

PROFS, Inc.

Public Representation Organization of the Faculty Senate University of Wisconsin - Madison

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Testimony of Professor Louise S. Robbins to the Joint Committee on Employment Relations on Behalf of PROFS, Inc., representing the UW-Madison Faculty

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My name is Louise Robbins. I am a Professor and Director of the School of Library and Information Studies at UW-Madison. I am here today as President of PROFS, Inc., representing the UW-Madison faculty.

I would first like to thank Governor Doyle and the leaders of both houses of the Legislature at the time – including Speaker Huebsch, Senator Robson, Senator Decker, and Rep. Rhoades -- for passing a 2007-2009 state budget that moves the university in the right direction as far as funding our basic needs. And the support for the retention of high demand faculty fund is an important recognition of the need to match offers from other institutions.

The next step in the process of keeping the university competitive is addressing the earnings gap for the many loyal university faculty and staff who have chosen thus far to cast their lot with the state. Headlines in recent weeks demonstrate why this should be a top priority for the state:

- UW-Madison now ranks second among all 600 research universities in the United States for the dollar amount of science and engineering research conducted annually. Research expenditures totaled \$832 million for the 2006 fiscal year, second only to Johns Hopkins.
- UW-Madison researchers continue to bring worldwide attention to our state through their groundbreaking stem cell research. Last week, researchers announced a way to reprogram human skin cells to act like embryonic stem cells, a breakthrough that is being hailed as a new era for stem cell research.
- The Wisconsin State Journal reported yesterday how UW-Madison faculty are focusing on better ways to teach undergraduates. They are coming up with new and innovative strategies for teaching students in large lecture halls.

Yes, these are great stories, and everyone in the state should be proud. But this can't go on forever. We can't expect faculty and staff to continue to produce top-of-the-line results while being paid bargain-basement salaries.

The academic marketplace is starting to catch up with us. In recent years, UW-Madison has become less and less competitive in the market for excellent faculty members. The reasons for this are many, but the most obvious, and perhaps the easiest with which to deal, is faculty compensation that falls substantially (some 10% on average) below not

only our peer group, but in some instances, below that of universities we would hesitate to call our peers.

To reach the median of our peers by the end of this biennium, the UW-Madison faculty would need a pay plan of at least 8% per year. The Board of Regents recommended 5.23% per year as part of a strategy to get faculty and staff compensation to the median over four years. What has been proposed is about half that.

Continuing to chip away at pay plan recommendations is not a smart strategy for the state. The reality is that 2%/2%/1% is simply not enough when the true need is at least 8% per year. Keep in mind that we are talking about getting our salaries to the median, not the top, of a peer group identified by two separate gubernatorial commissions, one appointed by a Democrat and one by a Republican.

Make no mistake about it. Other universities are keenly aware of the great talent pool that exists at UW-Madison and our continuing earnings gap. Those institutions will continue to try to cherry-pick our faculty and out-compete us for new faculty.

If this is the best we can hope for today, then we at PROFS, Inc. hope you will also make a commitment to continue to work with us to provide truly competitive compensation. Competitiveness in attracting and retaining outstanding faculty should be viewed not as part of the budget problem, but as a solution to the future economic success of the state.

Thank you once again for your continuing support of the UW-Madison faculty. You have a difficult job, and I commend you for your willingness to do it.