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Perspectives

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Emerald

Salaries frozen for too long

Professors' salaries are losing ground in relation to other universities

America is a funny place. We're in an election year, so the buzz words "education," "values" and "priorities" are on the tips of politicians' tongues. But the fact is that someone can raise more than \$67 million to run for president while teachers in this country are forced to get by on rather meager salaries. While most of the attention paid to teacher salaries is for the public school systems, University professors aren't doing much better in the big picture.

Average salary for our University professors is \$51,300, well below some of our peer universities' average salaries: \$65,400 at University of North Carolina and even \$52,300 at Oregon State University. With talk that diversity is important and that keeping good professors is a priority, the fact remains that cost of living increases have not been given out in four years while inflation has jumped 10 percent in the same time. The University jumped a tier in the U.S. News and World Report rankings this past year; teacher salaries haven't seemed to jump as well.

That's why a new proposal to the University Senate is looking to make cost of living pay increases an annual thing. As it stands now, budgets allow for each department to give out "merit" raises to a few select faculty members.

These raises are generally based on teaching awards and quality or quantity of published work. In other words, the professors receiving the awards are raising both their prestige and the University's. The problem with the system as it works today is that these merit pay raises are pretty subjective and often don't take the students' wishes into account. A few select and favored professors could easily rise to the top of the pay schedule while other teachers — who might have better student evalua-

tions but who aren't as flashy or outspoken — may miss out.

And no department has any business handing out subjective merit pay raises while the majority of professors lose out when their salaries stay the same but the cost of living rises.

With talk about diversity and maintaining high standards and providing a welcoming environment for professors, the absence of pay increases that merely offset the gaining economy is outrageous. Any money that is available should be spread out equally. If there is more, then merit-based pay raises are fine, provided they are fair. The proposal out now would not increase the amount of money spent on raises, but it would distribute it more fairly.

As in all subjective evaluations, merit-based pay raises are problematic. But the playing field could be made more even if students are given the chance to vote or otherwise express their evaluation of their teachers. With a board or a dean making decisions, there's a good possibility that an award will go a professor who has published a well-regarded book but who has neglected his teaching time to do so. That does not reflect well on the University.

What might be needed is an overhaul to the whole pay system. One such system is also being proposed. In the so-called "White Paper" salaries would be spelled out very specifically, with professors hoping that cost of living pay raises will be the cornerstone of the system. If our professors are among the lowest paid in the nation with respect to our stature and size, then something certainly needs to be reworked.

We're starting to be known here at the University as a school that cares about all its employees. That is why the classified workers fought hard to reach a deal this summer. That's why graduate teaching fellows did the same with health care coverage earlier this school year. Now, let's make the same commitments to the teachers who are responsible for making the University the rising star it is. Give credit where credit is due.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

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"He did have a history of good relationships with players of different races and different ethnic backgrounds. What we have here is a player who has expressed remorse. Under those circumstances, I am not going to abandon a player or an employee or a friend."

—Atlanta President Stan Kasten, on comments made by relief pitcher John Rocker to Sports Illustrated two weeks ago. Rocker insulted gays, Asian women, foreigners and people from New York City. He has been ordered by Major League Baseball to undergo psychological evaluations. ESPN.com, Jan. 7.

"This is not only 'no new taxes,' this is 'a tax cut, so help me God.'"

—Presidential candidate George W. Bush, in a GOP debate last week, where he appeared to echo the ill-fated words of his father, former president George Bush: "Read my lips: no new taxes." CNN.com, Jan. 6.

"I think for the first time ever, we're back out in the neighborhoods. We do want to be seen as a household in the neighborhood. We're here 365 days a year, 24 hours a day."

—Matt Shuler, Eugene interim co-fire chief, on the revamping of the city's fire stations to meet the standard of four-minute response. Another goal of the building and renovation project was to secure a better community presence for fire stations.

Letters to the editor

Peaceful WTO protest commended

I was tremendously impressed by the courage shown by the WTO protesters in Seattle as they sat nonviolently, while the police used pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets on them. Incidentally, all this police violence occurred long before the window-breaking by a few people there. Rubber bullets and tear gas are not innocuous weapons and can be fatal. Just ask the Palestinians! The police, dressed in black and firing hi-tech weapons that looked like something from Star Wars, reminded me of Darth Vader — particularly when some of them started kicking people in the groin. They

have certainly come a long way from when they broke up labor demonstrations using police on horseback wielding billy clubs.

I was also impressed by the intelligence of the protesters in recognizing that the WTO is not about trade as much as it is about corporate power and corporations' ability to overrule laws that restrict the maximization of profit.

That tiny less-than-1 percent of the U.S. population that controls most of the wealth of this country and increasingly the world would do anything to protect their wealth and power — absolutely anything! If the CIA, working on behalf of corporate power, could develop a chemical to turn the population of the United States into a docile bunch of sheep, they would do it in a flash.

Perhaps, with television and sophisticated propaganda, it is unnecessary, but this massive Seattle protest has to cause them some concern.

Gary Sudborough
Bellflower, CA

Fourth-graders need postcards

Our fourth grade class from Gifford Grade School is studying the United States. We would like your help.

We would like your readers to send us postcards or letters telling us about your state. Thanks for your help. Please send information to:

Fourth Grade U.S.A. Project
Gifford Grade School #188
406 S. Main St.
Gifford, IL 61847

Calling all brides and grooms

Planning a spring or summer wedding? The Emerald is seeking out University students, faculty or staff to offer anecdotes and information about the process, with stories to run in a Jan. 25 bridal supplement. Please call the Emerald office, 346-5511, and leave a message — with phone number and best time to reach you — for supplement editor Jack Clifford.