



# SMITH COLLEGE

Committee on Faculty Compensation and Development

October 17, 2006

The Committee on Faculty Compensation and Development urges that additional support for faculty scholarship be an integral part of the emerging strategic plan. The committee believes that it is axiomatic that that college support for faculty scholarship

- Supports good teaching;
- Provides opportunities for students to work closely with faculty and fosters the skill needed for independent student research;
- Plays a critical role in attracting and retaining excellent faculty;
- Raises the college's profile and position in the national rankings;
- Provides seed money for external grants, awards and fellowships; and
- Insures that our faculty remain engaged in their scholarship and professional development throughout their career at the college.

To that end, we hope that supporting faculty scholarship in innovative ways will be a crucial component of the strategic plan.

Although Smith faculty members have an outstanding record in the receipt of external grants, the college nevertheless confronts challenges in comparison to larger research universities in securing external research support, especially in the social sciences and the humanities. We lack the support of graduate students and certain kinds of research infrastructure that would allow us to better compete for external grants. Our focus on teaching often limits the scale of projects we can undertake to a level below that sought by external funders. Our emphasis on new interdisciplinary work can also limit our success with the more traditional funding agencies. College grants are then critical in moving forward a faculty member's research agenda.

However, in recent years funding for faculty research has failed to keep up with both rising costs and the increasing research activity of our younger faculty. Funding from the operating budget has not risen at all over the past six years while research expenses, especially in the areas of travel, lodging and food have risen substantially. (The transportation portion of the Consumer Price Index has risen 17% over the same period. Although this is an imperfect measure for the kinds of travel by our faculty, the disparity between 17% and 0% is indicative of the problem we face.) Over the past several years we have been able to cover much of the increase in costs and faculty participation from restricted and endowed funds. These funds provided just over \$100,000 in FY06, roughly 25% of all funding. However, much of the restricted funding has come from "run-ups" in these funds that have now been largely exhausted.

Moreover, CFCD guidelines for research spending and travel to learned societies are increasingly out of touch with reality and have served to keep our expenditures artificially low. For instance, the per diem for research travel is only \$65 per day, well

below the cost of even a cheap hotel room. The money that faculty need to pay out of their own pockets for research travel and travel to learned societies falls particularly hard on our junior faculty – a regressive tax that is not consistent with the college’s interest in supporting the future of the institution. CFCD has been working on a new structure of faculty grants that would provide more adequate and more flexible support to our faculty, but eliminating what has become a baroque system of spending limits designed to save money will inevitably lead to the need for more resources.

CFCD is in the midst of estimating the resources needed for more robust support of faculty research. However, we expect that the increase could easily be in the range of \$100,000 per year or more. Given the amount of funding involved, we want to make sure that this need is on the strategic planning table.