

Cracking the Nut, Part 8: WSRI Continued

In response to the previous post in this series, I received a thoughtful message from a BUFM who pointed out that the “real issue” is not the number of high-salaried employees at WSRI but, instead, the failure to set up and manage WSRI and WSARC so that they might be profitable. The BUFM emphasized that most research institutes have a higher percentage of high-salaried employees than most university colleges or departments. Indeed, the BUFM suggested that the post might actually serve to create dissension among those in our bargaining unit because it highlights the wide variations in compensation among faculty in the colleges within our university.

I have no argument with anything that this correspondent has written. But the purpose of the posts in this series is not to highlight why each of the various enterprises and initiatives in which the university has “invested” large sums have been losing money rather than generating revenue. Coming up with those answers is the administration’s problem.

Instead, precisely because the administration has been very ambiguous even on how much it has had to subsidize these money-losing ventures, the purpose of this series is to suggest the scope of the revenues diverted from the core mission of the university and the degree to which this diversion represents very skewed institutional priorities. Yes, someone might take issue with the variations in compensation among faculty in the colleges within our university, but those variations are longstanding and exist in most universities across the United States. In striking contrast, that our university has experienced three successive years of negative cash flow is, as far as we have been able to determine, an unprecedented occurrence at a public university.

So, in this post, let’s go a step beyond the comparisons presented in the previous post and look at the highest salaries in WSRI and compare them to the highest BUFM salaries in each of the colleges with BUFMs.

The two highest paid employees of WSRI/WSARC are the chief scientist and the CEO, who earn, respectively, \$374,158 and \$219,501.

The highest paid BUFM in the university is the former provost, but at the moment, his salary is an outlier because it is the only BUFM salary that falls between the two highest salaries at WSRI/WSARC and because it is one of just several high salaries for BUFMs that has been calculated back from an administrative salary.

Because BUFMs on fiscal-year contracts have typically assumed administrative salaries, we have calculated all salaries to their academic-year equivalent. With that proviso in mind, and bearing in mind that the BUFM data is from April 2016, before the VRIP made it more difficult for us to track data, the highest BUFM salaries in each of the colleges were as follows:

CECS--\$201,502.78

CEHS--\$95,178.32

CoLA--\$116,764.47

CoNH--\$118,287.91

CoSM--\$173,211.44

Lake--\$100,680.78

RSCoB--\$192,773.03

Indeed, in terms of suggesting skewed institutional priorities, if one looks at the mean and median salaries of WSRI/WSARC employees earning more than \$100,000--\$144,009.31 and \$122,281.12, respectively—they are higher than the highest BUFM salary in four of the seven colleges with BUFMs.

Again, we acknowledge that this is, in many ways, an exercise in comparing apples to oranges, but it does very tellingly suggest very skewed institutional priorities.