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# The Investigators

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Apr 23, 2009 3:19 pm US/Central

## Education Funding Down, Salaries Up At UNT & UTD



Reporting Bennett Cunningham

DENTON (CBS 11 News) — College tuition is up in Texas and state funding for education is down. So why are some local university administrators getting raises and perks while students and parents struggle to pay tuition?

Your tax dollars, earmarked to educate the next generation during the worst economic recession in decades, are being used for six-figure paychecks, housekeepers, gardeners and private clubs.

Holly Hekman attends the University of Texas at Dallas [UTD] and works 60 hours a week. She says college is "really expensive--your books are \$500 or \$600 at a minimum."

It's the same for master's student Gwendolyn Lau. "It's tough when you are trying to make ends meet and pursue an education," she said. So when these paying students find out their school's president received a \$33,000 raise and now earns more than \$500,000 per year, they are not happy.

CBS 11 reviewed the contracts of UTD President David Daniel and found in 2008 Daniel earned about \$526,000 in total compensation. He also requested nearly \$4,000 in club memberships at the Park City Club and the Crescent Club and Spa.

The UT Board of Regents approved his request.

Daniel says the funds for the clubs are from interest income from endowments, not tax dollars and the memberships are used "100% for business purposes."

The UT Board of Regents is ultimately responsible for approving Daniel's compensation. We tried to ask Board Chairman James Huffines about it, but his spokesperson said his schedule was too busy.

So we asked the man who appointed Huffines, Governor Rick Perry.

Governor Perry earns \$150,000 per year. We found the Governor at a rally where he joined protestors, upset about excessive federal spending.

We asked the Governor if he thinks state university Presidents are making too much money. Governor Perry said, "I will leave that to the Board of Regents to make those decisions."

In a prepared statement, Chairman Huffines said, "The ultimate goal of advancing excellence in education, research, health care and service within Texas justifies the current levels of compensation." His statement went on to say that the board is freezing senior executive's salaries through August 2010. But some other public universities are not following suit.



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The University of North Texas [UNT] employs Dr. Gretchen Bataille as its President. Bataille said, "Perks really are the things I need to get my job done."

[UTD Contracts \(.pdf file\)](#)  
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Taxpayer funds pay Dr. Bataille's \$10,000-per-year car allowance, even though she drives a donated Lexus luxury sedan. You also pay \$300 per year for her American Airlines Admirals club membership. And tax dollars fund her \$30,000-per-year salary supplement and a recent \$45,000 bonus. You also pay her an additional \$50,000 per year for a housing allowance.

Combine those allowances and bonuses with her \$353,000 annual salary, and Bataille took home \$488,000 in 2008.

Bataille feels the housing allowance is necessary because, in her words, "The University of North Texas does not provide a house, so I am expected to keep my house in order and keep the flowers in the garden and the house clean and entertain a lot of donors and university guests in my home."

Dr. Bataille owns the house and says she entertains a few times a month. But even with the \$50,000 housing allowance, for housekeeping and gardening, Dr. Bataille says she comes up short. "Well, I have to pay a mortgage and utilities," she said. "In fact, the first two years I calculated my expenses and they are certainly way in excess of \$50,000 a year."

Gayle Strange is head of UNT'S Board of Regents. She was on the compensation committee for Dr. Bataille. Strange feels Dr. Bataille deserves the money. She tells us Dr. Bataille works "24/7" and sometimes even takes calls at 10 o'clock at night.

So why should taxpayers pay for a \$50,000 a year housing allowance? Strange says, "I wouldn't expect her to use her time for house cleaning and taking care of her yard. I think her time can be better spent on this large enterprise, the University of North Texas."

Peggy Venable was White House Liaison for the U.S. Department of Education in the Reagan Administration. Now she's the Texas director of Americans for Prosperity, a group dedicated to fiscal responsibility.

Venable feels there is a life lesson to be learned by this situation. "Grow up and be a university president if you want to make a lot of money," she says. "It seems ludicrous when you add it all together. It really is amazing to think how many parents are selling their homes and thinking this is what their tuition is paying for. I'm not convinced we need to pay half a million to get a good university president."

Venable's frustration is echoed by the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a non-partisan group that promotes limited government. In a recent newsletter it found Texas universities are passing increased administrative salaries on to students and parents. The group blames tuition increases on too much spending.

CBS 11 looked at two other large public university systems to compare compensation.

The State University of New York at Binghamton, with about 14,000 students, is similar in size to UTD. According to a survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education, the President of SUNY Binghamton earns about \$180,000 less per year than UTD President David Daniel.

In California, the University of California at Berkeley has just over 35,000 students--about the same enrollment as UNT. Berkeley is ranked the number one public university in the country by U.S. News & World Report. UC Berkeley's top executive earned \$467,000 last year.

Dr. Bataille, at UNT, earned about \$20,000 more. UNT is not nationally ranked by the magazine as a top public university.

Richard Vedder is the Director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity. He recently studied the Texas higher education system and concluded Texas spends more per student than the national average, yet attrition rates are "scandalously high."

His report found the average financial burden to students has increased and staff is increasing faster than enrollments. Vedder argues when it comes to administrative salaries, "\$100,000 is \$1000 of help for 100 of the neediest students." And he goes on to say, "What's disturbing about it is, at least going into a recession, it seemed to be continuing. [The universities seem to be saying] 'The rest of the world can suffer but we can continue on to do our own thing.'"

Dr. Bataille defends her compensation, saying "I recognize my salary is far higher than other staff and faculty but we are in a nation where we compete for talent and I believe I have the talent to take this university forward."

UNT and UTD both tell us the universities offer a lot of financial assistance for students. Both schools also say their presidents brought more money and prestige to their universities.

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We also asked each president if they had thought about taking a salary cut, but neither would commit.

Last week the presidents of two other public universities around the country cut or donated part of their salaries.

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