

The Board of Regents met on January 27 and, as you will hear, it was quite a day. Since there are competing narratives about the overall tone, I urge you to listen to the podcast if you have not already done so, and decide for yourselves. I would suggest that you start with the Finance and Budget Committee's report. ([http://www.wku.edu/regents\\_podcast/](http://www.wku.edu/regents_podcast/)) The news reports of the meeting are accurate but incomplete, so allow me to fill in some holes. As you are aware, at our October 30 meeting, Chair Jim Meyer tabled until our January meeting the contract extension for Dr. Selig in order to fund his \$41,000 raise with athletic monies instead of using funds from the E and G budget. You may also remember that the Board went into closed session to discuss the proposed \$20,000 raise for Dr. Kahler, and when we came out the Board tabled that motion definitely until the January meeting. (To listen to Mr. Meyer pulling Dr. Selig's contract from the agenda, or to hear the motion to go into closed session on Dr. Kahler's raise and the subsequent motion to table when we came back into open session, please listen here for the October 30 meeting: [http://www.wku.edu/regents\\_podcast/](http://www.wku.edu/regents_podcast/))

With this as background, I will now describe briefly what happened next. I raised my hand to be recognized, and according to the Herald's live blog, I held the floor for a whopping four minutes. During my brief presentation, I was interrupted several times by a fellow regent who attempted to call the question and to close debate as I tried to present the following argument. I reminded the board that this was not personal. Instead, as a faculty representative I raised a principled objection voiced by my constituency who believe this action to be not only inequitable but also devastating to our increasingly low employee morale. I referenced the petition I gave them at the October meeting—the seventeen single-spaced pages signed by 260 faculty and staff on this campus stating their desire that the board set aside the motion to increase compensation for Dr. Kahler at midyear and Dr. Selig in his new contract. I read one comment from the petition that spoke to this point: "I realize that there may have been pre-existing agreements, but if so, the bad news about raises should have been phrased differently. For the majority, who are working harder than ever and with fewer resources, to go without while the few get substantial raises has been very bad for morale and has harmed the faculty-administration relationship—I hope not irreparably." I reminded them that we're not talking about twice-in-a-career raises for tenure and promotion to associate or full professor; we are concerned about raises given to a select few administrators, the latest in a line of such administrative raises well beyond what the rank and file receive, the same faculty and staff who are told there is no money for merit raises. I also presented the document you have on the table before you, which demonstrates that faculty have never caught up to benchmark on salary, and that we all are losing even more ground because of the increased cost of health insurance. I had hoped that this would get their attention, and at least show why people have been so angry about these raises--again, this is the tipping point for long-simmering feelings that faculty and staff don't really matter.

I cannot say whether or not every member of the board read the petition or not, but it is difficult to believe that anyone who read the petition given the direction the discussion took when my four minutes ended. As reported in the papers, one regent stated that "we've discussed this 'til the cows came home," and that "you say it's not personal, but it sure looks like it is." Before other regents had the opportunity to speak, once again the motion to close debate came. One regent responded to the motion by expressing his concern over what he perceived as "bullying" of one regent and that the board seemed intent on silencing members instead of discussing the issue and trying to find some consensus; the motion to close debate failed because it did not get the necessary supermajority, and discussion continued. After a failed attempt

to amend the motion to give Dr. Kahler a two-year escalated raise of \$19,000, debate ended and the raise passed by a vote of 8-3 (Kennedy, Minter, and Smiley dissenting).

After a few weeks of reflection, I am troubled by more things than I can say about this episode. Much like the previous attempt to silence discussion in 2007 when the board voted to move to Division I-A (now FBS) football, some persistent in believing that squelching dissenting voices or avoiding discussion entirely is the way to run a university. Instead, I would suggest that while board members may disagree, it is imperative that we conduct the university's business in a civil manner, and even more important that the elected regents who live and work on this campus every day have the opportunity to share our constituents' concerns. I do not have a "right" to win, nor does anyone else; but every board member has a right to be heard and to have our concerns addressed in a collegial manner without resort to bullying tactics to create a false image of unity. It is not acceptable to dismiss all dissent as 'personal.'

The board's unwillingness to consider all points of view ignores that there is something very large at stake here—our morale and the increasing feeling that we are not empowered in any way. This manifests itself today in low faculty attendance at provost candidate forums, or parking forums where only a few people come because they believe the fix is already in and they have too much work to do. I would urge you, however, to continue to participate vigorously because I believe that our absence does nothing to further our cause. Speak clearly even when you think no one is listening, even if your voice is shaking. I am listening, because it is my duty to let the Board know what you say, and to speak when you cannot. I will continue to do so to the best of my ability, and I again thank James and Kevin for joining me even when other voices are louder.