

University of California faces scandal over chancellors

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In the midst of massive budget cuts, the University of California regents are coming under fire for hiring new chancellors with exorbitant salaries, one of whom is in the middle of a scandal at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

In early May, on the same day that the UC regents decided to raise student fees by 9.3 percent (or \$693, for a total of \$8,720 per year for in-state undergraduates), they also hired two new chancellors.

Susan Desmond-Hellman was named the new chancellor of UC San Francisco with a salary of \$450,000, a nearly 12 percent increase over her predecessor. Earlier this month, she informed students and staff that the budget crisis in the state would force sharp cuts in university programs and services.

Linda Katehi, who has been hired to be the next chancellor of UC Davis starting on August 17, with a salary of \$400,000, will earn \$85,000 more than her predecessor, Larry Vanderhoef. This will be an increase from her current salary of \$356,000 as the provost of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Katehi will also be provided a generous compensation package that includes a \$100,000 relocation allowance, free housing, a \$9,000 annual automobile allowance, a generous health and pension package, a low-interest home loan and a faculty position when she ends her service as chancellor.

The pay increases for the UC chancellors were defended by UC President Mark Yudof, arguing that their pay is in fact low in comparison to the salaries of chancellors at similar universities.

“I felt like I got a pretty good discount, as a matter of fact,” Yudof stated.

Yudof’s salary runs at about \$900,000 a year.

The soaring pay of these top officials, even as

budgets are cut and tuition rises, underscores the way in which university administration has been increasingly run as a business and integrated into corporate America. Pay for university presidents throughout the country rose 7.6 percent in 2008, the latest figures available. Fourteen presidents at public universities brought home more than \$700,000.

Katehi’s salary and compensation package is not the only source of controversy. Katehi is currently the provost at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, which is reeling from an admissions scandal. Over the last five years, it is alleged that underqualified students were admitted due to political patronage.

The admissions scandal at Urbana-Champaign came to light through an ongoing investigation by the *Chicago Tribune*, which published its initial findings in a May 29 article (“Clout goes to college,”).

Employing the state’s Freedom of Information Act, the *Tribune* was able to obtain some 1,800 pages of documents, including e-mails from state lawmakers to university trustees attempting to get students admitted into the university.

“The records chronicle a shadow admissions system in which some students won spots at the state’s most prestigious public university over the protests of admissions officers, while others had their rejections reversed during an unadvertised appeal process,” the article noted.

The *Tribune* found that since 2005 some 800 underqualified students have received special consideration due to political patronage, belonging to what the *Tribune* terms the “clout list” or what the university refers to as “Category I” admissions.

The paper discovered that for the 2008-2009 school year, about 77 percent of the students on the clout list

were accepted to the university in comparison to 69 percent of all applicants. In addition to this, the investigation showed that those admitted from the clout list had lower average ACT scores and class rankings than the average for all admitted students.

Linda Katehi became Urbana-Champaign's provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs in 2006. In the 1,800 pages of documents obtained by the *Tribune*, Katehi's name appears about 50 times, although most of the e-mails are from Chancellor Richard Herman's office to Katehi's staff, with Katehi's e-mail carbon copied.

In response to the *Tribune's* investigation, she pleaded ignorance. "I was not aware of all this. I considered it very inappropriate." She stated, "I don't know what Category I is."

On June 12th, Katehi sent a two-paragraph e-mail to UC Davis officials in an attempt to clarify her role in the admissions scandal. "The so-called 'Category I' admissions process was not part of the regular admissions system and was handled at a higher level in the institution," she wrote.

This statement, however, appears to be contradicted by the fact that individuals who worked for her would regularly handle Category I requests. This includes Ruth Watkins, the vice provost, Keith Marshall, the associate provost for enrollment, and Debbie Kincaid, an assistant to Marshall.

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