

Op-Ed for the Queen's Journal

By

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Thanks to the *Journal* for re-examining budget issues facing Queen's. "Faculty raise questions over compensation" (*Journal*, May 26) began this process but contained some errors in fact. My purpose is both to present the facts and to move the discussion forward.

Corrections in fact:

1. All salaries make up 70% of the operating budget. Academic salaries make up 29% of the 70%. Operating budget is 37% of the total budget. Academic salaries make up approximately 15% of the entire university budget.
2. QUFA and the University Administration have approved no retirement package yet. QUFA negotiators rejected the Principal's proposal that the Deans would decide who would be eligible for a package and allowed to retire. QUFA maintains that any retirement package should be available to each eligible faculty member so that it is fair to all individuals who wish to retire.
3. The Collective Agreement (CA) between the University Administration and QUFA does not protect all faculty from layoff. Some term adjuncts were told at the end of Winter Term 2009 that they would not be re-hired to teach in 2009-2010. This has had extreme impact, not only on the individuals, but also on those departments where the University Administration has not hired enough full-time faculty to offer necessary courses. It is hard to understand why the Faculty of Arts and Sciences chose not to offer new contracts to these instructors who have a great

impact on students by teaching large lower level courses or smaller, individualized, skills-oriented courses.

4. The wage increase negotiated by the University Administration and QUFA in June 2008 was 3.2% for each of 3 years. That figure was never an issue for the administration's team during the negotiations. This 3.2% is in the same range as our competitor universities and less than some public service employees received. The Board of Trustees approved the CA with full knowledge of its costs. Its approval by both the Board and QUFA made the 2008-2011 CA between Queen's University and QUFA a legally binding document. Both parties to the agreement are obliged to maintain it.
5. QUFA rejected the Principal's proposal for five unpaid days because faculty salaries are not the primary cause of Queen's financial problems. Furthermore, funding the learning environment is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees, not the employees.

Some additional contexts and questions:

1. Queen's does not lack resources. Queen's continues to share (with UBC) the highest credit rating of any university in Canada. Queen's owns property not directly related to delivering current academic programs. Property could be used as collateral for loans or Queen's could simply borrow money as it has done in the past. Has the Board of Trustees investigated how academic programs could be supported through a financial plan for the future of Queen's University?
2. At the QUFA Fall General Meeting 2008, faculty requested an independent audit, but the University Administration turned down the proposal. Why is the Board of Trustees opposed to an independent audit of the university's books if it has nothing to hide from the public?

3. The Board of Trustees is paying salary and taxable benefits to two principals (Hitchcock and Williams), while only one works for Queen's. This cost about \$616,000 in 2008 alone. There are others no longer working at Queen's who are being paid by the Board, but that information is not easily available to the public. Will the Board of Trustees publicly reveal what it is paying ex-employees?
4. Each academic unit in the university completes an Internal Academic Review (IAR) every 7 years. Invariably, the IARs show that academic units are under-funded, but there is no remedy. The IAR policy (<http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/policies/iarrev/index.html>) clearly states that a "regular report on university-wide indicators" shall be made and the IAR "system of evaluations must be closely integrated into the decision-making processes of the University." This policy has not been followed by the Administration. The deep cuts implemented in the Faculty of Arts and Science are the result of accounting directives rather than of academic reviewing. The Board of Trustees did not put a long-term academic and recovery plan in place before making deep cuts. Why not?
5. Administrators' salaries have risen more steeply than faculty salaries. Administrative positions have increased as faculty numbers have fallen. One vice principal's salary increased by 35% in a single year. His office has at least two more assistants than it did two years ago. The costs attached to administrative offices are not easily verifiable in the operating budget, as key public data were discontinued in 2008-2009. Despite six years of steady increases in student enrolment, most departmental budgets now face cuts to the point where some academic programmes can barely survive. Also, faculty are forced to take on ever-increasing administrative tasks for the University Administration. Will the Board of Trustees explain to the Queen's community why

financial support for University Administration continues to grow while the budget for teaching and research continues to shrink?

Before making decisions to shrink academic programs and reduce the number of faculty who teach the students and do the research, Queen's needs to disclose accurate information to the public. A university is not a corporation that can make severe cuts in bad times, re-tool the factory later, and still produce a product everyone wants. Teaching and research are long-term processes that require continuity and long-term security. All that a university has to offer its community is the quality of education and research it provides. Once Queen's loses its reputation for being one of the top four universities in Canada, it will take generations to regain that reputation.

Queen's University's Administration and Board of Trustees need to stop blaming their employee groups, take their leadership obligations seriously, and develop a fair financial plan for maintaining the high quality university Queen's has been. We need administrative leadership that holds as its top priority the quality of education and research at Queen's and works conscientiously to achieve it.