

washingtonpost.com

College Leaders' Salaries Climb

Raises Outpace Rise in Inflation

By Susan Kinzie
Washington Post Staff Writer
Monday, November 17, 2008; A09

Just as tuition has been rising more quickly than inflation, state college presidents' compensation has been growing faster than other costs of living, and some private university chiefs' annual pay exceeds \$1 million, according to an annual survey being released today by the Chronicle of Higher Education.

The pay for public university presidents rose more than 7 percent last year, and it has risen more than 35 percent since 2003, says the survey, which is raising concerns among lawmakers and some education advocates.

In the Washington area, the University of Virginia's longtime president, John T. Casteen III, received nearly \$800,000 in 2007-08 from public and private sources, making him the third-highest paid public university president last year.

Charles W. Steger, president of Virginia Tech, was paid nearly \$720,000 during the same period, and University of Maryland President C.D. Mote Jr. received \$463,213.

Among the leaders of private schools in the region, outgoing Johns Hopkins University President William Brody earned \$1.06 million in 2006. Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, who stepped down from George Washington University last year, received nearly \$800,000 in 2006.

The survey is based on data, including benefits and other perks, from before the economic downturn. As many families face difficulties in sending their children to college, the pay increases for chief executives at universities is raising concern. And the raises come as national leaders are trying to shore up financial aid and state legislators are cutting budgets for higher education.

"The presidents' salary boost and tuition hikes regularly outpace inflation, just like coaches'," said Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, which has been investigating college costs.

"It's surprising that many public universities are raising their presidents' salaries," he said. "They've argued against an endowment payout requirement, saying state budget crunches force them to fund more of their own operations than private institutions have to. In these hard economic times, apparently belt-tightening is for families and students, not university presidents."

Hopkins spokesman Dennis O'Shea defended Brody's pay, which included money from the university and, separately, Johns Hopkins Medicine, where Brody has served as chairman of the executive committee. O'Shea said he has heard trustees say that Brody is underpaid "for the value he provides the

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university, and has provided the university for 12 years, in terms of improving our status in virtually every area you could think of across the board."

Still, some advocates for students and families cringe at the numbers.

"We shouldn't put the burden on students," said Gregory Cendana, vice president of the U.S. Student Association. He said he supports fair compensation for university leaders, "but when we're talking about salaries almost at a million dollars, where is the relief for students?"

The increases will probably taper off soon, said Maryland Sen. James C. Rosapepe, (D-Prince George's), a former member of the board of regents of the University System of Maryland. He cited two reasons.

"With the international financial crisis and the recession in the American economy, I think everybody in the public sector and the private sector is going to be looking at less job security and smaller pay increases as we go through the recession," Rosapepe said.

"The second thing is that executive compensation for college presidents grew very rapidly in recent years, as did compensation for corporate executives," he continued. "I think there is clearly, in the financial markets and in the public, a concern that executive compensation has gotten too disconnected from the compensation for rank-and-file working people."

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