

For Immediate Release
March 19, 2007

Contact: Kenneth Lemanski
508.626.4942

Study Finds Mass. State College Faculty Substantially Underpaid
*Earn \$11,000 or 14% less on average than peers when
adjusted for high cost of living in Massachusetts*

A new study finds that faculty at the nine Massachusetts state colleges earn substantially less than their peers at public colleges in other leading industrial states. Faculty at the Massachusetts state colleges receive \$11,000 (14 percent) less than the average salary of their peers across all ranks when the high cost of living in Massachusetts is factored in. However, full professors, who have attained the highest academic rank, fare even worse, earning 19% less than their peers when adjusted for the high cost of living in Massachusetts.

“These disturbing numbers call into question our future competitiveness as a state,” said Peter Alcock, chairman of the Board of Trustees at Fitchburg State College and a member of the Board of Higher Education. “Higher education is our stock-in-trade; more than any other state, Massachusetts depends on its public colleges to maintain our leadership in high technology, finance and other fields. But how can we continue to compete for the best faculty to educate our students and future workforce when we don’t pay them what they’re worth.”

The shortcomings were starkest in those fields that are critical to the future growth of the Massachusetts economy. Average salaries for full professors in business administration and management were 19% less than their peers; they were 17% less in biology, 9% less in computer and information sciences, and 9% less in the physical sciences.

“Low faculty salaries really affect our ability to recruit and retain the best teachers and scholars,” stated Dr. Mary Grant, president of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and chair of the Council of Presidents of the Massachusetts State Colleges. “On some of our campuses, as many as one-third of recent faculty searches have failed due to low salary and the high cost of living in Massachusetts, especially for housing,” said Grant.

To compensate for the high cost of living in Massachusetts, the study additionally compared Massachusetts state college faculty against their peers with earnings at the 75th percentile. Based on this comparison, state college faculty at all ranks were underpaid by 14%, with full professors again the worst off, earning only 81 cents on the dollar compared to their peers. The 75th percentile is the benchmark in a faculty salary compensation study the Board of Higher Education used to adjust faculty salaries at the Community Colleges beginning in 2002 .

The study of faculty salaries in the State Colleges was conducted jointly by the chairs of the Boards of Trustees of the State Colleges and by the Council of Presidents of the State Colleges. Based on data provided by the College & University Professional Association for Human

Resources (CUPA-HR), it replicates with current data a study the Colleges commissioned in 2004. And while the more recent study reveals some relative improvement in the salaries of State College faculty, those salaries still leave the State Colleges at a significant competitive disadvantage in their efforts to recruit and retain faculty of the highest quality.

“I look at this less as an issue of raising salaries and more as an issue of providing the highest quality education for our students,” said Lou Ricciardi, chair of the Board of Trustees at Bridgewater State College. “The failure to adequately compensate our faculty only compounds the low budgetary priority we already accord public higher education in this state.”

The nine Massachusetts State Colleges are four-year, baccalaureate and master’s degree-granting institutions in which more than 77,500 students were enrolled during academic year 2005-2006. More than 87% of their graduates that year were Massachusetts residents. More than 200,000 alumni -- 70% to 80% employed in the Commonwealth -- hold state college degrees. Six of the State Colleges -- those in Bridgewater, Fitchburg, Framingham, Salem, Westfield and Worcester -- are comprehensive colleges at which a liberal arts education is offered in combination with an array of professional programs; the other three State Colleges -- the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston and the Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay -- have special focuses and make unique contributions to the state’s economy and to its social and civil life.

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