

Clemson official says documents are open, for the asking

By John Staed

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CLEMSON UNIVERSITY — Clemson University's provost and faculty senate president said they will look at transparency issues raised Tuesday by a retired professor, but said the information he is seeking is available for the asking.

John Bednar, a former faculty senate member and a professor emeritus at Clemson, used the free speech portion of the senate's meeting Tuesday to ask that information about discretionary funds given to departments be made available to the public and audited.

"All funds made available to selected individuals from the Clemson University Foundation or any other foundation connected to Clemson University should be openly reported," Bednar said.

He said discretionary funds ranging in amounts from \$10,000 to \$20,000 were provided to university administrative council members.

Bednar also asked for an investigation into the use of temporary and contract workers by the university, saying they were not listed in online public pay reports. Clemson makes pay information available online at its Web site.

"There are individuals who are full-time temporary employees at Clemson University and whose salaries and other forms of compensation do not appear on the salary reports," Bednar said.

Faculty Senate President Bill Bowerman said Bednar's claims would be reviewed.

"We'll probably have our committees take a look," Bowerman said.

He said the Clemson administration has been transparent with him.

"Everything I've asked about has been answered," he said.

Provost Doris Helms said reports about temporary staffing and discretionary funds are available if Bednar asked for the information. She said Associate Provost Debbie Jackson has the report on temporary workers and a discretionary fund report, and that Bednar could get the other reports from the individual departments.

Discretionary funds are used for a number of events, including convocation, graduation and new faculty gatherings, Helms said. She distributes most of the money to deans for their use, but keeps about \$10,000 for events around campus.

“None of that goes into compensation,” she said. “That’s the thing that needs to be said: Those funds exist for the support of faculty and staff. They are not compensation funds.”

She said Bednar is welcome to her discretionary fund report.

“You can ask every other dean for their report, but it takes a lot of time,” she said. “If he wants it, he can have it.”

Responding to Bednar’s comments about temporary employees, Helms said the university has never included them in the online salary reports. Some people have worked for the university on a part-time basis for years, sometimes because they can use their spouses’ benefits or are on a part-time appointment, she said.

“Temporary people, because they come and go ... we don’t really have a good way of telling you what they actually earned,” Helms said.

Their varied work schedule makes the information difficult to report in a standard form, she said.

“(Associate Provost) Debbie Jackson has run a report of all the temporary people, and John Bednar is welcome to look at it,” Helms said.

One question Bednar raised about compensation paid to Clemson officials from the Clemson University Foundation was answered by spokeswoman Cathy Sams. She said President Jim Barker has earned \$172,344 a year since 2007, and John Alexander, a professor of finance who is the chief investment officer for the foundation, earned \$64,500 in 2009.

