

► Fair compensation: a winning proposition for the entire university community

Marc Ammerlaan

University from financial privation. In fact, we're doing better than ever (see insert, Chart A).

But you wouldn't know that by the decisions coming from the Administration. Everything is about reductions and cutting costs. Programs and departments have been given mandates to trim their budgets. The consequences don't seem to matter so long as targets are met. Class size has gone up in the languages, non-majors courses have been discontinued in the social sciences, and undergraduates have replaced GSIs in natural science labs. These changes threaten the quality of education, the very thing students come here for.

Decision-making has become increasingly centralized and isolated. Tenure-track faculty are being pushed to teach more, while the expectation for obtaining research grants and publishing work remains undiminished. Incredibly, the University is advocating for an increase in the time to tenure (the maximum of seven years shifted to nine years) as a positive thing. SACUA, the Faculty Senate, is against it. Doesn't matter. Faculty are informed, not consulted.

As lecturers, we are valued primarily for our cost efficiency. Relative to the tuition dollars attributable to our teaching, our salaries are a pittance. Year for year, we make less than local high school teachers. Course for course, we make less than tenure-track faculty. Hour for hour, our minimum is less than the GSI minimum. (Even worse, the median FTE for a lecturer in Dearborn or Flint is less than the minimum FTE for a GSI in Ann Arbor.) Unfortunately, the Administration doesn't have any sense of equity beyond "market forces." The same justification is given for administration raises that beggar belief.

New employees no longer have their retirement contributions matched during their first year. For all workers, health care co-payments have gone up (or will) based on the recommendations of a commission comprised of

vice-presidents, Provost office appointees, and sundry "experts." One example of their creative solutions—raise the health care costs for part-time employees prohibitively so they will opt out of university coverage altogether. The latest cutback has come in healthcare contributions during retirement. No longer striving to be leaders or best, the University is scaling back to the "industry average." Perhaps they only see equity in the downward direction.

It's time that we hold a discussion with other members of the university community about decisions that affect us all. Perhaps the most egregious example is this: the Administration has reduced the payout from its multi-billion dollar endowment from 5% to 4.5%. They prefer to raise tuition and cut benefits so they can show a little more growth in the endowment. That's perverse! They operate as if they're an investment fund, not a college. We need to change that. We need to climb over the financial firewall that the Administration hides behind. We need to inject our voices into their decision-making.

To that end, we are partnering with the UM chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to examine, through a series of surveys, the state of the faculty and the quality of undergraduate education, the results of which will serve as the foundation for informed discussion. Of course, AAUP has some different concerns than LEO does, but both organizations have a vital stake in a vibrant campus.

The first step in this AAUP-LEO effort is a survey we are asking members to fill out online. (You will receive a link to fill it out in an email from Ian Robinson.) It asks for general information about lecturers' position, workload, service, and experience so that we can present the full measure of our contribution to the University. The survey also asks for opinions on distribution of monies within the budget, faculty pay, benefits, work environment, and governance. With this information, our report can focus on the issues our members feel most strongly about.

It must be hard to run the University of Michigan. Seriously. There are so many competing interests and missions. Is the University's prime purpose to bring a world-class education to in-state students, James B. Angell's "uncommon education for the common man"? Or is it to "pave the way to tomorrow" with groundbreaking research? Is the University seeking to develop leadership, creativity, and intercultural awareness in individuals or is it aiming to develop the state and national economy? Should it be an exemplary employer or a prudent steward of public resources? Ultimately, to whom does the University answer—students, parents, taxpayers, or employers?

The answer to these questions is naturally "All of the above." The key point to be made, however, is that these are essay questions, not multiple choice. There is no discrete right or wrong. The strength of policy decisions depends on wise and judicious consideration of multiple perspectives. And here is where the Administration could use a little help.

For example, here's a fact the Administration hasn't publicized: the General Fund—the main support for the academic mission of the University—stands at record levels. Looking at revenue over the past ten years, it's hard to see any impact of the state's financial distress, the stock market decline, or any other of the crises we hear so much about. This growth has been almost entirely fueled by substantial increases in tuition, which has doubled in the past decade. The drop in state appropriations has been a relatively minor offset. The University touts increases to financial aid, but these are dwarfed by the rise in tuition. Whether the cost to students and their families is ultimately sustainable may be argued, but the Administration deserves credit for insulating the



May 2011

In this issue

Fair Compensation

Who benefits?

How do we get there?

What would it look like?

LEO Links

Get Organized!

"Why Me?"



Get Organized! #1: Attend a rally to protest cuts to education.

Let us know if you have ideas or want to help out. If all goes well, this report will be issued in Winter 2012. It should start some conversations, highlight areas of concern to other campus groups (students, staff, alumni), and lead to new alliances. With an energized community, in which everyone is involved and heard, the University stands to win.

► Getting to fair compensation

Elizabeth Axelson

In our 2010 bargaining platform, one of our demands was to raise lecturers' salaries to equitable standards. We argued that our pay for teaching should match the portion of salaries that compensates professors for teaching, and we estimated that this would be in the range of 66-75% of their pay. Based on this estimation, we calculated an approximately \$15,000 gap between the median salaries of lecturers and those of the tenure-track faculty. We proposed a six-year plan of raises to close that gap. Needless to say, this proposal was of no interest to the Employer. They floated a variety of arguments in opposition, all of which demonstrated their lack of concern for the concept of equity as we had advanced it. It seems they felt they didn't have to tackle the problem of lack of fair compensation because, as they saw it, they could meet the University's need for qualified lecturers without doing so. Ultimately, they agreed to a \$500 base salary "adjustment" in the last semester of the new contract. This adjustment can best be seen as compensation for the increased costs of health benefits that lecturers will be shouldering at that point, rather than as acknowledgement of any "equity" problem.

Granted, in the 2010 bargaining process we were more engaged in fending off cuts to benefits and righting the wrong done by the English Department in Ann Arbor when they fired our Vice President. Still, we clearly met stolid denial and resistance to our equitable standards arguments. So, what makes us think that we can make some headway on this

issue in the future? The disastrous state of Michigan finances and the proposed increased cuts to funding for the University suggest that we will continue to meet opposition from Management to demands for fair compensation for teaching. The recent move of the Wisconsin Republicans to strip unionized public employees of their right to bargain also demonstrates the hostile climate to demands for increased wages. Still, some developments suggest the presence of opportunities to forge alliances with students and their families and with tenure-track faculty to achieve fair compensation.

First, funding for higher education and the rising cost of tuition are now national issues. Publications from *Businessweek* to the *New York Times* to *More Magazine* have highlighted in the past year that tuition is rising faster than inflation and that higher tuition costs are pricing lower income students right out of the opportunity to attend a four-year college. These articles observe that "a fundamental reordering is under way" (T. Lewin, *New York Times*, 1/24/11), in which state funding is being replaced by tuition. They cite the Delta Cost Project, which shows that public research universities are now covering more than half their costs through tuition. These sources also suggest that the increased costs passed on to families are due to increased competition among universities for students, faculty, and facilities, a race driven by published university ratings. In fact, while university presidents and provosts maintain that increased costs go hand in hand with higher quality and accessibility, most families these days do not think so. They are more likely to believe that colleges and universities operate as businesses, "with an eye on the bottom line" (www.highereducation.org/reports/iron_triangle), and also that waste and mismanagement are likely reasons for increased costs.

This public discussion of funding for higher education and the ways in which universities raise and spend money is one we need to contribute to. We should be putting our analysis of where the money goes, and where it doesn't go, out there for public scrutiny and debate. As Ian Robinson notes, tuition now

accounts for 70% of UM's budget. Yet, for the academic year 2008-2009, in Ann Arbor, just 32% of the General Fund budget went for salaries of instructors (professors, lecturers, and GSIs) and just 2.8% went to salaries for lecturers, who taught 36% of undergraduate student credit hours in LSA, the campus's core college. These figures attest starkly to the fact that, as Kirsten Herold and Ian Robinson concluded in *LEO Matters #6*, undergraduate education is the lowest of the Administration's "top" priorities. Families struggling to pay UM tuition may well wonder what their money does pay for. The facts that we know and are adding to through our current surveys will resonate with the public debate. In arguing that the proportion of the budget spent on teaching should be enlarged, we can make common cause with the families of our state and elsewhere in the US.

The argument that the University is overspending on administration at the expense of teaching is one that tenure-track faculty as well as the public could be ready to embrace. When Management explains that costs are going up because of personnel costs, we need to point out whose salaries are actually rising the most. While a notable disparity exists between the tenure-track faculty and lecturers, it is even more profound when we compare teaching faculty with higher-level administrators. During the 2010 negotiations, for example, we calculated the average annual salary increases for the two bargaining teams for the five years from 2005 to 2009. During this period the average annual salary increase of members of the management team was 7.45% while that of the LEO bargaining team was 2.35%. On the management team, the salaries of the professors were among their lowest. Professors observing the disparities here might wonder what is afoot.

Beyond the differences in the raises enjoyed by the two bargaining teams, we have surely also all been impressed by the percentage raises granted to top-level administrators. The new Provost, for example, is enjoying a 28% raise over the salary of his predecessor. This is a shocking fact in austere times.



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Get Organized! #2: Contact your state legislators to protest cuts to education.

They tend to defeat the zero-sum game argument advanced by Management, which routinely pits tenure-track faculty against lecturers in a competition for compensation. Instead, we can see again that priorities for spending are the issue.

When President Coleman states, as she did recently, that the University “is ready to answer the Governor’s call for a shared sacrifice,” instructors—professors, lecturers, and GSIs alike—need to speak up and critique where the burden of these sacrifices is actually falling. We are preparing to play this role by conducting the survey Ian Robinson and Marc Ammerlaan discuss in this issue. AAUP has joined us in this effort, an important step in building an alliance across faculty to press for increased resources together. To win fair compensation for teaching, we will need to continue working with the tenure track-faculty as well as GEO to reach out to Michigan students and their families to reshape the University’s funding priorities. All of us are needed to build the discussion of what a fair compensation system should look like and to join in the effort to see it enacted at UM. Despite tough economic times, or perhaps even because of them, the argument for fair compensation needs to happen now.

To contribute to this effort, you can tell us what you think by completing the survey that will be emailed to you. You can also volunteer to interview one or more tenure-track colleagues as part of the survey effort. And we could use your input on the Fair Compensation committee.

To volunteer, contact Janella James at 734-995-1813 or janellaj@leounion.org.

► What would fair compensation for our work look like?

Ian Robinson

How do we know when we’re being paid fairly? A useful starting point is the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value.” Most would agree that people who do essentially

the same work, equally well, should be paid the same for that work. The difficulty arises in deciding when work is of equal value.

We can compare the value of our teaching with that of our tenure-track colleagues in terms of the quality of the work, measured in terms of student learning outcomes. Or we could compare the value of our teaching with the value of other activities to which a considerable portion of tenure-track faculty time is devoted. The former is easier to do, but ultimately we cannot avoid doing both for reasons that will be made clear below.

Do UM lecturers teach as well as their tenure-track faculty colleagues? Remarkably, for an institution that does so much teaching and so much research, we don’t really know. Student evaluation scores compiled by former LSA Deans Edie Goldenberg and John Cross in their new book, *Off-Track Faculty*, consistently show LSA lecturers scoring higher than their tenure-track counterparts. But student evaluations have serious limitations as a measure of teaching quality. The grades we assign are supposed to reflect student learning outcomes, but as seasoned teachers we know that there are as many problems with grades as there are with E&E scores, especially if we try to compare them.

In the absence of any persuasive measure of student learning outcomes, we typically turn to *a priori* arguments for and against the quality of lecturer teaching. In our favor, it can be argued that we specialize in teaching, and specialization generally permits the cultivation of excellence in a particular range of skills. It is often argued that faculty who do research are able to bring the results from this work to their teaching, making it more exciting. But many non-tenure-track faculty are community practitioners, and so have more experience in winnowing academic debates to identify those that are important for real world problems.

There may well be truth to all of these arguments. In the end, it is an empirical question what each of these factors contributes to student learning. The faculty and

student surveys we have begun to conduct will provide us with several direct measures of teaching quality, including the types of feedback provided to students and the methods of student learning assessment used, controlling for class size. These measures, while incomplete as well, will provide us with better answers to this empirical question than we have at present.

Let’s assume, for the sake of argument, that the quality of the teaching that lecturers do is, on average, equal to that of their tenure-track colleagues. Then what? Should we be paid the same per student or per course for our teaching? I would argue that per course is the better basis, since faculty have much closer and more labor-intensive interactions with their students in seminars of 15-25 students than in larger, often lecture-style, courses. In my experience, and I’ve taught both kinds of courses often, I end up spending about the same amount of time in each course; it’s how the time is used that differs.

Suppose we say, then, that tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty should be paid the same per course. How much are tenure-track faculty paid for their teaching, as opposed to the other things they do? Their salary isn’t explicitly broken down into teaching and non-teaching components.

We can try to infer the size of each component by looking at how many fewer courses tenure-track faculty teach in compensation for the other kind of work they do (i.e., research and publishing, and service) that lecturers are not paid to do. In Ann Arbor, the teaching load of the tenure-track faculty is 2+2 or 2+1, depending on the unit, while lecturers normally do 3+3 (it’s 4+4 in the School of Social Work). This comparison implies that one third to one half of tenure-track faculty salary is for non-teaching work.

Let’s assume, conservatively, that only half of tenure-track faculty salary goes to teaching. Then a tenure-track faculty member who is paid \$80,000 a year receives \$40,000 for teaching four courses a year—\$10,000 per course. On that basis,

Fill out the survey about conditions for UM educators (coming soon to your email).

a lecturer who teaches six courses a year should be paid \$60,000 for that work.

The Administration might argue that it counts teaching to be worth no more than one third of what it pays its tenure-track faculty, regardless of how many fewer courses they teach. Given the Administration's sense of UM's primary identity as a great research university, this claim is not incredible. However, we do not need to accept it at face value.

We can test such claims against university practice by looking to see how much money it costs a tenure-track faculty member who gets a research grant to "buy themselves out" of a course. The survey of tenure-track faculty includes this question, enabling us to say what value is currently assigned to a course taught by tenure-track faculty. The answer will likely vary across schools and perhaps even across departments within schools.

Having determined how much teaching is valued in a particular

unit, we still need to ask whether that value is appropriate. On what basis would we answer that question? Two criteria come to mind: first, how central teaching is to our mission as a public university; and second, how we fund our mission. The two criteria do not have to align. You could make money by selling something mundane, say, potato chips, but then devote most of the proceeds to, say, eradicating malaria around the world. Still, in the end, your capacity to contribute to that worthy mission still depends on the quality (relative to price) of the potato chips.

Teaching UM's undergraduates has always been part of our mission as a public university, not just a way to pay for something else. Improving the quality of, and access to, higher education is today more critical than ever to the future of this state and our country. In addition, undergraduate education is now far more important to funding all other aspects of UM's mission than it was previously, as indicated

in a chart developed and widely promoted by the Administration (see insert, Chart B).

The chart shows that almost two thirds of General Fund revenue comes from student tuition, up from just 20% in 1960; conversely, the share of university revenues derived from state transfers has fallen from more than 75% in 1960 to less than 25% today. Revenues from research grants and a number of other smaller sources (excluding the UM Hospital, which has a separate and much bigger budget) account for the rest.

It may be that in 1960, when the State of Michigan paid 80% of UM's academic budget, the University could say that it focused primarily on research and it could treat undergraduate teaching as a distinctly secondary priority. But today it is difficult to see how teaching undergraduates, the source of the great bulk of the tuition revenues, could be assigned such a low value.

Given that high quality undergraduate education is of deep intrinsic value *and* now pays for most of the other good things we do, it is hard to see why this aspect of our mission should be ranked below any of the others. Given the shift in revenue source, at least half of tenure-track faculty pay should be allocated to reward excellent teaching (except where faculty buy themselves out of courses). So, of the \$80,000 paid to our hypothetical tenure-track professor teaching four courses, at least \$40,000 should be paid for the teaching. The pay per course of those who specialize in this top university priority should not be less than that of those for whom undergraduate teaching is one of several concerns, provided that the quality of our teaching is at least equal to that of the tenure-track faculty.

There is much more to be said on the issues raised here, and there are many more issues that have not even been touched on. But I hope this is a good start and that we'll be able to build on what is here in the conversations to come. Till then!



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734-995-1813

Why Me?

Roger Butler-Borruat, Romance Languages and Literatures, Ann Arbor; **LEO Steward**, Romance Languages and Literatures

My life inside UM: *I currently teach French 232 and have taught all levels of elementary French (101-235) since 1997.*

My life outside UM: *When I'm not grading or doing lesson plans, I enjoy spending time with my wife Dominique, who is French Program Head in the Residential College, and my 11 year old son, Sébastien, who is a wonderful sixth grader, growing up before our very eyes! I am a veteran vegetable gardener (home-grown tomatoes rule!) and indefatigable camper, hiker, fisher, and mushroom hunter, so being out in the woods or on the water is always great.*

Why me? *In the summer of 1999, I began speaking with a few other instructors about feeling isolated and powerless in our positions. We began to explore what the title of "Lecturer" meant within the University and found it was a very elastic concept at the time. Once we realized how many of us there were on campus, and that our numbers were clearly growing, we got started on the organizing process that led to the creation of LEO several years later. For me, being in LEO is about seeking fair treatment by our employers, about helping those who will come later as well as those of us who are here right now. It's about having a voice in determining our working conditions and some measure of respect and job security for the work we do in this institution.*

My favorite...time at work is in the classroom. Because... *I always look forward to each hour spent with students as a brand-new experience, whereas my favorite time away from work is being outdoors, whatever the season and whatever the activity (although being on a Lake Michigan beach in the August sunshine sounds pretty good right now...).*