

2007 Merit Raises in the CoB A Step Forward or the Last Straw?

If reports coming out of the CoB's Management & Marketing Department are accurate, the unrest that results from revelations of the CoB's 2007 merit raise process may reach unprecedented levels. Though the lack of transparency in raises and other evaluation processes has troubled USMNEWS.NET officials for some time, the 2007 merit raise process at USM is breaking new ground when it comes to concerns about transparency from a broader based constituency.

Below we have inserted a memo to USM Provost Jay Grimes, dated 10-May-07, from USM's Faculty Senate officers:

May 10, 2007

To: Dr. Jay Grimes, Provost
The University of Southern Mississippi

From: Myron Henry, Mary Beth Applin, Stephen Judd, and Amy Young, 2006-2007 Faculty Senate Officers

The Faculty Senate thoroughly discussed the processes for merit raises at its May 4 meeting on the Gulf Park Campus of USM. By unanimous vote, senators expressed their dismay at your response to a request from the officers of the Senate that the processes (not individual salaries) for allocating salary increases be transparent at every level. Your response was addressed to Dr. Henry and read:

"Earlier today I provided you with a copy of the merit raise instructions that were provided to the deans. However, information about how each dean arrives at his or her recommendations for raises cannot and will not be provided to the Faculty Senate."

The unanimous vote by the Senate contained other features. Senators expressed concern about the additional information you have request about individual faculty such as what is now described as the FAR-lite [an abbreviation of the Faculty Activity Report (FAR) that each faculty members fills out on-line]. Senators noted that language in the Faculty Handbook references the annual review of faculty performance as the main document to be considered in the merit raise processes at each level of review. Specifically, language from section 8.4.1 of the *Faculty Handbook* reads "Annual Performance Reviews are intended: (d) to provide a written record of faculty performance to support personnel decisions and merit pay increases."

Senators also believe each faculty member should be advised of the recommendation for his or her raise at each level. Thus, it would be incumbent upon chairs to tell individual faculty the raise recommendation that was forwarded to the dean's level, and then incumbent on each dean to inform individual faculty through the chairs of the raise recommended by the dean to the provost. Similarly, the provost and president would inform a faculty member if the recommended salary increase from the dean is altered by the provost or president. Here we mention the primary concern focused on reductions from department recommendations at the dean, provost, or presidential levels. Not much time was spent discussing additional increases that might be initiated at the dean, provost, or presidential levels.

We hope you will respond positively to the unanimous motion from the May 4 Senate meeting. Once again, it had three primary thrusts: concern that you did not support transparency of processes at the deans levels; the additional "evidence" you are apparently requiring beyond already completed and accessible annual reviews and the electronic FAR, and a request that individual faculty be informed of the raise recommendations for them from each level of deliberation.

Thanks for your consideration.

xc: Faculty Senators

In the memo above, a statement from Grimes is included that indicates that the deans' processes for determining merit raises "cannot and will

not” be provided to the Faculty Senate. This is indeed a staggering statement, and one that may be related to the efforts of USMNEWS.NET’s editor to obtain documentation on how rumor and innuendo were used to provide an evaluation of teaching.

Sources are telling USMNEWS.NET that the 2007merit raise process used by the CoB’s administrators is a fiasco that will be revealed by the release of USM’s 2007-08 Budget Books. The letter above supports those tips, and we will certainly be reporting on the raise results in a few weeks or so.