



OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY ANALYSIS, REPORTING, & ASSESSMENT

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January 15, 2009

Laura Flipp
Associate Director, Finance Policy
Maryland Higher Education Commission
839 Bestgate Rd.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Laura,

Attached are Salisbury University's comments relative to the Commission's Peer Performance Analysis of our institution. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Kara Siegert'.

Kara O. Siegert, PhD
Director, University Analysis, Reporting, & Assessment

**Response to the 2008 MHEC Funding Guidelines Peer Performance Analysis
Salisbury University, January, 2009**

1. Teacher Licensure Pass Rate:

Salisbury University's pass rate for the PRAXIS II, 92%, represents a 1% increase from the previous year. This marks the second consecutive year this pass rate has increased.

In 2006, the University implemented a number of initiatives (e.g., mapping of PRAXIS content to curriculum, PRAXIS workshops, optimal timing of taking the PRAXIS, etc.) to move current rates closer to our peer average, 97%. Moreover, beginning with May 2010 graduates, Salisbury University will require students seeking a professional education degree to pass the PRAXIS II prior to their graduation. This will result in a teacher licensure pass rate of 100%.

It is noteworthy that Maryland requires examinees to attain certain scores on the PRAXIS II to achieve teacher licensure, while several of SU's peers do not use the PRAXIS II as their teacher licensure examination. Thus, comparability (i.e., difficulty, reliability, validity, etc.) of the exams and pass rates among these institutions is questionable. Additionally, those states that do require the PRAXIS II may have lower cut scores or have different PRAXIS sections associated with passing the exam than Maryland. As a result, it is virtually impossible to compare pass rates of Salisbury University students to those of our peers.

2. Declining Percent of Faculty holding a Terminal Degree:

The percentage of Salisbury University faculty holding a terminal degree declined for FY07 from 82% to 80%. Averaged over the past five years, Salisbury University has been funded at only 80% of the MHEC funding guideline. This adversely impacts the University's ability to attract and retain faculty. For instance, in FY07 Salisbury faculty salaries were at the 57th, 56th, and 77th percentiles for professors, associate professors, and assistant professors, respectively; far below the USM Board of Regents 85th percentile target of the AAUP average salaries for Master's II-A institutions. This is even more disconcerting when this data is compared to last year's, where faculty salaries were at the 62nd, 59th, and 74th percentiles. SU has lost ground at the senior ranks and improved slightly at the assistant level due to market pressure.

In FY06, approximately 30 searches for tenure track faculty were conducted to fill FY07 positions. Due to the delayed release of funds for enrollment growth searches, 13 of the searches were postponed until spring 2006. This delay put the University at a disadvantage in job market because well-qualified potential applicants likely accepted positions with other institutions earlier in the academic year. Indeed, 7 of these 30 positions, or 23%, were not filled with tenure track faculty.

3. State appropriations per FTES:

In FY07, Salisbury received \$4,957 per FTES from the state as compared to an average state appropriation of \$7,115 for its peers. Among its peers, Salisbury University has the second lowest state appropriation per FTES, or an average shortfall of \$2,158 per FTES. With an FTES headcount of 6,643, Salisbury falls 14.3 million dollars below the peer average in terms of its state appropriation.

This underfunding has put a serious financial strain on the University. Perhaps of greatest concern is the effect on Salisbury's ability to fund need-based financial aid. Indeed, Salisbury students' average debt load in FY07 increased almost \$2,500 to \$18,330. As noted in the response to question 2, this underfunding may also be impacting the University's efforts to attract and retain well-qualified faculty and staff. Moreover, Salisbury is finding it increasingly difficult to adequately staff many support operations.