteria for these raises strongly suggest that only a very small percentage (maybe 10%?) of the faculty will ever get them, and any money that's skimmed for these raises will mean less merit money available for everyone else. In particular, because everyone is competing for the same small pool of tier advancement raises, one might expect that very few lecturers would ever get them.
- There's language that says faculty have a "right to be considered" for tier raises, and if their advancement is approved, they are "entitled to a tier advancement raise." But there seems to be no obligation on the part of the dean to fund them. (The class A legislation says a tier raise "shall attend each tier advancement." The word "shall" in the code has the force of a contractual obligation, subject, as always, to the carefully circumscribed process for invoking "severe financial stress.")
- Overall, the alternative puts MORE authority over salary policy in the hands of deans than the current policy does, and less in the hands of faculty, since deans (with their faculty councils) would decide how much to skim from the Additional Merit pool, how much to allocate to tier advancement raises, and how to distribute unit adjustments, even down to the level of individual faculty members. One of the main points of the Class A proposal is to transfer a small but significant portion of salary authority to faculty.
- As Kate O'Neill has explained to us, the biggest difference between her Class C resolution and the Class A legislation is that the Class A proposal makes an effort (through the "shall" language associated with tiers and market adjustments) to push a bigger percentage of available funds into regular raises for continuing faculty; while hers does not attempt to do that. Instead, it seems primarily to make it easier for deans to reward stars. These "tier advancement raises" are not designed to provide career advancement for typical mortals, and seem to be based on an erroneous perception that the biggest problem with the existing salary policy is that the process for rewarding stars is not transparent enough.
- The resolution says that eligibility for both CPI and additional merit is based on the most recent performance reviews, which will be conducted according to the current code. Since additional merit allocations would be distributed annually, it seems that most faculty would want their most recent record considered, so in all likelihood we'd be back to annual performance reviews. The Class A legislation makes an attempt to spread out those performance reviews to an average of once every four years for most faculty (at least in colleges that do not opt out of tiers).
- The Class C proposal starts everyone at Tier 1, presumably because of a perception that the system for assigning initial tiers in the Class A legislation is too complicated. As a result, for example, a superstar faculty member who is already making \$400,000 will be eligible along with everyone else for three 10% raises of \$40,000 or more, and will be competing with everyone else in the college for that money. One might expect that the superstar would be deemed highly deserving, and might be likely to initiate a grievance if the "tier advancement raises" were not granted; so the superstar would probably get them, thus taking even more money away from the general merit pool. Meanwhile, the great majority of faculty members would spend their entire careers at Tier 1. Is this going to improve faculty morale?

- Retention raises would be severely restricted under the Class C proposal -- only available if there's "credible evidence of an actual or credible impending offer and a genuine intention by the faculty member to accept the offer." Obviously the "tier advancement raises" are meant to substitute for pre-emptive retention raises; but with the limit of 10% raises five years apart, they might not be enough to dissuade superstars from trolling for outside offers. The Class A legislation, in contrast, puts no such limits on retention raises, because we believe that units should have the tools to keep superstars here when absolutely necessary. Instead, the Class A legislation attempts to drastically reduce the need for pre-emptive retention raises by ensuring that ALL faculty who are performing at a typically high UW level will receive appropriate career salary advancement.

The bottom line is that this is an extremely dean-friendly and superstar-friendly proposal, which is likely to be, at best, only slightly better than the status quo for the vast majority of faculty, and will probably make virtually no progress on the main goal the Class A legislation is designed to accomplish--namely, creating a more robust career salary progression for most faculty members (who are, after all, highly excellent).

Because of this, we believe that, independent of one's position on the class A legislation, it would be a step backwards to approve the class C resolution. Compared to the fully developed class A legislation, the class C resolution's rough outline describes a system that will shift more control of the salary policy to the deans and do less to address long-term salary compression.

Respectfully,

Susan Astley, Professor of Epidemiology and Pediatrics; former Faculty Senate Chair

Jim Gregory, Professor of History; former Faculty Senate Chair

Paul Hopkins, Leon C. Johnson Endowed Professor of Chemistry; Chair Emeritus of Chemistry

Jack Lee, Professor of Mathematics; former Faculty Senate Chair

Bob Stacey, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences; Professor of History

Gail Stygall, Professor of English; former Faculty Senate Chair

Gordon Watts, Professor of Physics; Chair of Faculty Council on Faculty Affairs