



Sept. 15, 2008

Welcome back to a new academic year. It is great to again feel the vibrancy of a campus filled with students; to see the enthusiasm of new learners in our classrooms and residence halls; and to experience the anticipation of great athletic accomplishments and artistic performances. We begin the new year with the largest and most highly qualified freshman class in several years. Our undergraduate enrollment is up over 4.4 percent, and total enrollment is the 3rd highest in school history. We have a beautiful new state-of-the-art campus in Amarillo from which we can better serve the greater Amarillo and northern Panhandle areas. All of this comes as we prepare to launch our Centennial Celebration later this academic year.

Beginning with this Update, I will be providing a monthly electronic President's Update. The purpose of the Update is to provide information and details about issues that are of interest and importance to the WT community. As I develop this Update, I want to encourage you to provide me with suggestions for topics you would like to discuss and the issues on which you would like to have more information. Hopefully, this exchange will make the Update a valuable resource for you and an effective communication channel for me.

In this initial update I want to address the issue of faculty and staff salaries and our need to achieve competitive levels within the market. Based upon our analysis of faculty and staff salaries, it is clear that salaries at WTAMU are below market. Last year, we determined staff salaries were, on average, approximately 20 percent below market while faculty salaries, on average, are in the bottom quartile of salaries for all public universities in Texas.

A priority of our Five-Year Plan is to “Raise the salary levels for faculty and staff to competitive levels for similar ranks and positions among WTAMU’s peer institutions.” In our initial Plan we stated that commencing with fiscal year 2007-08, and for two years thereafter, we would create an annual pool of funds (\$200,000) that would be utilized for market adjustments. In fact, for FY 2007-08 we allocated \$239,857 for this effort. The adjustments were distributed to a total of 177 employees with \$197,309 impacting staff salaries and \$42,548 going to faculty salaries. Of the salaries that were adjusted, 89 percent were below \$50,000 before the adjustment and 64 percent were below \$25,000.

This year (FY 2008-09) we are allocating \$221,318 for market-based salary adjustments, and targeting a greater proportion of the total for faculty positions. This year, 77 employees will see increases with \$85,770 distributed to staff positions and \$135,548 for faculty salaries. Of the positions receiving increases, 79 percent have salaries less than \$50,000 before the adjustments and 36 percent have salaries below \$25,000. Included among these changes are two notable improvements to our salary structure. First, we have raised the minimum hourly wage for staff positions from \$7.50 to a little more than \$8.00, and second, we have raised the floor salary for an assistant professor with the appropriate terminal degree to \$45,000 per academic year and that of associate professors to \$50,000.

As I stated at the Fall Faculty/Staff Convocation, the progress we have made over the past two years does not resolve the problem. That’s well understood. We also know that as we’ve made adjustments at the lower pay levels and hired new positions at market competitive levels we have created some salary compression problems across the campus. Solving both the salary compression and the below competitive market level salary problems will continue to be two of our highest priorities as we outline our budget priorities for the coming years, unfortunately, progress in both areas does not lend itself to short-term solutions. Given our current and projected future funding levels, it is going to take several more years of dedicated effort to adequately address these issues.

I hope this Update is helpful to you and that you will be able to use the information in this and future Updates to better understand both the exciting opportunities and the pending challenges that exist for WTAMU. By working together, communicating openly and keeping our efforts focused on the mission, goals and objectives of our University we can and will elevate WT to a new level of teaching, service and community involvement. I look forward to hearing your ideas for future Updates and am excited about the wonderful semester that lies before us.