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**FACULTY SALARIES SHOW GAINS, BUT PROGRESS COULD STALL**

SPRINGFIELD – A state initiative has succeeded in making faculty salaries more competitive at Illinois colleges and Illinois, although gains may be jeopardized by the state’s ongoing fiscal exigency.

That is the conclusion of the annual study of Illinois faculty salaries to be presented to the Illinois Board of Higher Education next week. The Board will meet at 9 a.m., October 1, at Kishwaukee College Conference Center in Malta. The Board also will hear presentations from colleges and universities concerning “best practices” in meeting statewide goals and receive a report examining issues affecting students’ time-to-degree.

The faculty salary study analyzes the results of a state initiative approved by Governor George Ryan and the General Assembly aimed at making Illinois public university faculty salaries more competitive with peers around the nation. The study shows it worked, although average salaries paid Illinois faculty continue to lag behind peers nationwide.

According to the report, in fiscal 2002, the average salary for all ranks of faculty at public universities was $66,000, an increase of 11.5 percent over FY2000, the first year of the special salary initiative, entitled Recruiting and Retaining Critical Faculty and Staff, and known colloquially as the “3+1+1” plan (in addition to a 3 percent general salary increase, the state and campus each supplied an additional 1 percent to make salaries more competitive). The average salary at community colleges was $55,400, 3.8 percent more than in FY2000. At private institutions, the average faculty salary last year was $72,200, an increase of 7.4 percent since fiscal 2000.

The report notes that between fiscal 1995 and 2002, increases in Illinois per capita income outpaced the rise of faculty salaries in all sectors of higher education. But since 1999, the year before the salary initiative began, salaries at public universities rose faster than per capita income in Illinois. Salaries at community colleges lagged behind per capita income increases in all periods of comparison. Private institution salaries outpaced per capita income since FY2000.
An important measure of salary competitiveness is how average salaries compare to peer institutions nationally. In FY1999, Illinois public universities were at 95 percent of the median salaries paid at peer institutions. By fiscal 2002, they had closed the gap to 98 percent. Individual institutions vary considerably, from Eastern Illinois University, which is at 92.6 percent of its peers, to Chicago State University, which is at 110.7 percent of peer average salaries.

Despite the gains, only one public university ranks in the top ten among its peer institutions – the University of Illinois at Chicago is seventh among 22 institutions in its peer group.

The salary study also cautions that progress toward competitive salaries may be stymied by the state’s fiscal crisis. No new state dollars went to the salary initiative in fiscal 2003 when appropriations to public universities fell $91 million or 6.1 percent below FY02 levels. In addition, public universities are required to contribute $45 million from general fund appropriations to health insurance premiums. “The absence of salary increase funds will hamper institutional efforts to improve salary competitiveness in fiscal year 2003, and institutions will be challenged to retain the progress reflected in this report,” the salary analysis states.

In other business, Board members will hear presentations from four colleges and universities on “best practices” under the annual Results Reports they supply to the Board of Higher Education. Representatives from Kennedy-King College will speak about their culinary and hospitality showcase dinner; the University of Illinois at Chicago will report on its Laboratory of Integrative Neuroscience; the University of St. Francis will showcase its REAL Bridge Program; and Western Illinois University will demonstrate its success in integrating technology into teacher preparation.

The Board also will hear a report on persistence and degree completion, outlining the various factors that influence a student’s progress toward a college degree and highlighting activities throughout Illinois’ higher education system to promote student success.

The Board will be updated on its new Committee on Affordability, created at its August meeting to undertake the first comprehensive study of college affordability since a similar panel was formed a decade ago. The study will be a joint venture with the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, whose Chairman J. Robert Barr will co-chair the affordability study with IBHE member, Robert English. The committee will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, October 2 at the Thompson Center in Chicago.

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