

Colleagues:

At my final Board of Regents meeting yesterday, I voted "no" on the budget as well as the president's substantial raise. This email will explain why.

The Budget and Personnel Roster

The 2023-2024 personnel roster and budget were at variance with the organizational chart in the July 15, 2023 BOR Agenda Book. Had this information been accurate or even internally consistent, I would have voted for the budget after stating my personal belief that tuition increases are an unsustainable for struggling regional universities.

As the supplied material was neither accurate nor internally consistent, I felt obligated to vote "no."

The President's response to my notation of error was the standard reply I had received for four years: specific instances of error were attributable to the actions of lower-level administrators or employees, and everyone needed to understand that all we could do is provide a "snapshot" of our dynamic organization. At no point did the President acknowledge:

- Shifts in organizational charts are *shifts in leadership structures* for the organization, not overviews of general employment patterns
- Organizational charts record only the administrators the President appoints or hires
- For accurate record keeping, printed "snapshots" should include the qualifying dates and time stamps the President verbally discloses in addition to the printed dates
- Organizational "snapshots" should be accurate as of the date they are "snapped"

The very real concerns I could no longer ignore: If such simple and easily verifiable information cannot be accurately recorded in a time-sensitive manner, how can we trust record keeping or oversight in general, especially as the President's office renders more and more decision making "confidential"?

The President's Substantial Raise

The BOR agenda also included a negotiated raise for the President (see the attached pdf). In the same meeting where the BOR received reports of increased KERS contributions, declining enrollment, and increased fixed costs, they amended the President's contract to give him:

- a roughly 10% base pay increase
- a completely new annual contribution of 10% of that amended base pay to a new retirement account (creating a roughly 20% raise total)
- increased housing and per diem funding
- sabbatical perks, and
- a 50% bonus of base pay, provided on completion of the new Science building

As I noted during the meeting, I did not see any cause to increase the President' pay beyond the 5% across the board increase he had provided most employees. Given the fact that the institution is still suffering enrollment declines, has the sword of Damocles of the [legislative joint resolution](#) over its head, and would be funding this substantial raise via tuition increases, I could not endorse this extravagant expenditure.

During the brief conversation that followed, I heard two stated justifications that were not factually accurate:

- the President had not received a raise since being hired
- MSU was one of only two institutions in the state "above water" in terms of finances.

And one that does comport with the lived experience of many members of the campus community:

- the need to retain President Morgan to ensure stability in leadership.

The Chair of the BOR did correct the first inaccuracy, noting the President had previously received across the board pay increases. According to the Chair, though, the President had also turned down other perks offered by the Board. Presumably, these prior refusals were a cause for reward in and of itself.

At no point, though, was the contention that MSU is one of the only institutions in the state not in serious economic trouble ever contested. (To my knowledge, only NKU and KSU have documented problems, and only KSU is in a dire straight at the point.)

The claim about stability in leadership was also mystifying to me (not in the least because we just lost an able leader who could have helped facilitate the construction of the new science building—Dean Wayne Miller).

Additionally, anyone accurately informed about the role of Provost, and in receipt of factual accounts of verifiable turn-over rates at other institutions in the state, would be hard pressed to classify the documented record of academic leadership under this President as "stable" or ensuring "stability."

At no point in my time on the Board, though, has the group been adequately educated about the role and function of a Provost. Furthermore, the Board's perception of acceptable organization has been largely shaped by the President's inaccurate "snapshots" and prevailing narrative of organizational normalcy:

- To my knowledge, I am the only Regent who ever raised the issue of instability in leadership as a concern.
- Most of my concerns were raised in written evaluations of the President I provided directly to the BOR chair.
 - I do not know what BOR members, aside from the Chair, had access to these reviews.

- None of my concerns were ever reflected in the yearly evaluations of the President.
- Yearly evaluations of the President were always oral summaries of written comments presented by the BOR Chair.
- There was never any public circulation of written evaluations of the President's performance.

My concern is that we, an institution, cannot even agree to disagree because we are not all in receipt of the facts to make the most informed decisions.

In my estimation, an institution genuinely committed to recruitment and retention would pay its full-time student success professionals with Masters degrees more than that annual housing allotment of its President. You may agree with me, or you may not, but with such partial accounting and curated conversations at the highest levels, will we ever be able to discuss priorities in the "data driven" way we purport to privilege?

I have my doubts, but I will remain committed to accurate recording keeping in the hopes we can abide by the principles we espouse.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns, or any suggestions to aid the institution with more accurate a transparent record keeping.

Thanks in advance.

Annie Adams