



Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate
Seton Hall University

From: Katia Passerini, Ph.D.
Katia Passerini
Provost and Executive Vice President

Re: Memo re: COLA Resolution
2021-FS-31

Date: December 14, 2021

We are in receipt of 2021-FS-31, COLA Resolution, passed by the Faculty Senate at its November 19 meeting.

We agree that the faculty are essential to the mission of Seton Hall University and that, together with our students and our priest community, they constitute the heart of our campuses. That is why our Strategic Plan focuses so extensively on supporting, strengthening, and investing in faculty; in faculty research, teaching, and service initiatives; and in faculty well-being.

We also appreciate that our dedicated faculty have worked persistently and innovatively to continue to provide excellent educational experiences to our students during the ongoing pandemic, as President Nyre recently pointed out in his State of the University on November 12 and as the Provost iterated to the Board of Regents at their December meetings. The Board of Regents and the Administration fully recognize that the faculty, like everybody who has worked through the pandemic, is exhausted and facing inflation, and they are grateful for the strenuous efforts and sacrifices of all University employees, including University leadership, whose actions, rooted in strategy and shared governance, ensured that Seton Hall protected the health of its community and also avoided the worst financial effects of the pandemic. Most Seton Hall employees have endured temporary pay cuts, and those employees have had neither raises nor COLA increases for two years. During the pandemic, difficult but necessary decisions and sacrifices were made.

The University has already taken several steps to demonstrate its appreciation of the faculty.

First, even in the darkest days of the pandemic, when the University had to conduct a significant reduction in force; no faculty were laid off or furloughed.

Second, we restored faculty salaries to pre-pandemic levels and have refunded to the faculty all the salary that was lost from the pay cuts: in May, we provided a one-time payment to offset the pay reduction faculty experienced in AY 2020-21, and in November, we provided a one-time payment equal to the pay reduction in AY 2021-22. Base salaries have returned to pre-pandemic levels; this is true even though the voluntary pay reductions taken by the Executive Cabinet in AY 2020 have not and will not be restored.

Third, in October 2021, we kept our promise to resume full 403(b) funding. The retirement match that was reduced for all employees for AY 2020-21 was restored on November 30, 2021. The University's matching retirement contribution for this academic year is fully funded at its traditional 2:1 ratio.

Fourth, President Nyre confirmed on November 12 that the administration, the faculty, staff, and the Board of Regents all see the importance of providing raises. Contrary to what is stated in the resolution, so far the faculty and other employees of the University have only missed out on a cost-of-living increase for one year (AY 2020-21). As Dr. Nyre indicated on November 12, decisions about cost-of-living increases for AY 2021-22 will be made in the next calendar year, after a review to ensure that they are made in a financially sustainable way based on spring enrollment and retention numbers that we will learn in the coming weeks as the University Budget Committee completes the early stages of budget preparation for AY 2022-23.

Further, as part of the *Harvest Our Treasures* Strategic Plan, we have begun the process to launch a faculty compensation study that will assess faculty salaries both within our University and against faculty at peer institutions. Faculty representatives will work with the administration to conduct the study in partnership with a third-party firm with expertise and access to relevant data and databases and independently recognized for working with higher education institutions across the country. The process for the identification of a firm among those with expertise in compensation is in its infancy, and we will form a committee with the relevant set of stakeholders, including members recommended by the Faculty Senate, to select such firm. The study will address compression, the cost of living and cost of labor in our area, equity, and other key issues identified by the Faculty Senate Executive and Compensation and Welfare committees over the past few years. We appreciate the role of the Faculty Senate Compensation and Welfare committee in identifying such issues. Nevertheless, specific determinations about COLA will continue to be made by the appropriate fiduciaries entrusted to make budgetary decisions for the University. We are committed to implementing sustainable COLA adjustments across the board as and when the budget allows. As the faculty salary study and Strategic Plan attest, we are also committed to sustainably improving faculty compensation.