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Extent and Use of Summer Incentive Funds

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Question:

1) What is the total dollar amount of Summer Incentive money returned to ALL colleges (i.e., how much did all colleges together receive) each year for the past 3 years?

2) What is the total dollar amount of Summer Incentive money given to each college (i.e., how much did every individual college receive) each year for the past 3 years? Please provide a breakdown by college.

3) What is the total dollar amount of Summer Incentive money given to each department for each of the past three years? Please provide a breakdown by department.

4) In what year did a percentage of Summer Incentive money come to be considered "recurring funds"? How was that decision reached?

5) In each year since that date, what is the total dollar amount of the Summer Incentive money made available to each college that has been considered to be "recurring funds"? Please provide a breakdown by college.

6) In each year since Summer Incentive money could be used as "recurring funds," what is the total dollar amount of these recurring funds that has been used by each college for "market adjustments" for faculty (formerly known as "raises")? Please provide a breakdown by college.

7) In each year since Summer Incentive money could be used as "recurring funds," how many faculty members in each college have received "market adjustments" from Summer Incentive recurring funds? Please provide a breakdown by college.

8) In what departments have these "market adjustments" occurred? Please provide a breakdown of the numbers by department.
9) How have faculty been selected to receive "market adjustments" from Summer Incentive funds?

10) What would prohibit designating a greater percentage of Summer Incentive funds as “recurring funds” and using them for an increased number of "market adjustments" of faculty salaries?

Rationale:

Most faculty have had no increase in their salaries for five years. Repeatedly, faculty have been told that the money for salary increases is "in Atlanta." But, as is evident from the past use of Summer Incentive money for "market adjustments," there is money in Statesboro that has been devoted to increasing faculty salaries. The process by which such adjustments have been made has been entirely opaque to the faculty who deserve to know the extent of this use of funds and the reasons why these funds have been so apportioned.

Signed,
Robert Costomiris
Michael Moore
Michelle Haberland
Rob Pirro
María Adamos
Rob Yarbrough

Response:

10/9/2012: the RFI was approved and referred to Provost Bartels.
update 10/14/12: administrative response is attached.

Attached: RFI Summer Incentive Money

Minutes: 10/17/2012: RFI: Extent and Use of Summer Incentive Funds
Mynard displayed onscreen the administrative answer rather than the form of the RFI because the questions are reproduced in the answer.

The first questions: What is the total dollar amount of Summer Incentive money returned to ALL colleges? What is the breakdown by college? Mynard referred senators to the spreadsheet supplied.
Next questions: What was the total dollar amount of summer incentive money given to each department for each of the past three years? What is the breakdown by department? A: “Departmental breakdowns were allocated by individual Deans based on semester credit hours produced by each department. This information is only available from each College.”

Next questions: In what year did a percentage of Summer Incentive money come to be considered "recurring funds"? How was that decision reached? A: “In 2011, then Provost Moore made the decision to allow each College to allocate up to 30% of summer incentive money to recurring costs. Each College Dean (employed by Georgia Southern at the time) made decisions as to if/how recurring funds would be used. … Deans used recurring funds to convert casual labor staff to ¾ or full time employment (per compliance rules from the USG), to add positions to their College in high need areas, to provide support resources needed for ongoing College needs, and/or to address the most severe compression issues in their College.”

Questions 5 and 6 led Mynard to refer senators, again, to the chart.

Q #7: In each year since summer incentive money could be used as recurring funds, how many faculty members in each college have received “market adjustments”? A: “Decisions on the use of recurring funds to address compression issues were made by each individual Dean as appropriate to individual College needs. The chart provided indicates the breakdown of recurring funds, but does not indicate the number of faculty that have received market adjustments.”

Q #8: Next question: In what departments have these market adjustments occurred? A: “Information regarding individual department use of recurring funds for addressing compression issues was decided at the discretion of the Deans, and the information regarding which faculty received these funds is a private personnel matter. Information regarding the number of adjustments may be requested at the College level if available.”

Q #9: How have faculty been selected to receive "market adjustments" from Summer Incentive funds? A: “The use of recurring funds for addressing compression issues was allowed at the discretion of the Deans employed in those roles at the time.”

And, finally, #10: What would prohibit designating a greater percentage of Summer Incentive funds as “recurring funds” and using them for an increased number of "market adjustments" of faculty salaries? A: “Effective this year (2012), the practice of allowing summer incentive funds to be used for recurring expenses has been stopped.”
Given the downward trend in summer credit hour production, the reliability of consistent recurring funds cannot be assured at this time."

Robert Costomiris (CLASS) referred to the chart: It showed the summer allocation for 2012 as $7,290,000 and student credit hours of 67,043. The money went up, but the hours down. Could that be explained?

Provost Bartels said that each year the allocation for summer budget is negotiated, and it indicated a slightly higher amount negotiated back to Academic Affairs. She said the hours decrease was significant.

Costomiris asked if he understood correctly, that the amount of summer money allocated is not connected directly to student credit hours.

Provost Bartels said not the amount that is returned to Academic Affairs. A portion of the money that is actually attained from student credit hours is returned to the general fund. She believed the Academic Affairs portion is 60%-65%.

Mark Hanna (COBA) asked in regard to summer funds that have been applied to recurring, permanent uses, whether that will reduce the funding available for COBA this year, and how long that amount will continue to come out of summer funds.

Provost Bartels said the term “recurring funds” is a little misleading. What was allowed by Provost Moore at the time was that a Dean could make a decision to use a portion of the money that we’d anticipate occurring again the following years, on the assumption that we would have summer school and money would come in again. This means that in subsequent years, that amount is consistently and always committed for that following year, which she believed to be the reason that Provost Moore restricted that amount to just a certain percentage of what a college could assume would be recurring summer Incentive money. But it will continue until such time as it’s not needed because of changes in the status of the particular individual, or the particular need that has been funded in this way.

Costomiris said that Senators had been referred a number of times to go back to the individual colleges for information, but he understood that Senate is the appropriate venue and the Provost the appropriate source to ask for this information: How do we find the information out if it is not being provided here?

Provost Bartels said that in part the decisions were made by people no longer in those positions or who are gone from the institution, so the only way to trace back is to see if the Dean of that particular college can answer.
Costomiris noted that, for instance, regarding the numbers of faculty, the question was not asking for names or anything personal, just how many people had their salaries adjusted. He figured that to be a number that should be able to be determined by anyone with access to that information.

Provost Bartels said because these were decisions made by deans of particular colleges, she could not trace could trace those funds.

Costomiris asked, “So this is gone into some kind of black hole?”

Provost Bartels and all other administrators present remained silent. Moderator Mynard commented, “Apparently, yes.”

Jennie Dilworth (CHHS) was still unclear and asked if the amount that goes back to each of the colleges is dependent on how many student credit hours each college produces for the summer.

Provost Bartels that is correct.

Costomiris asked how one year of student credit hour decline for summer can be termed a trend on which to decide that recurring funds are not assured. Provost Bartels said this was because student credit hours are variable. It was the decision of Academic Affairs that this had been a poor decision to allow to happen, and that we should not chain ourselves to something that will require recurring funds when they might change, and because the policy or the process used was less than the best. Someone unidentifiable from COE asked if there is a University-wide policy on market adjustments of pay. He or she asked because apparently only some colleges were creative enough to make market adjustments, while some did not.

Provost Bartels said that was part of the problem. There was no policy; there was no formal process, nor any formal procedure for how decisions would be made. Costomiris thought that thought that though this was perhaps “unartfully” applied, the concept itself is a fairly creative response to a dire situation, and he encouraged the Provost to not run away from it so quickly because it is an effective means of redressing some of the salary compression issues that we don’t seem to be able to address in any other way. So, while its implementation in the past might have been flawed, he encouraged her to not abandon a tool that could be used effectively.
Tony Barilla (COBA) echoed Costomiris. He liked that initiative was shown to use a different pot of money to fund a market adjustment. He also noted the frustration that everybody has with the budget when the answer given is “It’s a different pot of money.” As an economist, he wants to count the pots. He asked how many pots of money Georgia Southern currently has.

There was again complete silence in response. When Moderator Mynard reiterated the question, President Keel said he could not say off the top of his head.