



TOP STORIES

Updated 8:37 AM

UT employee: Not my choice to depart

By: John A. Salazar

Rick O'Donnell served less than two months on the University of Texas Board of Regents under a cloud of public and university scrutiny regarding his salary and past employment.

O'Donnell was hired by Regent Chairman Gene Powell for a salary of \$200,000.

Many around the state were angered to discover O'Donnell was brought in at such a premium with a job description similar to the UT Chancellor.

In a statement released by O'Donnell he writes, "While it was not my choice to depart at this time, I am hopeful that the commitment to improving the productivity of the UT System will continue for the sake of taxpayers and the sake of students."

O'Donnell was dismissed from his duties Tuesday after he sent an email to UT Regent Wallace Hall.

In the four page letter, O'Donnell expressed discontent that requests he made to collect data on how tuition money and taxpayer dollars are being spent at the university were ignored.

He states the request for such data was "resisted at the highest levels of the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Texas System."

UT officials issued a response saying, "The notion that the UT System and UT Austin are purposefully suppressing such data is inaccurate."

O'Donnell is known as a higher education reformer and has been criticized for some of his writings while working for the conservative think tank, Texas Public Policy Foundation.

TPPF Senior Communications Director David Guenther said there is a big problem when efforts to address funding issues in higher education are quashed.

"Our universities are supposed to be places of learning and inquiry, which makes it all the more surprising that someone who is asking difficult questions, raising new ideas, and receives a fierce response," Guenther said.

University officials have not said if they will find a replacement for O'Donnell.

Copyright © 1999-2011 TWEAN News Channel of Austin, L.P. d/b/a YNN. All Rights Reserved.
Web production by Tipit — Powered by News Gecko