

A RUNAWAY TRAIN:  
ADMINISTRATIVE SALARIES STEAM  
AHEAD OF FACULTY BY 99 PERCENT

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When I arrived at the University of Idaho in 1972, new assistant professors made \$10,000 and President Ernest Hartung made \$30,000. When President Richard Gibb was hired in 1977, his salary had risen to four times that of entry level faculty.

Faculty complaints became more vocal when President Elizabeth Zinser's 1993 salary was five times entry level salaries. Zinser promised that her "high tide" wage would float all faculty boats, but instead, except for a few good years, our boats have been swamped, or back to my original metaphor, our rail cars have been abandoned on a side track.

The faculty union on campus has been publishing a salary survey since 1974, and we have data on administrative salaries that go back to 1982. In those 25 years higher administration salaries have increased 274 percent while salaries for full professors went up 175 percent.

Current President Tim White's \$280,030 is a whopping 390 percent increase over President Gibb's 1982 salary of \$57,115. The consumer price index for that 25-year period was 202, so that means that full professors are now 27 percent behind the CPI, while their bosses are 72 percent ahead. The academic locomotive that should be pulling us along has left us at the station.

Those who justify these huge administrative salaries say: "This is what the market demands, and we are still paying less than peer institutions." If faculty salaries had been keeping up, this would have been persuasive. But, as the State Board of Education continues to approve these administrative increases each year, UI faculty went without raises for three years between 2001 and 2004.

To White's credit he did, this year, manage to fund an average 7.7 percent while keeping administrative raises to 2.2 percent. There are, however, substantial salary deficiencies by discipline. Here are some examples of percentage lag for full professors: management/marketing (-37.4%); foreign languages (-34.4%); materials science (-34.3%); teaching/learning (-34%); philosophy (-33.3 %); psychology (-33.3%); family/consumer science (-32.4); political science (-31.1%); ag economics (-30.9%); history (-29%); civil engineering (-28.4%); statistics (-28.2%); sociology-anthropology (-27.9%); electrical engineering (-27.4%); curriculum/instruction (-27.1%); and accounting (-26.9%). At the peak of his career Tim White receives a fine reward, but our faculty are underpaid, demoralized, and disgusted.

During the past ten years, 37 faculty in 11 disciplines have moved on to greener pastures. Plant, Soil, and Entomological Sciences reports a 20 percent attribution rate, and about a dozen faculty are actively looking for jobs elsewhere. Biological sciences has lost at least eight faculty in ten years and they report three failed searches because of noncompetitive salaries.

During the late 1960s there was a large expansion of our public higher education system. This was good for educational opportunity, but bad for the way in which this system developed according to a business model. University presidents became less like academic leaders and more like CEOs, and their salaries, as well as those of their management teams, have skyrocketed. A natural response to the industrialization of the university was the rise of faculty unions. They now represent a large majority of faculty in states where collective bargaining is allowed. Not surprisingly, Idaho is not one of them.

A central feature of these contracts is a salary step system that guarantees cost of living increases as well as raises above that in good years. If UI faculty had gone for our salary step proposal in 1976, we would now be at the top of our peers rather than at the bottom. Furthermore, faculty without "market value", those in the library, humanities, and social sciences--would be making a decent professional wage.

One year a Moscow resident responded to our salary complaints by saying: "This is what you get for coming to Idaho, and besides you make a lot more money than I do."

But even among Idaho's professional workers, postsecondary teachers make at least \$10 less per hour than Idaho's engineers, architects, computer system analysts, lawyers, optometrists, physicians, pharmacists, and chemists. Is it too much to ask that we are paid salaries equal to those that some of our many students will be earning? We don't think so.