Date: February 5, 2015

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From: Sharon L. Vasquez, Provost, Chair

Subject: President’s Commission on Full-time Faculty Compensation

On behalf of President Harrison, thank you for agreeing to serve, or continuing to serve, on the President’s Commission on Full-time Faculty Compensation.

The President’s initial charge to the commission when he created the group during the 2011-12 academic year included this statement: “Here is the essential goal for your group: to recommend to me a multi-year plan to increase faculty compensation in order to keep us competitive with our peer group of colleges and universities. In order to do so it is important that we have a clear sense of the complexities involved in considerations of compensation and the ability to set priorities for addressing the major factors we confront, including but not limited to: benchmarking, equity, merit recognition, and disciplinary-based market pressures.”

Our current charge is to build on the successful work of efforts to date of the commission by accomplishing the following in a timely manner: 1) to “age” our existing salary framework so that it reflects the most recent faculty salary benchmark data available by using the sources and methodology adopted previously by the commission; 2) to forward recommendations for a multi-year plan to increase faculty compensation in order to keep us competitive with our peer group of colleges and universities; 3) to set priorities for addressing the major compensation factors we confront, including recognition of performance, fairness/equity, and disciplinary-based market pressures; 4) to continue building a greater faculty-wide understanding of the complexities involved in considerations of compensation; and 5) to increase transparency where possible without violating individual faculty members’ privacy.
You may remember that one of the most important recommendations from the commission when it issued its report in 2012 was for the institution to move forward with its top priority: to raise full time faculty salaries—for those faculty members who are academically qualified and performing satisfactorily—to the minimums outlined for each rank, by college/school in our recommended salary framework. The university has completed this goal by committing over $600,000 in permanent funds to complete what we have called the “raising to the minimum” process. Final adjustments in this two year process are now complete and will be reflected in 2015-16 faculty contracts. I am particularly proud that we have been able to take this important step in a challenging financial climate. And I believe such progress would not have been possible without the 18 month long compensation study under taken by the commission.

A related recommendation from the commission was to move forward with creation of a "valid, reliable, and institutionally owned annual evaluation system for all full-time faculty that is consistent across the schools/colleges but reflects the nuances of each." I am pleased that in partnership with the Faculty Senate leadership, a task force has completed a year of study and issued their report and recommendations. We are gathering input and will design and execute a pilot study this spring of an enhanced process.

In order to forward an initial recommendation for FY16 investment, we must move quickly. Fortunately we will be building on the research, recommendations, and methodology framed by the commission’s work from spring 2011 through the recent “Raising to the Minimum” exercise. The commission will continue to work with Frank Casagrande, a compensation consultant, who is familiar with the University of Hartford. He has provided important expertise to the commission from the onset and the President and I believe he will add value to the next phase of our work.

Faculty compensation remains an important initiative for the President and for me. In order to remain competitive, the university must attract and maintain a diverse and energetic faculty. Compensation is, of course, an important part of what attracts and retains faculty members. As the President has often reminded us, we will be challenged in determining how to be fair, appropriately competitive, and prudent in the commitment of finite university resources.

I realize that we all are juggling challenging workloads and a number of priorities; however, I ask that you make this important work part of your service commitment to the University of Hartford. Robert McAlpin, Director of Budgeting and Financial Oversight for Academic Affairs, will be providing planning support and budget expertise to the group. You will be hearing from him shortly.

Compensation is an important topic for the campus, and also a highly controversial one. I therefore implore, as has Walt, to keep all the information you will be given in order to fulfill your charge strictly confidential.

Please see the attached agenda for Frank Casagrande next week. New members of the commission are invited to an important orientation, then all commission members are encouraged to attend the Town Hall Meeting on “Aging our Faculty Salary Framework.” The actual commission meeting has been scheduled based on your responses to the recent Dodle Poll. I regret that we could not find a time that works 100% for everyone.

I thank you for agreeing to serve your fellow faculty and the university. I look forward to working with you.