

Summary of the 2008 ASU Faculty Senate Finance Report

The committee highlights the items below as the most significant findings of their study:

1. ASUJ faculty qualifications are deteriorating at the same time that the research and graduate mission is being stressed in strategic mission documents. Graduate education and higher research goals both require a faculty with higher, not lower, levels of credentials.
2. The number of faculty employees has only increased slightly while professional and administrative staff have grown substantially over time.
3. Faculty salaries are not keeping pace with national, regional, or comparable state institutions. This threatens the institution's ability to retain the type of faculty needed to meet the institution's mission and goals.
4. The institutional spending on teaching as a % of E&G is the lowest in the state. This shows a lack of institutional priority for the teaching function.
5. Spending on athletics at most 4-year public institutions in the state transfers amounts away from the academic mission in a manner that faculty find unconscionable. While student athletic fees at ASUJ are comparable to many other 4-year schools in Arkansas, ASUJ's use of auxiliary profits as a means of financing its athletic programs is unsustainable in the long run.
6. ASUJ's charges for tuition are comparable to that of other 4 year public institutions in the state.
7. ASUJ overall headcount and FTE's have held roughly steady. However, the undergraduate FTE enrollment has actually declined.
8. The headcount and FTE's at institutions across the state are influenced by scholarship policy. The percentage of tuition and fees allocated to scholarships at ASUJ is in the middle ground; but HSU's, UCA's, and ATU's highly competitive (some might say predatory) scholarship strategies are increasing their enrollment numbers. Legislative caps have had little effect so far.
9. Though UCA has increased numbers of students significantly through its generous scholarship policies and pays slightly higher teaching salaries, the ASU System appears to have better liquidity, less debt, and higher levels of unrestricted net assets than UCA.
10. Though the ASU System generally had higher levels of foundation assets than UCA relative to tuition and state appropriations in FY06, ASU foundation assets levels are still quite low given the university's mission and goals of increasing its research and academic profile.

Recommendations of the 2008 ASU Faculty Senate Finance Committee

One purpose of the Faculty Senate Finance Committee report is to provide factual input into campus budgeting processes. Given the findings above, the committee recommends the following priorities in the coming budget deliberations:

1. It is essential that more resources be allocated to teaching salaries.
 - a. Given that faculty salaries have not kept pace at the national, regional, or state level, it is extremely important that the equity review process outlined in the officially recognized Faculty Handbook be fully functioning and fully funded.
 - b. Providing funding for competitive initial faculty salary offers is needed to attract qualified candidates for new positions.
2. Additions to administrative and professional staff need to be funded as part of the regular budgeting process, rather than having positions added ad hoc. Administrative and professional staff lines should be carefully scrutinized in the budgeting process to determine whether some functions can be streamlined with salary savings redirected to the academic mission.
3. Athletic funding, including the choice of conference, needs to be a matter that is addressed openly with genuine input from faculty and other campus constituents. The academic mission is impacted by athletics; this is too important and too costly an endeavor to be decided by the Board of Trustees in isolation from campus input.
4. ASU Foundation balances need to be increased significantly. Further, ASUJ relative spending on faculty salaries, department budgets, and research is the lowest in the state. Therefore, funding for academic programs should be the number one priority when seeking to increase donations to the Foundation.