

MSU Faculty and Staff:

As we approach the final week or so of our spring semester, I wanted to relay a few brief announcements:

- Title Changes: Dr. Laurie Couch and Dr. Mike Henson, our academic ‘assistant vice presidents’, will now carry the title of ‘Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Student Success’, and ‘Associate Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School’, respectively. This conversion to the nomenclature of Associate Provosts will reflect their roles in the academic world, and better align their titling with their peers across the state and region. These titles are very similar to other universities.
- Faculty Contracts and Staff Salary Notification Letters: As we near the deadline for all annual employee evaluations to be completed on April 30, we will be issuing Faculty Contracts and Staff Salary Notification Letters within the first week or two of May in preparation for the July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020 academic/fiscal year. Please make sure your supervisor has completed your annual evaluation in time.
- Gains Among our Students in Mathematics: Our Department of Mathematics faculty should be highly commended for working with some of our students who are slightly under-prepared in mathematics. Through some redesign of their curriculum, as well as modality of teaching, they have significantly improved our students’ success rate in completing their credit-bearing mathematics course.
- KERS Pension Issues: As most of our campus is aware, the Commonwealth has been grappling, most notably, with KERS pension issues. Presently, and without a Special Legislative Session to alter the pension systems plans, our rates are scheduled to rise from 49% of payroll to 84% of payroll on July 1— costing us an additional several million dollars in pension payments. While we have taken great pains within our budget development process to account for this drastic (and unsustainable) increase, it has been difficult. Thus, I want to compliment all the individuals who have worked over the past few months in helping come up with creative solutions to try to account for this.

As a part of our strategies, albeit some of them temporary, we have been successful at reducing and restructuring debt, reducing overhead costs, redoing a number of contracts for savings, reduced positions when people have either resigned or retired, turned to part-time and/or contracting some areas when people have resigned or retired, reorganized a few areas, and have shifted personnel - both faculty and staff - to areas of highest and most strategic need. Likewise, early ‘estimates’ of new student enrollment for this fall 2019 semester look pretty steady.

Our University is composed of roughly 10,000 students, hundreds of full-time employees, a host of part-time employees, and other affiliates – and is very complex. Knowing this composition and complexity, an organization our size must constantly move and shift to meet changing demands. As a compliment to all on campus, many of you have made a

number of adaptive and transformative shifts and are finding new and creative ways to do some things.

Our goal has been to preserve jobs/positions of our current faculty and staff as much as realistically possible, while trying to keep our tuition and housing cost increases moderated and as low as possible for students. Knowing this we will likely not be able to hire many 'new' KERS eligible positions for some time as we wait until the pension issues show clarity, but will work to preserve the jobs we have presently. As an alternative, we may have to move people around and also use a combination of part-time people and otherwise to accommodate the gaps that arise. Do note we are not in this alone, as our other sister regional universities are in the same position: we simply cannot afford the new KERS pension costs – no university can. In conclusion, we may have to be slow and judicious in hiring for the foreseeable future.

Thank you for what each of you do every day. It is our cumulative efforts that make us a great small/median sized campus, and we must remain focused on our students success.

Jay Morgan
President