Report to Faculty Senate from Financial Affairs Committee, April 8, 2010
Re: Stabilization of the Summer/Winter Faculty Stipend

The University has proposed no longer linking faculty stipends in the summer or winter terms to the in-state undergraduate tuition rate. The proposed change would keep faculty stipends for courses taught in the summer or winter terms where they currently are, regardless of any future tuition increases.

Currently, summer and winter pay is directly linked to tuition. When the adjustment to the winter/summer pay was made, it was in response to the fact that pay for these sessions had not changed for many years (at least over a decade), and was not competitive enough to attract faculty to teach in the winter/summer sessions. The tuition tie-in was built in as a way of “inflation indexing” so that we would not have a one-time increase, and then once again start falling behind. Fixing the summer/winter pay where it is, guarantees that faculty will continue to lose ground on an inflation adjusted basis for years to come.

The University has offered the following reasons for the proposal: (1) The differential between summer/winter term stipends and regular term stipends has resulted in an inability, in some cases, to hire part time faculty to teach in the regular terms, (2) the recession has had a serious negative impact on the State’s ability to generate revenue and has forced the State to reduce the amount of revenue it can commit to higher education, and (3) Increasing the compensation for faculty teaching the summer and winter terms while all other employees received no increase would be unwise.

None of the above reasons for the proposal are convincing for the following reasons. We agree that regular semester stipends are low. However, this is the problem that needs to be addressed, and reducing winter/summer pay is not the right way to approach this problem. We also agree that the recession has required the administration to make many difficult decisions because of budget cuts from the state. However, the budget problem is a temporary one, and we do not believe a permanent change is an appropriate solution. In addition, the summer/winter pay comes directly from tuition from students rather than from state funds so it is not immediately clear how reduced funds from the state negatively impact the University’s ability to pay the summer/winter faculty stipend. Finally, the fact that other employees (including faculty) are not receiving pay increases does not warrant changing the winter/summer pay schedule. Once again, this is a permanent change to a temporary problem.

In addition to our concerns described above, we have some other questions about the proposal. Has the administration considered what impact this would have on the future willingness of faculty to teach during the winter/summer sessions? This impacts not only courses on campus but also study abroad programs that take place during these special sessions. If tuition does go up it is a win-win situation for both administration and faculty under the current system since faculty pay is a percentage of tuition and the administration keeps more money, too. This method of sharing gains among different members of the organization is often a preferred way to organize any organization. Apart from the use of school facilities and administrative overhead, faculty members add all of the value for these winter/summer courses. To raise tuition (which is to tacitly admit that the value of this service has risen) and then withhold all of these gains from the faculty is both unfair and exploitive. Finally, our primary concern is the permanent nature of the proposal. Removing any method of tying pay to increases in cost-of-living will make faculty recruitment more difficult in the long run which will then require another round of faculty pushing for pay increases.