

Dear Members of the Faculty:

On October 7, 2005, I sent you the e-mail below with a proposal to recognize outstanding faculty achievement through the establishment of an annual program that would give up to 50 nonrecurring awards of \$5,000 each to faculty members for outstanding achievements in teaching, research, and service. That e-mail follows with the description of the proposed program.

There also were two open forums held to discuss the pros and cons of the proposal. Two different evaluations of the proposal's merits were expressed at the two forums.

At the first forum on October 12, 2005, there was a small group of faculty members in attendance in addition to Faculty Senate Chair Siegel and myself. This group was mainly against the program, citing concerns about the criteria, the selection process, redundancy with the established merit evaluation process, and the fixed amount of the awards. If such money were available, the majority of this group wanted it placed in merit.

At the second forum on October 17, 2005, another small group of faculty members was present. The second group was for the awards. Members of this group responded to some of the concerns from the first group, suggesting that these awards be clearly distinguished from merit and be for unique and distinct achievements that would stand up to public scrutiny as worthy of recognition. They wanted to make sure that the awards were considered separately from merit and did not preclude merit in any way. This group was supportive of the merit system and recognizing faculty for achievements.

What unites these two seemingly opposite evaluations of the awards is the need for recognition of exceptional achievement. The majority of both groups were supportive of a return to merit raises. One of the telling arguments against committing these funds to the Faculty Achievement Awards at this time is the sense I got from several people that the rules of the game were changed. They were counting on merit returning as a part of base, and the original proposal superseded those expectations.

Another issue was the distribution and disbursement of the funds, and several terms need to be clarified. The \$250,000 Academic Affairs received for this purpose was given on a recurring basis. That means that the money will recur or be in every fiscal year's budget from now on. That differs from nonrecurring which means for one fiscal year only. For example, on the revenue side, monies that are left over from the previous year (called carry-forward or fund balances) are nonrecurring in nature—they are only available for that fiscal year. Expenditures can be recurring or nonrecurring in nature as well. If funds are put into a salary base, that salary base needs to be paid annually. That is a recurring cost because it has to be paid each subsequent fiscal year. A one-time salary bonus, however, is a one-time payment, only paid in one fiscal year.

Based on the thread of wanting merit recognition that ran through both of these conversations with the faculty as well as the other communications received from faculty, it would seem that a hybrid of nonrecurring merit bonuses and nonrecurring outstanding achievement awards is the best answer. The \$250,000 nonrecurring carry-forward from 2005-06 (since we did not use it this year) will be added to the \$250,000 for 2006-07 (the new money available next year) to make a pool of \$500,000 nonrecurring available for one-time allocations in 2006-07. For future years, there will be a minimum \$500,000 pool for nonrecurring merit awards each year. Off of the top of this

\$500,000, there will be \$450,000 for nonrecurring merit bonuses distributed based on each college's full-time faculty eligible for merit consideration and awarded according to each college's procedures for awarding merit raises. The remaining \$50,000 will be set aside for 10 awards for outstanding achievement.

There was some debate over whether we should just put the money available into a recurring merit raise for next year using up the current funds available versus disbursing it as nonrecurring bonuses maintaining a recurring source of revenue available every year for similar bonuses. There will be some who would prefer to have the merit put into their base salaries. That is the practice with which everyone is familiar. But then the money is gone and what about the next year? We might have funds for merit raises and we might not. The following year might be a more productive one for a faculty member, but there might not be any funds to recognize his or her accomplishment. By proceeding with nonrecurring bonuses based on funds that will stay budgeted for that purpose, we can assure the faculty that there will be recognition of meritorious activity each year with a minimum of \$450,000 to recognize those accomplishments. There will be consistency both in level of funding and recognition of annual achievements.

Across-the-board increases to address cost of living will continue to be put into base salaries.

For the outstanding faculty achievement awards, \$50,000 will be designated for 10 awards of \$5,000. Each college and the Libraries will submit to the Provost five names of individuals deemed as outstanding through the departmental merit process for their work during the review period. The Provost and the college and Libraries deans will select from those 30 candidates the 10 individuals whom they find to be outstanding among their peers for unique and distinct achievements that would stand up to public scrutiny as worthy of recognition.

A further note, as the colleges, departments, and faculty consider the distribution of the funds for merit for next year, we all need to be mindful of several policies regarding merit raises that are in the University Merit Pay Guidelines section (Part III) of the Faculty Handbook.

- I.C. .... University merit dollars are to be divided proportionately among departments based on the number of full-time faculty who are eligible for merit consideration in each department. Individuals who exceed minimum performance standards to an equivalent extent receive merit awards in equal dollar amounts.
- II.A. (...the [merit determination] system must:) Be designed to differentiate with regard to performance so that no portion of the merit funds may be allocated across the board.
- II.J. (recently approved by the Board) At such time when merit money is available, previous non-merit years should be considered, and each department shall create a committee to deal with awarding credit for past non-merit years. This practice will be applied in the event that non-merit years occur in the future.

I appreciate all who came forward with their comments and suggestions. The two forums helped to refine what needed to be done. A university is a place of discussion and debate and this process helped to show the benefits of open discussion and joint problem-solving.

E-mail sent to all Faculty on October 7, 2005

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**From:** Academic Affairs Campus Mailing

**Sent:** Fri 10/7/2005 5:42 PM

**Subject:** Open forums to discuss the proposal for Faculty Recognition Awards for Outstanding Performance to be held on October 12 and October 17, 2005.

This message is being sent on behalf of Dr. James Chapman.

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In this year's budget approval was given for \$250,000 to be used to recognize faculty for outstanding performance. Before formally announcing these awards and proceeding to administer the process, there will be open forums for faculty to discuss with the Provost and the Chair of the Senate the proposal below. Meetings will be held at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 12, and Monday, October 17, in the Faculty Lounge of the Keen Johnson Building.

## **D R A F T**

### **Faculty Recognition Awards for Outstanding Performance**

**Rationale:** A number of faculty each year perform in outstanding ways. These awards are to recognize those activities for that time period.

**Award:** There will no more than fifty, non-recurring awards of \$5,000 each. These awards can be given for as many years as the individual qualifies for the award. Should there be less than fifty outstanding candidates in any year, there will be fewer awards given.

**Time Period:** The award will be given for outstanding performance in a given fiscal year.

**Criteria:** The outstanding performance can be related to teaching, service, or research. Priority will be given to individuals with outstanding performance in both teaching and research or teaching and service. These selections should be able to withstand the scrutiny of the University community and will be posted with rationale on the Academic Affairs website to honor these individuals and set the standards for future awards.

**Who May Apply:** Full-time, tenured, tenure-track, or library faculty members can self-nominate or be nominated by anyone in the Eastern Kentucky University community. The reasons why this person is an exceptional faculty candidate need to be described with the specifics of the achievements supporting that exceptionality being stated as well.

**Selection Committee:** The selection committee will consist of outstanding emeritus faculty.

Nominations should be submitted by no later than March 15.