

May 14, 2025

To: Faculty Senate
From: John Patrick Rice, Ph.D. Chair, Compensation and Benefits Committee
Re: Salary Reviews and Faculty Compensation

For the past several months the Compensation and Benefits Committee has been considering matters pertaining to salary equity. In January, we began a process of reviewing all teaching and professional salaries in search of inequities. After a time-consuming and thorough review of all salaries, we found disparities, but no inequities. The details of that process are available in committee minutes presented to Faculty Senate this Spring.

After presenting our report, the committee received four inquiries from faculty regarding performing individual salary reviews. Of those four, one made a formal request to the committee for a review as required. I responded to that individual that the committee had run out of time to complete the review this spring and that it would be considered in the fall.

Soon after the committee submitted its report, I spoke with faculty members about my reservations with a faculty committee leading this process. I have since reconsidered my position. I believe the Faculty Senate should be involved in this process. Faculty make recommendations for hire, for tenure, and for meritorious service. All these recommendations involve faculty salaries. Therefore, faculty salary review falls within the responsibility and authority of the Faculty Senate.

I encourage everyone to review NSHE policy regarding Community College Faculty Salary. The policies can be found in the Nevada System of Higher Education Procedures and Guidelines Manual, Chapter 3. It was most recently revised in July 2024. I also encourage everyone to read Title 2 – NSHE CODE Chapters 5.4 and 5.5, most recently revised in September 2024. These documents show that all NSHE faculty salaries are based on Academic Standing ranging from Grade 1, Less than a bachelor degree to Grade 5, Earned Doctorate. The documents also show that faculty hired in Rank 0 and Range 0 (which we sometimes refer to as “Zero Track”) may receive salaries as approved by the President.

When the Compensation and Benefits Committee reviewed salaries and identified discrepancies, we found that in every case, the discrepancies were among faculty hired at Rank 0, Range 0. Those employees chose a different path than those who chose the tenure path. There is no codified “salary schedule” for Rank 0/Range.

Now the Faculty Senate has the opportunity and the obligation to clarify the importance of academic preparation among the teaching faculty. We are an academic institution in the business of providing training and education that results in an academic credential. Academic credentials, service and performance are the only codified measure available to us to determine how we are rewarded for our work. Longevity (which can also be considered “experience”) is rewarded upon initial hire. It is not a factor in meritorious advancement of salary.

There is no codified method or guideline to measure Rank 0 and Range 0. The policy leaves those measures to the discretion of the President.

So, where do we go from here?

I look to our health sciences area for a good example. Health sciences must answer to multiple accrediting and other oversight organizations. Many of those organizations require faculty to hold advanced degrees. However, those degrees assure our students, their future employers, and the patients they will ultimately serve that they have received the highest quality education possible. In addition, those faculty members receive salaries that approach or exceed those of their peers in industry.

One way for faculty to take personal responsibility for advancement in their salary is to work towards and earn a higher or advanced degree. This is made affordable to GBC faculty through grants-in-aid, which are themselves additional compensation. It is possible for a Great Basin College faculty member to earn a bachelor or a master degree at a significantly discounted price. Recent NSHE policy now makes it even easier for students to obtain substantial credit for “real world experience”. It has never been easier for our students and faculty to strengthen their academic preparation for teaching college students. These processes are in place and often result in an increase in compensation. All of our faculty are given equal opportunity to advance themselves academically.

We already require part time instructors and concurrent instructors to hold advanced degrees in order to teach our dual and current enrollment students throughout the college. It then follows that all of our students in every area of the college, their future employers, and the people they will serve should have assurance they have received the highest quality education possible. Academic credentials are the single measure the Nevada System of Higher Education has chosen to provide that assurance.

And so, we must also ask ourselves difficult questions. It is time to have a discussion about whether this is a standard we will hold for all of our faculty.

There will be challenging discourse. The conversation will address the fundamentals of the importance of having a highly skilled and academically prepared faculty in all areas of instruction. It is an excellent opportunity to strengthen our faculty, provide higher compensation when warranted, and provide the highest quality education to our students.