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VAN ROY COLUMN

Clear the shadow over the UW, Audit its hiring policy

Today several of my colleagues are calling for an audit of the University of Wisconsin's hiring policies. Specifically, they are asking that the Legislative Audit Bureau look into two areas. The first is the UW's policy of hiring consultants with six figure salaries, potentially costing tax and tuition payers millions for unknown amounts of work. The second issue is backup jobs. I think that an audit looking into these two areas is a good idea.

For the UW it's been a summer of embarrassments. They've been caught wasting tax dollars on employees that have been convicted of felonies ranging from stalking to sexual assault. They've granted administrators years of paid leave, paying their full six figure salaries after they've resigned and stopped working, and they've created cushy "consulting" jobs for retiring administrators that contain no job description and seem to require no work.

An example of one of these "consultant" jobs is the one awarded to UW-Madison Administrator Paul Barrows. Earlier this year, Barrows took a seven month vacation from the UW, collecting paychecks from his \$200,000 salary the whole time. He claimed that he was "sick," but while his illness prevented him from doing any work, it did not prevent him from filing resumes with several other universities in search of a new job.

When Barrows was finally caught with his hand in the taxpayer's cookie jar, was he fired? No. He was granted a "consultant" job with absolutely no job description and no responsibilities. For all we know he is still collecting a six figure salary on your dime and doing nothing to show for it. This is the problem with the UW's "consultant" policy.

Currently, there are at least 160 people with the job title of "consultant" at the UW. Undoubtedly, many of these consultants serve valuable roles on their perspective campuses, however, we have no way of distinguishing the good from the bad, or those who work, from those who don't.

The second issue that we would like to see the Legislative Audit Bureau look into is the "backup" job policy. The UW's policy guarantees "backup" jobs to 1,097 or 80 percent of its administrators meaning that if they fail at administering, they have a guaranteed backup job doing...well, we're not exactly sure what they'll be doing, but they'll definitely get a pay check. Can you see the problem with a policy like this?

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One example of the backup jobs policy run amuck was a decision by UW-Milwaukee to pay four former administrators more than \$600,000 over one year, supposedly to prepare them for a return to teaching. Unfortunately, according to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, UWM cannot produce any documentation that shows that any of the administrators did anything over that year. To me those four backup jobs sound more like a \$600,000 vacation than anything else.

Examples like these force the question, what are the students and taxpayers getting in exchange for their dollars going to these consultant and backup positions? This question will cast a shadow over the UW for as long as it goes unanswered. An audit will help us clear that shadow from UW and give the taxpayers and students the answers they deserve.

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