



Increasing Their Salaries, Not Access and Quality

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Universities and colleges across Canada have suffered through two decades of funding cuts. At the same time, tuition fees skyrocketed and wages for faculty and staff stagnated. University and college administrators argue that inadequate public funding prevents them from providing adequate salary increases to faculty and staff, while simultaneously remunerating themselves generously and diverting funds from academic budgets into public relations and advertising campaigns. Recent federal transfers have wiped out the funding cuts of the mid-1990s, and universities and colleges in Manitoba have received an average of 6.75% funding increases for each of the last eight years. Yet the latest figures confirm that, when it comes to spending, universities have their priorities backwards.

Manitoba University Administrators Reward Themselves

The senior administrators of Manitoba's universities and colleges argue that government funding is inadequate to maintain the tuition fee freeze and adequately compensate faculty and staff, but, despite this, they have managed to secure substantial wage increases and perks for themselves.

Presidents at all Manitoba universities and colleges have seen their salaries rise steadily over the past few years. At the University of Manitoba, the situation is the most extreme: wage increases for senior administrators averaged 32% between 2003 and 2007. According to Manitoba's Disclosures Act for public officials' compensation, Former University of Manitoba President Emöke Szathmáry saw her salary rise by almost \$95,000, or 36%, between 2003 and 2007. This increase is enough to hire an assistant professor or teaching assistants for 100 undergraduate labs.

President Szathmáry's \$355,000 salary puts her in the company of the 0.26% of Manitobans that earn over \$250,000 per year. Despite a number of requests, newly instated President David Barnard's salary has not been disclosed.

Inequity between Administration and Faculty

These administrators' salary increases contrast sharply with the 2.5% increases recently negotiated for faculty and support workers. As Jim Turk, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers observed, assistant professors may earn about the same as retail store managers—with the added problem of huge student debt loads. Promises of Teaching Assistant or Grader/Marker positions are used to recruit graduate students, and the value of these already low wages for student employees has been further eroded by recent fee increases.

The inequitable approach taken towards faculty and staff salaries diminishes morale and makes it difficult for Manitoba's universities to attract and retain qualified faculty and other academic staff.

The Canadian Federation of Students calculates that, in spite of the tuition fee freeze implemented in 2000, students in Manitoba now pay up to 59% more in 2008 than they did in 1995. It would take a student working full-time at minimum wage almost six years to earn Szathmáry's \$95,000 wage increase.

Consider this in light of University of Manitoba President Emöke Szathmáry's comments in May 2006 that the university might have to close its doors for good if mandatory user fees charged to students were not raised. The University's scarce disposable income is used for administrators' salary increases, while access to education and the needs of students, staff, and faculty are neglected.



Mayor of Brandon
Dave Burgess
\$70,000



Mayor of Winnipeg
Sam Katz
\$140,000



Premier of Manitoba
Gary Doer
\$123,408



Rectrice of the Collège
universitaire de Saint-Boniface
Raymonde Gagné
\$160,547



Red River College
President
Jeff Zabudsky
\$162,432



Brandon University President
Lou Visentin
\$224,184



University of Winnipeg
President
Lloyd Axworthy
\$282,531



Prime Minister of Canada
Stephen Harper
\$303,722



Former University of Manitoba
President
Emöke Szathmáry
\$355,436

A Question Of Priorities

These decisions not only expose the misplaced priorities of the University, they devalue the efforts of faculty, staff, and students to lobby for more adequate government funding.

Even from a narrow management perspective, it would make sense to make senior administrators subject to the same fiscal restraints imposed on other departments; otherwise, it would appear that the administrators are rewarding one another for squeezing faculty, staff, students, and even the quality of the institution.

While university administrators continue to claim a state of bankruptcy, they find millions of dollars to put into massive capital developments, new buildings, extensive landscaping and pet projects with little to no regard on how they will continue to fund ongoing operational costs. The University of Winnipeg is pumping tens of millions of dollars into the new science complex, theatre building, fitness facility and landscaping. The University of Manitoba purchased a nearby golf course for \$10 million, and is spending \$1.5 million on a staircase to nowhere.

While some initiatives will improve certain programs, university budgets remain a matter of priorities. Universities can grow through reasonable rates of expansion, while not sacrificing current facilities, programs, staff wages, and keeping tuition and other fees low.

Access And Quality Must Be Priorities

Universities have struggled through funding cuts and need more public support to fully recover. The universi-

ties, in turn, must demonstrate that their priorities are those of a high quality, accessible education system.

Although public institutions in Manitoba are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), obtaining any substantial information is difficult and costly. The Canadian Federation of Students has filed over 40 requests to Manitoban universities and colleges since September 2007, including requests for accounting of hospitality expenses, travel invoices, public relations and advertising expenses, and costs related to the presidents residences (which are owned by the Universities). The majority of FIPPA requests have been outright refused, or have been assessed fees as high as \$68,000 per request to fill. As a result, a number of requests are under review by the Manitoba Ombudsman, but most university and college financial information remains out of reach of the public.

Because Manitoba's universities receive over two-thirds of their funding from federal and provincial governments, such measures are an important step towards further protecting public investment in universities.

Remedies to the problem of accessibility and recruiting and retaining staff and students should not become a public relations exercise.

Faculty, staff, and students are dedicated to working together for better salaries, more academic and staff positions, lower tuition fees, and increased research funding. More federal and provincial government funding, used in responsible ways, can make this happen. Higher levels of public funding only serve the public interest if it is used to fund core programs, not extravagant spending sprees.