

Raises increase competition

UNL hopes to shrink salary gap

By William G. Garbina
Staff Reporter

Approved faculty raises should make the University of Nebraska-Lincoln more competitive when hiring professors, helping prepare the institution for a predicted faculty shortage, a UNL official said.

Robert Furgason, vice chancellor for academic affairs, said the raises UNL faculty will receive this year are intended to close the salary gap between UNL and its peer institutions.

Faculty members at UNL received an average 11.5 percent raise for fiscal year 1989-1990.

Furgason said comparatively low raises before last year's 11 percent raise caused UNL to "slip behind fairly significantly" in faculty salaries.

UNL faculty received raises of 3 percent during the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 fiscal years, and 4 percent during the 1987-1988 fiscal year. During the same time, UNL's peer institutions gave an average 6 percent raise.

The 11.5 percent merit-based raise is nearly double the estimated 6.7 percent raise expected at UNL's peer institutions. Furgason said the raise must be at that high level to make up for the lost ground during past years.

Furgason said UNL already is becoming more competitive with its peers as a result of the salary initiative.

Faculty morale in general is very good, he said, which keeps current faculty members from looking elsewhere. UNL's first priority is to keep faculty, Furgason said.

Other evidence of increased competitiveness, he said, is in the hiring success this year.

John Peters, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, said he has hired 40 new faculty members. Peters said he was especially impressed with the qualifications of these new faculty members. He said he believed the faculty raises contributed to their hiring.

Furgason said that in past years, UNL often had to hire its third choice for a position. But this year the rate of jobs accepted by UNL's first choice is close to two-thirds, he said.

This is significant, Furgason said, because a university's hiring success determines its future. The faculty hired now will lessen the impact of the predicted faculty shortage in the

next decade, he said.

Furgason said a faculty shortage would cause very intense competition for the best qualified professors. When the faculty shortage arrives, he said, it will be much more difficult to catch up with peer institutions and be competitive for the best.

"I think what is very, very important is posturing for the future -- getting in the position to be able to stay competitive for the future," Furgason said.

All raises received by UNL faculty members are merit-based, Furgason said. Merit, he said, is determined differently in each college but generally is based on teaching performance, research and service.

Furgason said this year's raise is the second step in a three-year plan intended to bring UNL faculty salaries up to a level near that of peer institutions.

Gov. Kay Orr and legislative leaders demonstrated a commitment to the university, Furgason said, by approving the three-year initiative, which includes another 11.5 percent raise for next year.

This year's 11.5 percent raise cost \$7.3 million, Furgason said, but figures on how many faculty members received raises still are pending.

He said Chancellor Martin Massengale agreed to use 3 percent of the 11.5 percent to resolve inequity issues, such as salary compression and salary inversion.

Salary compression happens when the salary of an entry-level faculty member is unusually close to that of an established faculty member.

Salary inversion happens when the starting salary of an entry-level faculty member is above the salary of an established faculty member.

John Benson, director of Institutional Research, Planning and Fiscal Analysis, said the UNL staff members also received a raise. The staff is divided into two classifications: managerial/professional and office service/clerical.

An average 8.22 percent raise was given to the managerial/professional staff with 2.81 percent allotted for equity adjustments.

The office service/clerical staff received an average 10.43 percent raise with 4 percent for equity adjustments.

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