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President's Weekly Perspective, 2008_03_17

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Monday Morning Message
March 17, 2008

Good morning and Happy St. Patrick's Day to all of you who are Irish or make claims to be for the day.

I want to take this time to thank all of you who have contributed to our budgeting process. It was gratifying to hear the really thoughtful ideas from faculty, staff and students that focus on helping our students succeed. I've had frank and insightful conversations with leaders and members from all of our constituencies. I understand and appreciate their issues and I'm confident that they understand the particular difficulties we face in crafting this year's budget.

Last Wednesday, the Regents approved my recommendation for faculty and staff compensation, which was to give an average 2% increase to staff and 3% to faculty. Everyone on this campus appreciates the hard work of our staff. They comprise the engine that keeps this institution running. The University, however, is facing an immediate and serious problem – the loss of faculty. I appreciate how Staff Council President Vanessa Shields framed the discussion about compensation. The extra 1% for faculty compensation is the University's effort to try to address issues of parity. I thank our staff for understanding that we have to do whatever we can to keep our faculty, even in rough economic times.

I thank our Regents for taking steps to compensate our lowest paid employees and to increase funding for our part time faculty and graduate assistants. We will also be working with the Regents to determine exactly what our unencumbered fund balances are. We will continue working on the goals the Regents have set for us without placing an undue burden on our students. I especially want to thank student leadership for again stepping up to the plate and realizing that the future strength of this institution depends in part on future tuition increases.

We will continue to do everything we can to provide the best possible compensation package for our faculty and staff. I'm pleased that our health benefits have stabilized, thanks to the diligent work of our HR folks. It is a tough year economically, and we're doing the best we can. Our goal is to pay our employees as much as possible, knowing that it will never be what they truly deserve.

(include something about tournament invites, we hope)

Have a good week.
David J. Schmidly