

Sterling College

Working Hands. Working Minds.

Consensus Recommendations from the Program Committee and the Faculty Workload Task Force July 16, 2016

Submitted by John Elder for the Program Committee and Dean Carol Dickson for the Faculty Working Group on Compensation and Workload.

The Program Committee has been invited by President Derr to submit recommendations to him relating to faculty salaries and total compensation. We appreciate his interest in having our group involved in this way, but also understand that both the final decisions and the ultimate timing are entirely up to him. Financial feasibility of additions to the instructional budget will obviously depend upon robust enrollment figures next year and thereafter.

We have tried to find a way to peg our increases to various benchmarks in our cohort. However, we found that was difficult for a couple of reasons. One, we have old data and data changes so frequently. Two, as Rick Detwiler has pointed out, endowment per student does not take into account income per faculty member and is thus inadequate as a measure. On the other hand, the issue of income per instructor is closely bound to faculty-to-student ratio, which is expected to change as our student body increases. Acknowledging that there have been significant increases in faculty salaries over the past three years, it is nonetheless imperative to continue raising the level of faculty compensation, a point also stipulated in the NEASC accreditation report.

Immediate Increments to Salary and Compensation

1. **Salary.** We recommend adding a total of \$13,000 (equivalent to \$1,000 for each full-time faculty member) to the current faculty salary budget line. This would be on top of an annual cost-of-living adjustment. Such an increase would be allocated among the faculty according to the President's discretion. It might be, for instance, that certain senior members of the faculty have fallen behind in this regard and need a boost. On the other hand, recruiting sometimes involves negotiation about salary, and here too we understand his need for discretion case by case.¹

2. **Benefits.** The Faculty Workload Task Force (Pavel Cenk1, Laura Spence, and Carol Dickson) has identified medical insurance and retirement as the top priorities among faculty members. Therefore, we also recommend a menu system in which individuals could each allocate an additional \$1,000 between those two areas as they liked. Because the College currently offers no medical benefits, a new mechanism will need to be create to accomplish this.

¹ Our committee recognizes that such increases imply a parallel increase in administrative salaries, but this is beyond the scope of our charge.

Given the current total of 13 full-time faculty, the sum of these two additions would come to between 2.4% of the anticipated instructional budget of approximately \$1.1 million. In light of the current average salary of \$48,000 (which includes a bump of \$3,000 two years ago when the College stopped offering medical insurance), the additional \$2,000 to instructors (averaged across the faculty) comes to approximately 4% of current faculty salary. Assuming a cost-of-living allowance of 2%, this would increase total faculty compensation by 6%.

Longer-Term Goals

- 1. Salary.** We agree with President Derr that more meaningful than establishing guidelines for salary and total compensation linked to specific measures such as endowment per student or income per faculty member is simply stating our goal to move expeditiously from our current position near the bottom of our institutional cohort in both these areas to the middle of the cohort. This is an ambitious project, but we believe it should be manageable if phased in. Such a plan would fulfill a central and longstanding goal of Sterling College.
- 2. Endowed Chair(s).** While much depends on continued expansion of our student body, we also believe that endowing the salary of one or more faculty members might be an attractive focus for fundraising, especially if linked to the service of particular beloved, long-established teachers at Sterling and/or to institutional goals like attracting faculty of color.
- 3. Sabbatical Program.** The Faculty Working Group found that, because instructors at Sterling have multiple and varied responsibilities, it was difficult to make general recommendations about improving their workloads. However, there was one proposal that ranked highly among faculty and would do much to address individual needs: introduction of a system of sabbaticals. The Workload Task Force recommends the College adopt a sabbatical program that supports faculty leave on a seven-year staggered rotation to enable faculty members to conduct research and professional development opportunities they would otherwise be unable to engage in. The specific structure could look like this: Faculty members would apply to the Dean of Academics for a sabbatical one year in advance of a proposed leave by writing a proposed scope of work and outcomes and potential deliverables to the College (in terms of enhanced teaching, field course preparation, or published research). The College would cover 100% of faculty salary and benefits for one approved sabbatical semester every seven years. The Task Force believes a sabbatical program would enhance faculty engagement in their professional fields, benefit the students through increased faculty professional development and enrichment, and help to raise the profile of the College through faculty professional activities. The cost for partial replacement by adjuncts would come to approximately \$10,000 per semester—the amount required to staff three courses with adjunct faculty.