

Uncommon Sense

The Newsletter of the USF Chapter of the United Faculty of Florida
(UFF is a Florida Education Association affiliate)

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Compression & Inversion at USF

Approximately two-thirds of ranked faculty in the UFF-USF bargaining unit are below their national market salary averages for rank and discipline in comparable universities.

The popular jargon is: your salary is *compressed* if it is only slightly greater than that of typical colleagues of lower rank, and *inverted* if it is less. But the jargon isn't as helpful as comparison with colleagues nationwide, for then we get a clearer picture of what is happening.

Ever since 1974, Oklahoma State University has been conducting a *Faculty Salary Survey by Discipline* of members of the *National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges*. Currently, the survey lists highest, lowest, and mean salaries for faculty by discipline, rank, and Carnegie Class of institution (USF classifies itself as a *very high research activity* institution) for 2005. For example, the average full professor of law in a very high research activity university got \$ 164,055, the average associate professor of mathematics & statistics in a high research activity university got \$ 66,858, and the average assistant professor of philosophy & religious studies at a doctoral/research university got \$ 51,744.

We conducted a quick and dirty computation using the 2005 OSU numbers with 1,056 USF faculty to get an idea of what was happening (since we used 2008-2009 numbers for USF salaries, our results *overestimate* USF's relative salaries). About 65 % of the USF sample were at or below their OSU average salaries. Specifically, for those in the sample who had been here
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USF, the Economy, & the Legislature

USF gets over a quarter of its income from state appropriations, plus more from other state pots of money, so we have to pay attention to the legislature.

The legislature is haunted by the specters of failed tax reforms past. For example, two decades ago, Republican Governor Bob Martinez persuaded the legislature to pass a sales tax on services, and then backtracked in the face of howling criticism; the services sales tax was repealed and Martinez lost the next election.

The legislature now faces a deficit that grows with each passing projection. The legislature is playing shell games with funds (e.g., the proposal to divert tobacco tax money to schools) but the union is more interested in revenue in general. The legislature has shown interest in revenue sources as long as it isn't called a tax (e.g., the cigarette tax has been referred to as a "user's fee"). What it's called doesn't matter, as long as the system is cleaned up.

Legislators respond to those who communicate with them. We have a few lobbyists in the vast crowd in Tallahassee, but a legislator who desires reelection pays attention to the folks back home. And that is why UFF is encouraging people to write to their legislators asking for a 1 % sales tax – er, user's fee – for education.

Eternal Vigilance

It isn't exactly true that the Chinese characters for "danger" and "opportunity" combine to make "crisis," but it makes a useful proverb.

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less than seven years, 60 % were at or below their OSU average salaries; seven to twelve years, 63 %; thirteen to twenty years, 72 %; 21 to 29 years, 76 %; thirty or more years, 74 %. Apparently, the longer you are at USF, the lower your salary in comparison to your colleagues in your discipline and rank nationwide.

According to the American Association of University Professors, over the last decade, continuing faculty at institutions surveyed have received pay raises equivalent to 4.6 % per year before inflation (2.1 % after inflation); and every year in the last quarter century, the average increase was greater than the Consumer Price Index increase.

That's not what we've been getting, and over the decades, the differential adds up: if two employees start at the same salary, but one gets a 2 % raise per year while the other gets 4 %, then after twenty years, the second employee will make over 47 % more than the first.

The erosion of USF salaries is a longstanding morale issue: in 2004, the Faculty Senate called on the Board of Trustees to address the issue. The union has been pressing the issue at bargaining, with the growing support of the faculty. The economy may make the issue difficult to address, but if USF does not deal with the issue, then it faces a gloomy future.

Eternal Vigilance, *from page 1*

It's also a reminder that a crisis is a time for extra vigilance, for all sorts of people see opportunity in a crisis. That includes managers who see no reason to maintain practices that, in their opinion, restrict their ability to deal with the crisis – or that they just find irritating.

For example, tenure. The Kentucky Community & Technical College System has just decided to eliminate tenure for new hires. The chair of their board explained that this would increase hiring flexibility as demand changes. (He claimed that their board discussed this before the downturn, and indeed maybe their board had been fantasizing about this for years.)

And faculty governance, which has irritated impatient administrators from Tennessee to Ohio, especially in the current crunch. And as our own provost has said, “In Florida, we have a state law that spells out quite clearly that it is the right and the responsibility of the public employer to determine *unilaterally* the organization and function of the university” [italics added].

When a ship is at sea in a storm, the captain needs the authority to act in real time. But an economic downturn is not like that, and we can give innovations the thought that they deserve. And as this downturn was caused, in part, by large-scale cutting of corners, this might be a good time to remember that all these ponderous processes and institutions exist in part to prevent the disasters that arise from haste.

Logistics

The USF Chapter of the United Faculty of Florida publishes two newsletters, **Uncommon Sense** (see <http://w3.usf.edu/~uff/US/index.html>) and a UFF Biweekly (or, if you prefer, a fortnightly) every other Thursday, which presents news and items of interest (past articles are archived at <http://uff.ourusf.org>) and announces the Chapter meeting the next day. All members of the bargaining unit should be getting both newsletters: to get on the mailing lists, contact the UFF/USF Webmaster, Greg McColm, via uff_biweekly-owner@ourusf.org.

We have two websites, one on-campus at <http://w3.usf.edu/~uff>, and one off-campus at <http://uff.ourusf.org>. Come and visit us!

This summer, the USF Chapter of the UFF will meet on alternate Fridays during the lunch hour at CDBs restaurant in Tampa on 51st Str. & Fowler Ave. This is where decisions and plans are made, and all union members are invited to come (and bring a friend!). Pizza and beer are provided by the Chapter. Come and join the movement.