

Interim Progress Report from Wage Study Task Force

July 2005

The Wage Study Task Force was convened by Faculty Senate President Candace White during academic year 2004-2005. We were charged with updating an earlier campus wage study produced in 2000-2001, a time when there were active living wage campaigns both in the City of Knoxville and at UTK. During that period the Faculty Senate passed a resolution in support of a living wage for campus workers. (A number of documents related to the previous wage study and the living wage resolution are still available on the Faculty Senate web site. They are listed at the end of this Report for those interested in tracing some of the history of this issue at UTK.)

Co-chairs of the present Wage Study Task Force are Professor Fran Ansley (Law), Dr. David Linge (Religious Studies, emeritus), and Dr. Mary Rogge (Social Work). The Task Force met regularly during spring 2005 and has now continued into the summer. Dr. Candace White and Dr. Beauvais Lyons from the Faculty Senate, Elizabeth Gentry from United Campus Workers, and Dr. Cynthia Rocha from Social Work, as well as two Social Work graduate students, Courtney Cronley and Brenda Snow, made important contributions to our work. We have received indispensable help from Alan Chesney, Mike Herbstritt, and Martie Gleason at Human Resources throughout the process.

Our original goal was to produce an updated report by May 2005. However, as we assessed and reviewed the data we were beginning to gather, we realized that more time would be needed to complete our charge. We so reported at the May meeting of the Faculty Senate, and we are presently scheduled to return with a final report at the October meeting this fall. This Interim Progress Report is intended to provide a brief narrative about our activities and our plans, together with some documents that should give interested parties an idea of our work and some of the issues we have encountered thus far.

Since the last study, a number of changes have taken place. They have complicated our task, but they also present new opportunities and capacities. Those changes include:

- reconfiguration of UT pay grades— with some previous grades being collapsed into each other, and all grades re-numbered;
- the advent of the IRIS system (which puts a great deal more information at our command, but in a form not entirely analogous to that available at the time of the earlier study);
- increases in the cost of living since 2000-2001;
- the emergence of several national projects that calculate figures for “living wages” and “self-sufficiency standards” for different geographical locations, using methods and arriving at numbers that should be considered as possible alternatives to the living wage calculated back in 2000-2001.

In light of these changes, the members of the Task Force decided that we should produce more than a linear update of the older study. We do plan to provide current figures that are keyed to the prior study, at least to the extent existing records will reasonably allow. But we also decided to take on what we believe will be the more useful and forward-looking effort of producing a report that would move beyond the prior one in several ways.

First, we hope to develop data sets that take better advantage of present informational resources and are consciously designed to be replicable at chosen intervals in the future without undue expenditure of time and effort. Replicability would put future Faculty Senates in a position to track changes and trends in campus compensation patterns over time.

Second, we hope to widen the lens used by the previous study. For instance, the earlier report focused in the main on “non-exempt” employees (that is, hourly employees, those who are not exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act). Of course information focused on hourly employees is especially important when one is focusing on an issue like the living wage those special concern is for those toward the bottom of the income ladder. Such information remains important for this update. But we conclude that on-going faculty assessment of compensation patterns at the University, even when guided primarily by a concern for those toward the bottom, would be better served by a fuller picture.

Accordingly, we have worked with Human Resources to enlarge the data sets from the prior study to include all those who are employed full-time by the University and who work here on campus. The fuller “snapshot” we are developing shows hourly and salaried employees, including staff, faculty and all levels of administration.

Of course, as the 2001 study also recognized, no picture of campus incomes can be complete without information about what contracted employees are paid. Getting access to this information presents different problems, but the Task Force is working to resolve them. We are happy to report that this summer for the first time, we have received answers from Aramark to questions we put to them about their workforce and their pay scales. We continue to seek similar information from Service Solutions.

The Task Force will likely recommend additional data that we believe should be included in a snapshot of the University’s compensation structures to be taken annually or at some other periodic interval requested by the Faculty Senate. For instance, we believe the University should regularly assess how its employees are distributed across income levels by categories such as gender and race. IRIS should make it easy for this information to be provided as part of a periodic report.

The compensation of part-time employees is also an important matter not included in the past study and unlikely to be addressed in ours. The extreme diversity of this group at UTK makes analysis difficult, but in our view this cohort should be studied in the future and then included in future snapshots.

Those interested in more information about the Task Force and its work may wish to consult the links set out below. You are also welcome to contact any of the co-chairs of the Task Force,

Professor Fran Ansley at <ansley@utk.edu>, Dr. David Linge at <dlinge@utk.edu>, Dr. Mary Rogge at <mrogge@utk.edu>.

Selected documents related to the work of the 2004-2005 Task Force:

Sample minutes, February 17 meeting

Sample minutes, March 17 meeting

Working Goals of the Wage Study Task Force

Selected documents related to the prior study and the Senate resolution of 2001:

2000 UTK Study of Wages for Hourly Workers (March 2000)

<http://web.utk.edu/~senate/WageStudy.pdf>

Living Wage Fact Sheet (October 2000)

<http://web.utk.edu/~senate/LivingWageFactSheet.html>

Faculty Senate Resolution on a Living Wage (March 5, 2001)

<http://web.utk.edu/~senate/ResLivingWage.html>

Report of 2000-2001 Senate Budget Committee (April 2001)

<http://web.utk.edu/~senate/BudgetRpt4-01.html>

Estimated cost of wage improvements (April 2001)

<http://web.utk.edu/~senate/LivingWageEstimates.html>

Living Wage Campaign: Frequently Asked and Important Questions

<http://web.utk.edu/~senate/LivingWageFAQ.html>