

Preamble:

“Procedures and Principles for Awarding “High Merit” Money to Faculty”

A central purpose of universities is the search for truth and understanding in the context of free inquiry. In part, this is an individual activity, with each scholar and university professor exploring and thinking in his or her own intellectual discipline. However, this is also a fundamentally collegial endeavor depending upon the collective resources and good will of fellow faculty and colleagues.

This philosophy was articulated in the Faculty Welfare Committee’s “Merit Report of the Faculty Welfare Committee” in the spring of 1989. The Faculty Senate wishes to underscore our continued belief in that report’s fundamental observation:

“...The creative activities that emerge in a thriving and vibrant academic institution are social or collective in character. New works in literature, art, or in social analysis are...fundamentally social products. No one doubts that a poem comes from the hand of a single author or that a painting spills out of the paint cans of a single artist. Yet, it is equally undeniable... that these individual efforts flourish in the supportive atmosphere of a "community of scholars" where colleagues collegially help one another's work in various ways: Office conferences, hallway chats, reading groups, and thorough reviews of a colleague's work: In all of these ways- and more- do faculty members provide essential support for productivity in scholarship, teaching and community service...”

On this basis, the Faculty Welfare Committee recommended retention of the two-tiered merit system then in place and which has received broad faculty support since its reaffirmation in the spring of 1989. After considerable research, the Faculty Welfare Committee concluded that complex or multi-tiered merit systems were inherently counterproductive. Emphasizing and rewarding reputed individual accomplishment at the expense of others, multi-tiered merit systems cause divisiveness and disunity among the broader faculty, thus contributing to lower morale and less interest in the institutional well being of the university.

In this light, the Faculty Senate continues to support the logic of the two-tiered policy embraced in the 1989 Merit Report. However, since the University System has made it clear that Salisbury University must have at least a three-tiered merit system, we reluctantly endorse the “Higher Merit Proposal” as the least offensive and least damaging plan that we could administer.

Further, we emphasize in particular that the Senate’s endorsement of the Committee’s high merit plan is conditioned on the expectation that the awards will be strictly limited to at most 2-3% of the faculty in any given year so as to minimize the divisiveness that will likely emerge from a plan of this nature. If the awards spread beyond this limited figure, they will then lead, we fear, to great dissension and low morale among the faculty.

The Faculty Senate trusts that the Administration appreciates the spirit in which we recommend this policy proposal. We understand their need to have such a third tier in place but we also wish to express our continued confidence in the merit policy that has been in place for over ten years and hope to retain its character as much as possible into the foreseeable future. Should the university system no longer require Salisbury University to have at least a three-tiered merit system, the Faculty Senate recommends returning to our two-year system.

Procedures and Principles for Awarding “High Merit” Money to Faculty
Faculty Welfare Committee
May 2002

Most faculty members deserve a “standard” merit increase, but occasionally some individuals demonstrate truly outstanding faculty performance. These are the individuals we suggest are worthy of “high merit”. The Faculty Welfare Committee has discussed and drafted the following procedures and principles:

- 1) The Provost, after consultation with the Deans, who will have consulted with Department Chairs, will select those receiving “high merit.” In the event that a name is proposed AFTER the initial consultation between Deans and Chairs, there will be another consultation with the appropriate chair before sending that name on.
- 2) Time-line: By the first Friday in May, Deans will meet with Chairs. The Deans will meet with the Provost by the second Friday in May. The Provost will announce the names of those people receiving “high merit” by June 15.
- 3) The faculty will NOT assemble notebooks, letters, etc. and will NOT apply for these awards. In fact anyone who applies for “high merit” will be ineligible to receive it.
- 4) The Provost will award “high merit” on a University-wide basis and will not apportion these awards either to the Schools or to the Departments.
- 5) The Provost may award “High merit” in the three categories of Teaching, Professional Development, and Service, although the Provost need not recognize anyone in any category in any given year.
- 6) The Provost shall, in a given year from all three categories combined, award “high merit” to at most 2-3% of the total faculty (i.e. perhaps seven or eight faculty members).
- 7) The Provost will utilize all available evidence, including the annual evaluations, up to the time the awards are publicly announced.
- 8) In making these awards the Provost will utilize criteria that take into account the differences between/among the various schools and departments in terms of expectations, resources, and academic ranks.
- 9) The Provost will publicly identify those receiving “high merit” and will announce their category (or categories) of demonstrable truly outstanding performance, although the Provost need not announce the amounts of the awards. Typically the amount will be at least \$2000-\$3000.
- 10) Each member of the Faculty may receive “high merit” awards in any or all of the three categories of Teaching, Professional, Development, or Service; however
- 11) Only those faculty members judged by their chairs (or in the case of chairs, judged by their deans) to be exemplary in teaching will be eligible to receive awards for ANY category.
- 12) In the event that individuals are recognized in years when it is impossible to award them money, then they will receive money at the first subsequent opportunity.
- 13) The monetary awards would be added to base salaries.
- 14) This process should be employed for several years and should not be subject to frequent change.