

College of Agriculture Wethington Award Review 2005

The Wethington Award was implemented in the College of Agriculture in 2003-2004, with the caveat that the award would undergo a college review before the third year of participation. College of Agriculture faculty members received Wethington Awards in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

In August 2005, Dr. Nancy Cox, Associate Dean for Research, charged the Agriculture Faculty Council (AFC) with conducting a review of the Wethington Award. In her directive to the AFC, Dr. Cox requested the council explore the following elements of the Wethington Award as it pertains to the College of Agriculture:

1. Has the Wethington award been implemented fairly?
2. Has the award promoted excellence in scholarship?
3. Has the award promoted retention of productive faculty?
4. Has the award led to increased productivity with respect to grants?
5. Are there ways to streamline or simplify the process?

The AFC appointed a committee consisting of Robert Geneve, chair, Horticulture; Lynne-Rieske-Kinney, Entomology; and Mary Arthur, Forestry, to conduct the review. The Research Office provided the committee with information such as the Wethington guidelines from the associate provost's office and COA awards to date to assist the subcommittee in their deliberations.

In November 2005, the AFC Wethington Award Committee solicited opinions of faculty and chairs about the Wethington Award via a survey. Based on the results of the surveys, the College of Agriculture will continue to participate in the university-wide Wethington Award.

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Decision to Continue Participation in the Wethington Award

The Agriculture Faculty Council's examination of the College of Agriculture's Wethington Award resulted in a thorough and thoughtful review of the two years the award has been available in this college. Based on the AFC's investigation, the Wethington Award will continue to be available to faculty members in the college, based on university guidelines as well as guidance from the college's Wethington Oversight Committee, Mike Barrett, Bob Harmon, Lynn Robbins, Peter Timoney, and me. The Oversight Committee will continue to monitor the COA Wethington Award and make recommendations concerning adjustments.

The Wethington Award has provided new opportunities for COA faculty members and is expected to continue to grow over time. Faculty members are encouraged to think about how the Wethington Award might fit their research programs and their pursuit of extramural funding. As always, research proposal budgets should reflect the best way to perform the research; personal reward should be a secondary consideration.

I would like to thank the AFC Wethington Committee for their thorough attention to their charge. The information that resulted from their review is invaluable, not only directly concerning the Wethington Award, but also concerning faculty member's thoughts on related issues.

I would also like to thank the faculty members and chairs who responded to the survey. The time you spent answering the survey is appreciated and your comments will continue to guide the college as the university continues to grapple with resource issues.

Again, many thanks to Bob Geneve, Lynne Rieske-Kinney, and Mary Arthur and the Agriculture Faculty Council for their work on this review. Also, I want to thank Pam Compton in Horticulture for her administrative support.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy M. Cox".

Dr. Nancy Cox
Associate Dean for Research

Agriculture Faculty Council Committee Summary Report

Robert Geneve, chair, Horticulture
Lynne Rieske-Kinney, Entomology
Mary Arthur, Forestry

As an Agriculture Faculty Council (AFC) subcommittee, we felt the Wethington grant would continue because it is a University-wide program, and based on the survey and number of faculty that replied, there was no general outcry to stop the program.

As an AFC, we did not feel we should necessarily interpret the results. We felt we were acting as a facilitator for the administration in this survey.

Agriculture Faculty Council Faculty Survey Results

There were 41 respondents

1. Do you currently have a Wethington Award? Yes 31.7% No 68.3%

2. Have you previously received a Wethington Award? Yes 22.0% No 78.0%

3. Are you aware of the ²eligibility requirements for a Wethington Award?
 Yes 80.5% No 4.9% Not sure 12.2%

4. Do you currently have a grant or grants qualifying you for a Wethington Award?
 Yes 56.1% No 34.1 % Not sure 9.8%

5. If you have/had a qualifying grant, but did not receive an award, why did you not apply for a Wethington award?
 - a. I was unaware of the Wethington Award Program 13.3%
 - b. I did not previously recognize that I had a qualifying grant 26.7%
 - c. I question the concept of the Wethington Award Program for rewarding productive faculty 33.3%
 - d. I choose to use the faculty salary savings to support my research program 26.7%
 - e. Comments: On attached pages

6. Would the Wethington Award Program factor into your decision to stay or leave your current position?
 major factor 17.1%; minor factor 36.6%; no factor 46.3%
 Comments: On attached pages

7. Do you consider the Wethington Award Program as a factor for submitting a competitive grant?
 major factor 26.8%; minor factor 31.7%; no factor 41.5%
 Comments: On attached pages

8. Do you feel that the faculty qualifications to receive a Wethington Award are appropriate (see attachment for current qualifications)?
 Yes 51.2% No 17.1% Not sure 26.8%

Comments: On attached pages

9. Do you feel that the Wethington Award Program is promoting excellence in scholarship?

Yes 39.0% No 26.8% Not sure 31.7%

Comments: On attached pages

10. Please provide any additional thoughts on current and future participation in the Wethington Awards Program.

Comments: On attached pages

5. If you have/had a qualifying grant, but did not receive an award, why did you not apply for a Wethington award?

- a) I did not budget salary for myself because it would have left me unable to support a person in my lab.
- b) All the cost accounting standards makes things too difficult to buy on a grant. The faculty salary savings are one method to buy things that I need that I can not purchase on a grant, i.e. computer, software, etc.
- c) I strongly oppose the concept of this award.
- d) I oppose the concept of this award.
- e) Received grant in 2005.
- f) My Dept has never discussed a policy for Wethington Awards, not sure if it is understood. One was awarded from our department, but it was awarded through extension.

6. Would the Wethington Award Program factor into your decision to stay or leave your current position?

- a) I think this could be important for a younger faculty member but not a senior full professor such as myself.
- b) If you are leaving to a position with a higher salary (read most other universities) then the ability to supplement your UK salary if you get grants is not a major factor in comparing to a another institution that is offering a higher fixed salary.
- c) Because I have a 12-month appointment, a Wethington Award is the only way to supplement my salary.
- d) It is more likely to play a role in the recruitment of faculty, rather than retaining faculty, in my opinion.
- e) I would rather have a recurring raise, if I can get that at another position, that will factor into my decision. A one off bonus that is very expensive (indirects, benefits, etc.) does not influence my decision. I would rather support my research program.
- f) In my opinion this is a misguided program. There are many ways to fund a productive program. Getting the “right” kinds of grants (i.e., ones that pay maximum overhead) is NOT “productivity” and it is inappropriate for UK to equate the two. These awards exclude productive faculty who do applied research funded by USDA and other sources that don’t qualify for Wethington Awards. It also excludes many Extension faculty and, I think, discourages putting time into teaching, advising, curriculum development, and service. Why should faculty who “hide” in the office firing off proposals to an exclusive set of funding agencies (and who may eschew service, advising, and teaching excellence) receive substantial bonuses, when others who follow a more balanced Professorial Model (and earn high or highest Merit ratings) barely receive cost of living?
- g) It is a nice way to supplement salary.
- h) I have been contacted by three universities this year to submit my vita for various openings. The potential for pay raises are significant. However, I declined the invitations because I believe the Wethington Awards can make up for some of the difference.
- i) Now that I have a better understanding, yes.

7. Do you consider the Wethington Award Program as a factor for submitting a competitive grant?

- a) If the College is serious about grantsmanship, then a financial reward seems most appropriate.
- b) Whenever I submit a competitive grant I do so because I am trying to support an area of my research program. I always put my salary into grants that allow salary recovery, but my primary motivation in doing so has nothing to do with my own remuneration, and

- everything to do with how I might be able to use the money to support my research program. So far, all grants into which I originally put salary that have been funded were funded at a lower level than I originally asked for, so the salary came out. Had it stayed in, I would have used it for programmatic support, per agreement with my chair.
- c) I have always been active and successful in rain-making, so I would continue to apply for grants. Having the extra supplement is an additional incentive to get less sleep and do extra efforts.
 - d) It may be important to some faculty but prior to establishment of this award I submitted 3-5 proposals/year and it is not possible to do much more than this.
 - e) Wrong question – Does the opportunity to fund your salary to make you able to get a Wethington Award when selecting which grants to apply for? – major factor.
 - f) Except for the Wethington Award, the College of Agriculture does not provide any other salary incentive (\$\$) to submit NIH grants.
 - g) Wethington Awards are a disincentive. If I am responsible for my own salary increases, there are activities that are a lot more productive in this regard other than grant writing.
 - h) We need incentives.
 - i) Have not to date.
8. Do you feel that the faculty qualifications to receive a Wethington Award are appropriate?
- a) Heavy emphasis is placed on research scholarship to the exclusion, it seems to me of instruction (resident and off-campus, i.e. extension. Reward grants because they are of importance and bring scholarship and prestige to the institution and the individuals involved regardless of whether or not they are T, R, or E.
 - b) Mostly yes but the major item should be actually getting a grant with salary savings.
 - c) If you get a grant that includes paying a portion of your salary then you should have the right to decide what to do with a portion of those funds.
 - d) It is not clear to me why there is a requirement of having a 4 on the most recent biannual evaluation, and why is the mark lower for non-tenured faculty?
 - e) The Merit system is the appropriate vehicle for rewarding faculty excellence. Grants may allow a scientist to do more, but getting the grant is a means, not the end in and of itself. Why send the message that a productive program funded by USDA, commodity groups, contracts, etc. that addresses problems important to KY agriculture is less worthy than basic research funded by NSF or NIH? Reward productivity and excellence, not how it is funded.
 - f) Research funded by NSF or NIH? Reward productivity and excellence, not how it is funded.
9. Do you feel that the Wethington Award Program is promoting excellence in scholarship?
- a) I don't believe that faculty in Ag are submitting more grants, or grants for more money, in response to the Wethington Award. I strongly suspect that most faculty apply for grants to support their research programs, not to supplement their salaries.
 - b) It helps as an incentive.
 - c) Not particularly, much of our most important work is not of a type that will support Wethington awards.
 - d) It is simply a fancy way of saying to can earn more salary...
 - e) These awards are promoting grantsmanship which may or may not be excellence in scholarship.
 - f) Faculty who bring in extramural funding (indirects) should be rewarded (e.g., increase in salary); receiving extramural funds and excellence in scholarship are related.
 - g) The most rigorous measure of scholarship is national competitiveness for extramural funding.

- h) I resent the implication that funding a productive program from sources other than the “right” sources somehow equates to lesser scholarship in the eyes of the UK Administration.
- i) Grants tend to involve cutting-edge work and place the faculty in situations that generate new knowledge and insights.
- j) I think equating “excellence in scholarship” to some granting agency’s willingness to fund faculty salary is an extremely flawed thought process.

10. Please provide any additional thoughts on current and future participation in the Wethington Awards Program.

- a) The College should take advantage of the 50K limit and not restrict the limit to 30K if they are serious about the award.
- b) Availability for these types of funds are not equal for all areas of the university. Therefore, they are a biased award that I do not feel is the best long term interest of the entire university.
- c) Whenever I submit a competitive grant I do so because I am trying to support an area of my research program. I always put my salary into grants that allow salary recovery, but my primary motivation in doing so has nothing to do with my own remuneration, and everything to do with how I might be able to use the money to support my research program. So far, all grants into which I originally put salary that have been funded were funded at a lower level than I originally asked for, so the salary came out. Had it stayed in, I would have used it for programmatic support, per agreement with my chair.
- d) Ideally, I would like a program that provided program support rather than salary enhancements for faculty. It would be desirable to have a pool of money that could reward productivity of those programs that are not in the position of getting grant funds that could be used in that manner.
- e) It should be clearly stated that Assistant Research Professors are eligible and how the award would be implemented for them. Also, as the College of Engineering does so clearly the College of Agriculture should clear spell out the distribution for the individual, department and college so that we all understand the formula(s) being used.
- f) I have decidedly mixed opinions about Wethington Awards. I think in many cases they reward a spectrum of activities that is too narrow--but--1) If Wethington awards are retained within the University, then COA faculty should be eligible to participate. It does not make sense to penalize ourselves at the College level even though it creates inequities. 2) Many of the grant opportunities available to COA faculty will not support Wethington awards--either because of expectations (e.g. regulations of funders) or because the award amounts are not large enough to support an award without seriously compromising the ability to do the work (e.g. USDA).
- g) I am not sure to what extent this awards program facilitate faculty to submit external grants. Faculty with good research ideas will apply for a grant or two regardless of the existence of the Wethington Award Program.
- h) I have mixed feelings about the Wethington awards. In my case, my rationalization (and my dept. chair agrees) is that it is a way to address salary inequity. I’d rather have my salary adjusted and let the salary money be used to support efforts in our department and/or college.
- i) I was recently awarded a nationally competitive grant, I requested salary time and assume that this would make me eligible for a Wethington award, don’t know of sure.
- j) I currently have a grant application at will make be qualified for a Wethington Award and I plan to get my share like others in the University do.

- k) This is an appropriate incentive system but it should be watched closely since it has the potential to create negative faculty relationships.
- l) It is a way for the university to provide incentives for faculty members to submit grants; it also allows some active researchers to have a salary increment during times when raises have been miniscule.
- m) The Wethington Award program should be maintained because it will motivate faculty to submit more extramural grants (particularly NIH grants.)
- n) While not participating currently, I hope to do so in the future. More importantly, I see this as an important tool for recruiting faculty to this institution.
- o) The program is an excuse for UK not to give raises. If my goal is to increase my income, I will do more consulting work or move to a different university that has higher salaries.
- p) I could better embrace the program if all units were starting on an equal footing. Certain programs, etc. Have had the lion's share of resources for a long time. What is the College doing to ensure that we have a top-notch research facility available to all faculty, not just a select few?
- q) I think it's a very nice way to supplement salary and provide incentives for grant-writing, especially for 9-month employees, who generally work 12 months out of the year anyway. I think more information is needed on informing faculty (especially junior faculty) what are the requirements for receiving the award, what kinds of grants qualify, how to apply, etc. More advertising is key.
- r) This is an inappropriate program for a Land Grant College of Agriculture. Demoralizing to faculty who work in applied or mission oriented research. Discourages a balanced effort in teaching, advising, and/or service. What about Wethington Awards for top 5% teaching, quality undergraduate advising, serving as DGS, Extension excellence, and/or applied research addressing critical needs of KY agriculture? Fix the Merit system. Eliminate this program that is better suited to Medical Center researchers than the UK Agriculture College. If retained, distribute the "spoils" equitably within the individual's department, either as reward for all productive persons, or to general Departmental improvements (graduate student enrichment, special seminars, teaching facilities, etc.).
- s) It is a good program that should be continued.
- t) I appreciate the need to find additional ways to support and reward faculty, but this program is particularly deficient in equity and fairness.
- u) I will apply in 2006.
- v) Perhaps this could be encouraged from the Assoc Dean for Research if the department does not understand.

Agriculture Faculty Council Chair Survey Results

1. Do you actively encourage faculty to participate in the Wethington award program? Yes 80% No 20% Comments: 10 responses
 - If I have a chance to discuss this as proposals are being generated, I mention it. If the faculty put salary on a grant, I bring it to their attention.
 - While the program is available, it is a way to assist in low salaries.
 - To date I have not done a good job of encouraging faculty participation in this program – not because I think poorly of the program, but because it hasn't been on my "radar screen." It will be in the future, however – after reviewing the materials and discussing the

program with Lisa Collins I now have a much better understanding of the program.

2. Do you feel the Wethington award is important for faculty retention?
Yes 55.6% No 44.4% Comments: 9 responses
 - So far, it has had no impact. This may change as the culture changes in the future. I think more faculty are considering this as a way to supplement their salary with time.
 - It doesn't address salary lagging and compression compared with peers.
 - I'm not sure all awards have a direct effect on retention. They do increase morale of recipients which probably has an indirect effect.
 - I feel that the program has the potential to be important for faculty retention.
 - I would consider "of value" but not necessarily "important" for faculty retention.

3. Do you feel the Wethington award is important for faculty recruitment?
Yes 66.6% No 33.3% Comments: 9 responses
 - This is a reserved yes. It was important in convincing one faculty member to come at a lower salary than he would have received elsewhere, but he wanted to come too. We mention this during interviews but does not seem to be of major concern to candidates.
 - I can't see how it is in our department.
 - That is a possibility but may not be a real incentive to a new hire.
 - Again, I feel the program has the potential to be important in faculty recruitment, although it may be important in every recruiting case.
 - Similar comment to #2

4. Do you feel the Wethington award is a factor for promoting grant submissions?
Yes 37.5% No 62.3% Comments: 8 responses
 - I do not think this has motivated faculty to write and submit grants. Any faculty member who wants to be successful understands that grants are necessary for this. Also, many of our grant programs are not suitable or allow faculty salaries on them.
 - Unfortunately, it also can encourage faculty salary instead of grad students.
 - I don't think they promote grant submissions. I do think they promote writing in salary, however.
 - Again, the potential is there to promote grant submissions. This question may best be answered empirically, however.
 - Not in general, but certainly in the case of some faculty members.

5. Are there ways to simplify the process for these awards?
 - Perhaps, but I have not thought sufficiently about the process to offer any suggestion(s).

- It seems we could simply give the names of the faculty for the awards, the amount of salary savings they generated, their last rating, and the proposed award amount. In some ways, calling them awards seems a sham as I cannot imagine denying the award in most cases.
 - Pretty simple already!
 - I am sure they could be simpler but the process seems fairly straight forward now.
 - I believe the current process is straight forward and not overly complex.
 - Actually, the process seems rather simple now.
6. What is your assessment of your faculty's perception of the Wethington award program?
- Limited enthusiasm. Grants from certain agencies are just insufficient to "carry" such awards.
 - A program more benefiting 12 month vs. 9 month faculty.
 - Still somewhat guarded as to the potential for divisiveness but also growing interest (slowly) in using it. Also, unless they have reason to apply, not a lot of knowledge too.
 - Extension faculty, and others on special grants that are not eligible, may feel excluded.
 - They like it.
 - Faculty who receive awards like them. The others vary from being neutral to being resentful they don't have opportunities to supplement their salaries.
 - Most faculty think it is a good idea but do not see it as a motivation to do what they are already motivated to do.
 - I was told that this program was communicated to COA faculty via e-mail, and therefore that faculty should be aware of the program. I haven't heard much discussion of the program, however, and therefore don't have good information on faculty perceptions of the program. We will definitely discuss this at future faculty meetings.
 - The program is viewed by many as self-serving, by others as their entitlement.
 - The faculty in Entomology supported participation in the program; but several members of the faculty do not believe this program is in the best interest of the University.
 - I have had only positive responses from those interested in participating. I have had no negative reactions.
7. Please provide any additional thoughts on the current and future participation in the Wethington awards program.
- I am somewhat indifferent, although I do believe there is a danger of creating "haves" and "have nots". If the College Administration believes there is a net gain, I have no problem with the program being continued.

- A department's (school's) policy on salary savings will greatly influence participation.
- I think we have to continue it now. Enough faculty have used it or would like to as to make it seem like they lost something if the program ended.
- I view this as a stop-gap measure, but it does reduce arguments against full F&A. Some discussion on "awards" to those that did not get a grant might be useful now.
- I think we need to continue the program. If faculty members in other colleges have them, it would be hard to justify our faculty not being eligible. In fact, the situation is better with the awards than it was before the awards. Before we had them, there was not way for our 12-month faculty to supplement their salary through grants while 9-month faculty could.
- I will continue to invite faculty to participate but the choice will remain theirs.
- Taken overall, I believe the program should be continued.
- I am strongly in favor of the Wethington Award. I feel it is a strong incentive for including salary on grants that not only benefit the P.I. directly, but also benefits the department. I look at it as a financial reward for their grantsmanship. I would like to see it continued.