Academic Staff Representatives Meeting Highlights
Submitted by Tim Culviner

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Pay Plan

Al Crist, Associate Vice President of Human Resources, said that the Regents have not proposed a pay plan because they are using the budget process to gain authority to delegate to campuses the authority to give discretionary pay increases. Crist said that he didn’t know whether such authority would extend to using tuition increases to support merit raises.

An academic staff representative said that if discretionary merit raises are instituted, supervisors need to be better at evaluating performance than they are now. Crist said that System Administration will work with campuses to develop materials and training for supervisors.

Another academic staff representative said that it seems like we are losing all the time—what are we gaining? Crist said that we gain if the Board of Regents has authority for the budget. It will not be able to blame the state legislature about budgetary matters. Also, we are gain if campuses have authority to grant merit pay increases.

UPS Process

Questioned about the purpose of “job families” in the proposed new University Personnel System, Crist said that they are intended to help employees see possible career paths but are not intended to be restrictive. Employees will be free to move from one family to another when they change positions. The job families will be created during the titling and compensation review, which will start after July 1, 2013.

Crist said that job families have been adopted by a number of universities, and that the University of Nebraska has done a particularly good job.

[Click the link below to see UNL’s page on job families:
http://hr.unl.edu/compensation/nuvalues/jobfamilies.shtml]

Crist said that the titling and compensation review might be done internally (no outside consulting) so that it does not require BOR approval. Having it on a BOR meeting agenda would increase its political visibility.

Asked why the UPS proposals are so vague, Crist said that vagueness provides space. Too much precision can “end up tying your hands” in ways you later regret.

Flexible Degree Program

UW-Extension Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor Aaron Brower said that we are in the midst of a true revolution in education. With all information available to everyone, the role of educators has changed from communicating information to helping students navigate through information.

Under the Flexible Degree plan, a campus could refashion an existing degree program for competency-based online delivery. A change of delivery mode does not require BOR approval. The campus will provide content-related tutoring, but all support not related to content will be provided by UW-Extension.

Brower said that part of his job is managing expectations, adding that if the UW provides one complete degree program delivered in the flexible mode by fall 2013, we will be doing well.