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May 27, 2008

Senator Fred Risser, Co-chair
Joint Committee on Employment Relations
State Capitol, Room 220 South
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Representative Mike Huebsch, Co-chair
Joint Committee on Employment Relations
State Capitol, Room 211 West
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Risser and Representative Huebsch:

In this current economic environment, I understand that Legislators are called upon to make many tough choices about Wisconsin's priorities and where to direct limited state resources.

With an eye toward a prosperous economic future, the Legislature and Governor Jim Doyle have taken many important steps to help Wisconsin compete more successfully in a knowledge-based global economy. A cornerstone of that process is Wisconsin's ability to capitalize on human talent through strategic investments in education. Strong bipartisan support for the University of Wisconsin System's *Growth Agenda for Wisconsin* demonstrates this forward-thinking effort.

By implementing the *Growth Agenda*, the UW System will offer more life-changing educational opportunities to Wisconsin residents. By engaging in world-class research, we will develop and attract more businesses and the high-paying jobs they create. None of this, however, will be possible without the good work of 40,000 faculty, academic staff, classified staff, and student employees across our 26 campuses and 72 UW-Extension offices. We must appropriately support and reward these talented people for the vital contributions they make to Wisconsin's long-term economic growth.

You and other Legislators are certainly aware that faculty and academic staff salaries at UW System institutions lag the compensation offered by other universities and colleges. As you will see in the attached article from the April 18, 2008 edition of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, people across the nation are also aware of our lower-than-average pay. As this information spreads, other institutions of higher education are more than willing to take advantage of our recruitment and retention challenges. I hope we can work together to address this growing crisis.

Today's recommendation by the Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) provides for a 1.0% general wage increase effective July 2008 for University System faculty and academic staff, followed by a 2% general pay adjustment in June 2009. This recommendation will undoubtedly leave us further behind in the competition for talent with our peer states and their university systems.

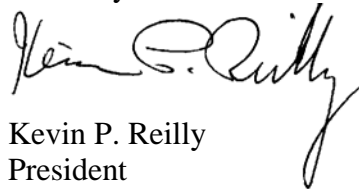
I want to bring to your attention that your action today will have a uniquely negative impact on our faculty and instructional academic staff. Since most of these professionals work on nine-month appointments (September through May), they would not receive the 2% increase in June of 2009, because they are not paid during the summer months. For these employees, the second phase of the increase would only be distributed with their first pay period in the 2009-10 academic year. This would effectively leave them with only a 1% pay increase for 2008-09, and would likely result in our faculty and academic staff falling even further behind their peers.

Again, I understand and appreciate the significant challenges dictated by difficult economic times. I realize that all agencies, including the UW System, must do their part to help the state tighten its fiscal belt. However, I must point out that today's decision on our unclassified pay plan will create new challenges for our public university at the very time that we are working to grow Wisconsin's economy and increase per-capita incomes. If the *Growth Agenda* is successful, it will broaden the state's tax base and reduce the financial burden on individual taxpayers.

Please know that I remain deeply committed to working collaboratively with the State Legislature and the Governor to assess, analyze, and address the genuine market-driven compensation needs for all UW System faculty and academic staff.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin P. Reilly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kevin P. Reilly
President

Cc: Members, Joint Committee on Employment Relations
Director Donnelly
Regents
Chancellors
Human Resource Directors
Faculty Representatives
Academic Staff Representatives

<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i32/32a00103.htm>

From the issue dated April 18, 2008

Wisconsin's Flagship Is Raided for Scholars

Public institutions can't match job offers from private universities

By ROBIN WILSON

Jon C. Pevehouse had not even finished his first year as a tenure-track professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 2001 when other universities began trying to lure him away. By last year, Mr. Pevehouse decided it was time to consider the offers seriously. He quickly ended up more than doubling his salary, with a move to the University of Chicago.

Mr. Pevehouse was considered an up-and-comer, and his departure last spring was a blow to Madison's political-science department. But he wasn't alone: In all, nine political scientists, more than a fifth of the department, left Madison last year.

"It was a body blow," says Donald A. Downs, a longtime professor of political science there. "People worry about holding down the fort."

The problem is money. Wisconsin's stagnating state higher-education budget has forced the university to keep faculty salaries far below average. When professors get feelers from elsewhere, they learn that a move can easily mean a whopping 100-percent salary increase — sometimes more.

Budget problems have also depleted money for perks that keep faculty members on board — funds for research and travel, pay for summer months, reduced teaching loads, and longer and more frequent sabbaticals.

Since the departures last year, the political-science department has made some new hires that it is excited about. But it remains one of several departments at Madison, most of them in the humanities and social sciences, that are losing faculty members faster than they can replace them.

As the faculty pay gap between public and private institutions widens nationwide, lots of public universities are having a hard time competing. But Madison is having particular problems, losing faculty members not only to well-off private institutions, like Chicago, but also to lower-ranked public universities. In the past few years, professors in a variety of disciplines have left Madison for Arizona State, Florida State, and Rutgers Universities and the University of Minnesota, among others.

Some people worry that the wave of faculty departures is damaging Madison's reputation as a premier public institution. From 2006 to 2007, the university dropped from No. 34 to No. 38 in *U.S. News & World Report's* rankings of national doctoral institutions.

And when it comes to faculty pay, Madison comes in at the bottom of a list of universities that it considers competitors. "As our peers have pulled ahead," acknowledges Peter V. Farrell, the provost, "we bring up the rear."

Despite the losses, some professors at Madison remain optimistic. Last year Wisconsin's governor persuaded the Legislature to approve \$10-million to increase the salaries of professors who are likely to be lured away.

"This is not the apocalypse," says William Cronon, a professor of history who, at \$147,000 a year, is one of the highest-paid faculty members in the humanities at Madison. "This is a great university, and that will be true 25 years from now."

A Drop in the Rankings

About 400 professors at Madison received job offers from other colleges in the past four years. That is double the number who received offers in the four years before that. While in some years the university has been able to hang on to as many as 80 percent of those with outside offers, the proportion slipped to 63 percent last year.

The departures have hit the College of Letters and Science hardest. Last year 33 professors in the college received job offers from other universities, and Madison was able to hang on to only 19 of them. That does not count professors who retired from Wisconsin but went on to work at other universities. For example, of the nine departures in political science last year, four were technically retirements. But three of the four have taken jobs elsewhere, including one as a dean at Boston University.

The School of Education at Madison has also been a target of outside recruiters. Last year 15 faculty members received job offers and six left, including four in the department of curriculum and instruction. That department, which is ranked No. 1 in the country by *U.S. News*, lost James Gee, who took several million dollars in grants with him to Arizona State. The school fell from No. 8 to No. 12 in the national rankings this year.

Faculty turnover is expensive. Over all, across the disciplines, Madison figures that it spends an average of \$1.2-million in start-up costs for each new professor. It typically takes eight years for a professor to bring in enough research money to cover that cost. A professor who stays at Madison for 25 years after earning tenure brings in an average of about \$13-million in research money. But the university loses many professors before they even pay off the initial investment.

Professors say Madison is a prime target for other universities looking to hire because average faculty raises are so low. Even if a professor is getting research grants, producing journal articles, and writing books, the most he or she would have received over the past few years is about a 2-percent annual raise. Some professors report that years have gone by with no raise at all. On

average, faculty salaries nationwide are up by 3.8 percent this year, the same as last year, according to the American Association of University Professors.

It is no surprise, then, that faculty members at Madison find themselves significantly underpaid compared with those at other universities. Madison's average salary is at the bottom of a list of 12 public universities that it considers its peers. The university paid full professors \$103,543 last year, about 13 percent less than the average for that group.

Madison has also slowly slipped to the bottom of a ranking of faculty pay, compiled by Cornell University, at 38 prestigious public and private research universities. Last year Madison paid its professors — from assistant to full — an average of \$50,000 a year less than professors earned at Harvard University, which topped the list. Professors at Madison also earned less than those at Ohio State and Purdue Universities and at the Universities of Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, and Texas.

"They are hemorrhaging in terms of their ability to attract and retain faculty," says Ronald G. Ehrenberg, director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute. "It's a wonderful university, but once you get the reputation of going in the wrong direction, it's very, very hard to build it back up."

Baiting the Hook

One sure way to get a raise, say Madison professors, is to go out and get another job offer and ask the university to match it. That is a common practice in higher education, but at Madison it has damaged morale because it is often the only way professors feel they can get rewarded.

Richard Lehrer spent 16 years at Madison before leaving to work as a professor of education at Vanderbilt University, in 2001. "For years I was making less money than my wife, who was a middle-school English teacher," he says. When he asked Madison officials for more money, he recalls, "they said that was all they could do."

Later, after 10 years at Madison, he got a job offer from the University of Michigan. "When the guy called, he said, 'I got on the UW Web site and I saw your salary, and you can't afford not to listen to me.'" Mr. Lehrer took the offer back to Madison, which agreed to double his salary, so he stayed. But five years after that, when he got the offer from Vanderbilt he decided to go.

The practice of professors at Madison flashing outside offers in order to get raises has set the university up to lose some of its very best faculty members. Professors may go out on the market without necessarily intending to leave, but then find themselves bowled over by the possibilities.

"You get courted, and at a certain point you start to fall in love with the institution courting you," says Michael Bernard-Donals, chairman of the English department. Five professors left there last year, including three who went to Rutgers, and the department is down at least 10 faculty members from a high of 54 in the 2005-6 academic year.

Rebecca L. Walkowitz and her husband, Henry S. Turner, are among the three who moved to Rutgers last year. Like many faculty members who have left, she says the move was bittersweet: "We had great colleagues, and it was really hard for us to leave." But at Rutgers she found an English department that not only offered more resources to professors and graduate students, she says, but also was more valued by administrators.

"At Rutgers," Ms. Walkowitz says, "you feel the humanities are the jewel in the crown."

Wayne A. Wiegand left Madison's School of Library and Information Studies in 2003 because he didn't feel that professors in his department received adequate support. He is now at Florida State, where he gets \$6,500 a year to spend on research and travel, compared with \$1,000 a year at Madison.

And because he is an editor of *The Library Quarterly*, his field's premier scholarly journal, Florida State has permanently reduced his teaching load. Madison had refused such reductions to journal editors at its campus, he says.

In addition, when Mr. Wiegand recently won a \$50,000 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities to work on a book, Florida State offered to match the sum. That means he can take next year off and still receive his regular salary. In a similar situation at Madison, he says, the university refused to match the grant.

Catching Up

Madison has been using some new strategies to try to hang on to its best and brightest. The university just gave 10 young faculty members \$50,000 fellowships, which they can use for travel, books, and other expenses. It is hoping to award 15 more over the next few years.

It is also raising private money to hire professors, rather than depending so heavily on state funds. And it is using extra money the governor approved for faculty salaries last year to try to keep faculty members who are at risk of being hired away.

"We are asking our deans, Is there a next wave we can foresee?" says Mr. Farrell, the provost. "It's a lot cheaper for us if we can have a pre-emptive response."

Sometimes that works. Laura L. Kiessling and her husband, Ronald T. Raines, are professors of chemistry and biochemistry at Madison. Two universities were interested in hiring them in 2006. But before those institutions made formal offers, Madison asked the couple, "What can we do to keep you?" recalls Ms. Kiessling, who is a member of the National Academies of Science and just won a prestigious Guggenheim fellowship.

She won't say much about the couple's answer or Madison's response. But Gary D. Sandefur, dean of the College of Letters and Science, says both professors got raises, along with flexible spending accounts to use for things like lab equipment, travel, and research assistance.

"We do everything we can to keep the very best people, and they are exactly the kind of people we want to keep," says Mr. Sandefur.

But even professors whom Madison has rewarded worry about the university's future. Ken Ono has an endowed chair in mathematics that pays him \$149,000 for nine months, almost double what other full professors in the department earn. His faculty group in number theory is one of the best in the country. But while he is happy, he knows that other universities will keep trying to pick off his lower-paid colleagues. In the past four years, the math department has lost seven professors.

"I'm scared," says Mr. Ono. "One of my closest colleagues is a full professor who is paid less than some new tenure-track assistant professors at other universities. I fear that he will be lured away. In my line of work, losing one or two colleagues can be devastating."

That's why Mr. Ono is looking around himself. He's had five job offers since he started at Madison, in 2000, and has turned them all down. But his departure could be just a matter of time. Two new offers are on the table, and he is considering them more seriously than he has any others.

<http://chronicle.com>

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