

A&M's top administrators overpaid

Sizeable disparity exists between faculty and administrative salaries

As indicated by recent survey reports, Texas has joined the national trend of dishing out increasingly exorbitant salaries for university presidents and chancellors. As a result, a very large and disconcerting gap steadily grows between university bigwigs and faculty members. Some choose to blame an intensely competitive job market for this gaping disparity while others claim the additional administrative skills and responsibilities required for administrative positions are enough to justify the pay difference.



JENNIFER LOZANO

Nonetheless, according to the *Houston Chronicle*, the Texas Legislature only appropriates \$63,654 and \$70,231 for presidents and chancellors' respective salaries. Therefore, according to Vice President for Finance and Controller, William B. Krumm, a portion of both faculty and administrative salary comes from a pool of money that includes student tuition and fees along with state appropriations and investment income placed in the general fund. For this reason, better management and prioritization of funds should be demanded in order to improve faculty pay, the quality of professors and thus the quality of universities.

According to the *Houston Chronicle*, the latest report from the Texas Faculty Association (TFA) reports presidents' salaries have increased 34 percent in real dollars over the last decade and chancellors' have increased a whopping 54 percent while faculty salaries have only grown an average 11 percent. Also, chancellors and presidents oftentimes receive many fringe benefits and perks that can include houses, club memberships, deferred compensation and car allowances that need to be taken into consideration.

In fact, when perks are included, Texas boasts four of the nation's top-10 best-paid administrators, including Texas A&M's chancellor, Howard D. Graves, who according to the previous year's figures, compensation included, came in ninth in the nation, earning \$462,000.

Just recently, according to Mara Soloway, communications specialist for the A&M Systems, the Board of Regents approval increased Graves' already impressive salary to \$500,000, (including compensation). According to the *Chronicle*, this bumps Graves up to number six on the top-10 list.

Meanwhile, back in the heart of academia, with no club memberships and car allowances to speak of, professors work hard to deliver a quality education to their students and earn a living. *The Battalion* recently reported that assistant professors earned \$56,711 in 2001, associate professors made \$64,444 and professors earned an average of \$85,000.

Although it is clear that professors are making an adequate salary to survive, the difference between their salaries and top officials is disheartening and suggests that only top administrative positions at A&M are highly valued and worthy of significant pay increases.

Administrative salary increase has partly resulted as a means to compete with private universities to attract qualified leaders. Ronald Ehrenberg, director of Cornell University's Higher Education Research Institute told the *Chronicle*. "For a long time, the public were losing the best and the brightest of their leaders to private universities because the compensation was so much higher in private universities," said Ehrenberg.

However, according to the 2003 rankings of America's Best Universities in the *U.S. News and World Report*, Texas A&M dropped from number 48 in the first tier to the second tier. Executive Associate Provost Bill Perry previously told *The Battalion* that the drop could be attributed to this year's report not counting large classes with labs as "one large class and several small classes" as it had in the past. To address this issue of class size, Perry said money was already designated to hire 60 more faculty members. However, it will be hard to attract and retain qualified professors with non-competitive salaries and an impressive gap between administrative and faculty salaries. This example shows the important role that faculty play in a university's overall achievement.

"The need to elevate faculty salaries is a top priority for the University and an imperative goal of Vision 2020," said Cynthia Lawson, director of University Relations. On the other hand, Lawson points out that given the amount of money going towards administrative salary and the number of students that attend the University, A&M is a relatively efficient campus.

There are many alternative avenues for correcting the discrepancy in faculty and administrative salaries. Alternative sources of income such as department budget cutbacks should be considered along with implementing laws such as those that exist in California. According to the *Chronicle*, California law regulates public university officials' pay to the average of a selected group of universities.

The gap in faculty and administrative salaries is not going to be closed by simply hoping the Texas Legislature will grant the University more money. Instead, different management options at the university level that would allow faculty pay increases and a cap for administrative salaries should be considered.

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JOSH DARWIN • THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

A&M football team should act appropriately at movie theaters

I will never be able to watch an Aggie football game again in the same way after tonight. And coming from a family steeped in Aggie traditions, especially that of following and rooting for the Aggie football team, that is a sad thing.

After a long day at work and an even longer week, my husband and I wanted to relax at a movie one evening the night before a football game. We purchased tickets for a movie that began around 7 p.m., arrived at the theater, and took our seats.

After just a moment, it became very clear to my husband and I that we were surrounded by a lot of A&M football players. My husband was so excited, remembering that it was an established routine for the football team to be bussed over to the Hollywood Movie Theater to watch a film on the Friday prior to a home game. He had accumulated this knowledge due to friendships with past A&M football players.

The movie began and immediately the football players that were sitting directly behind us in the very back row, began to converse back and forth with what could only be described as inappropriate commentary. They weren't even trying to whisper, they were using their full, normal speaking voices. They continued this disruptive behavior throughout the entire movie.

In addition to this, one of them kept calling people on his cell phone and holding conversations. I attempted to alert them to their rudeness by turning around and looking at them, but this did absolutely no good.

In fact, I believe it may have made matters worse, because after that, the one sitting directly behind me placed his feet on the back of my chair and kicked me every now and again. There was a coach sitting right by me and my husband. Sadly, he did nothing about the continual noise. Perhaps he didn't hear it.

The most disturbing thing about this whole situation is that these young men are supposed to be role models and representatives of our great University. Maybe they didn't ask to be role models, but like it or not, they most definitely are representatives of A&M. We all are. I would like to see representatives displaying more respect and courtesy to others.

In short, I suggest that R.C. Slocum educate his athletes on proper movie-going etiquette before taking them in public.

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Class of 2000

Leaving students distant

Distance education is a poor choice

Everyone knows those professors are out there. The monotone voices that drone on, saying little else besides unenthusiastically reading aloud the material presented in the textbook. There are the ones who talk about their high school basketball team and what they ate for lunch and rarely touch anything relative to the class.

Everyone has probably had an experience like one of these, and if you didn't stop attending class altogether, you probably wish that you had. In addition to the time spent studying the material, you have to take time to teach it to yourself.

Somewhere in the back of your mind, you probably are wishing there was a way to avoid problems such as these.

The University does provide an opportunity for students to alleviate these problems themselves through the distance education program. Lessons are identical and courses simplified, and the student can arrange the class to meet his own time constraint needs.

However, not only are these courses ineffective in teaching and testing the material, but students who enroll in these classes rarely come out of the course with a firm knowledge of the subject.

True, these courses may have benefits. The appeal of organizing class times around your schedule is attractive to students who work or have hectic schedules. An obvious benefit for some is that these classes are not as challenging as courses taught in a traditional setting.

However, the easy way out is not usually the best way, and students may find themselves unprepared in another class or later in life when they need the knowledge they were expected to have learned.

During the 2001-02 year, 192 courses were offered via the Internet or as a video/television series. Some undergraduate courses are offered each semester, but the graduate degree plans is where this program is channeling its focus.

More than 14 degree plans are offered for graduate students, and a degree can be earned entirely through distance education.



SARA FOLEY

While the Department of Distance Education says these methods are effective, it is difficult to believe that a student can go through graduate school at Texas A&M without ever stepping foot on campus or in a classroom and have a degree equal to those who spend their time in traditional classes.

It seems to cheapen the degrees others receive and the grades they earn. A&M has plans to expand the current distance education program, spending more resources and money on a plan that doesn't benefit the students on campus.

Although the department could not provide accurate data on the average grade in a distance education class, if you were to speak to anyone who has ever enrolled in such a course they will assure you of its ease and efficiency.

One area that needs heavy reform is the testing policy. If students are taking a test in their home, there is no way to regulate them from using materials that would give them an unfair advantage, or having someone with them who would be willing to do the work for them.

Another problem students complain about is the server constantly going down, causing problems in regards to due dates and time constraints. Any students who have lived on campus or frequently use the computers have experienced the maddening frustration that comes with the server that is not always dependable. When enrolled in a course which relies solely on the Internet, many technological problems will arise.

Although the distance education program may remove one from those intolerable situations with professors, having difficult professors is part of college, and a realistic situation which will come about in the work force. By continuing to enroll in traditional courses, you may give up some convenience but gain experience and knowledge.

Sara Foley is a sophomore journalism major.

