Minutes--October 8, 2003 Meeting

Present: Alice Christ, Raju Govindarajulu, Mitzi Johnson, Kathie Kern, Rob Lodder, Chuck Staben, Eric Thompson, Ernest J. Yanarella (chair)

The meeting began at 1:05 PM.

The chair began by introducing E. Thompson and C. Staben, who were absent for the first meeting due to scheduling problems, and R. Lodder, who was joining the committee for the first time on the recommendation of other committee members.

A. Christ drew upon the Morehead State University experience and suggested how this model offered important components for how this committee's report might be structured. These included: setting a goal, offering a time frame, and formulating a distribution strategy. C. Staben discussed the issues of merit and equity, suggesting that addressing these matters involved finding local mechanisms and not a systemic approach. He also underlined the importance of the committee pointing to funding sources that could underwrite any recommendations. In addition, Staben argued that the issue of benefits and other compensation was at least as important as salary concerns. He also outlined the basic features of the Wethington bonuses for meritorious faculty that had been introduced by the administration, though its impact has been restricted to a few Colleges. M. Johnson noted that both the President's Commission on Women and the Work-Life task force had issued reports favoring a cafeteria-style benefits approach over a universal benefits approach. Rather than making tuition waiver for faculty dependents a blanket benefit, she favored the cafeteria "pick-and-choose" option where each faculty member would be allocated a set sum toward benefits as he or she choose (tuition waiver, child care, retirement, additional insurance, etc.). The "hot button" issues of tuition waivers and partner benefits were discussed in this context by several members. C Staben indicated the relatively inexpensive and high profile nature of the tuition waiver benefit and estimated that while fewer faculty families would take advantage of it, many staff families would.

R. Govindarajulu opened a new line of discussion on the subject of salary compression/inversion. He offered to bring statistics drawn from open salary records to the next meeting. Other committee members questioned how serious--or important--salary compression/inversion was at this University.

The committee then explored what goal would be the focus of the committee report. Should the latest Strategic Plan's goal of reaching 90% of the median salary level of the benchmarks or should the committee recommend more specific department or discipline median? The chair raised the issue of increasing the Strategic Plan's targeted goal of 90% to 95% as a higher objective to shoot for? “Back-of-the-envelope” calculations were performed to estimate how much additional money would be necessary to fund each target, indicating that perhaps $8.8 million would be required for meeting the 90% goal and $16+ million for the 95% goal.
Another point of intense discussion involved whether equity issues tied to faculty who have been at UK for lengthy periods or merit issues tied to faculty who have been successful grant-getters and achieved high levels of research productivity should be the predominant target of committee recommendations. The chair also argued for the need to balance considerations of equity and meritorious performance in any report emanating from the committee.

It was pointed by one committee member that administrative salary increases are separately funded and that university folklore suggests such increases have been invariably higher than average faculty salary increases. Should administrative salaries be capped over folded into faculty salary pools or distributed at the same percentage levels?

Once more, the nagging issue of how to fund tentative proposals flowing from committee discussions came up.

The chair encouraged committee members to continue these discussions in email exchanges between meetings as a way of maintaining continuity of discussion and further exploration of issues. The chair also identified the following issues as ones that had begun to sift out for explicit comment and recommendation in a future report: equity, merit, benefits/compensation, funding. These concerns should become the foci of the next two or three meetings.

The meeting closed at 2:50PM.