

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Professional and Scientific Council

### FY 2023 Salary Statement on Behalf of Professional & Scientific Staff at Iowa State University Chris Johnsen, President, Professional & Scientific Council

Good morning. My name is Chris Johnsen, and I am the President of the Professional and Scientific Council for Iowa State University. As the representative of over 3,000 Professional and Scientific Employees of Iowa State University, I would like to thank the Iowa Board of Regents for the opportunity today to come before you with the following comments regarding salaries for FY23.

In reviewing salary policy statements made by Council presidents in prior years I found them to be revealing and disheartening, but not entirely unsurprising. Council presidents for the better part of a decade have been pleading year after year for meaningful, performance-based increases that reflect the value that Professional and Scientific employees bring to Iowa State University. Each statement shared unique perspectives into the hard work and dedication of Iowa State's Professional and Scientific employees. They collectively paint a bigger picture of the mission critical work of Iowa State University being carried out by Professional and Scientific employees. That this work has been done exceptionally well, despite increased challenges in nearly every dimension of our jobs. These past statements reminded me of a famous Albert Einstein quote, *"doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."*

As such, the following remarks may come as a surprise to those listening. The majority of my constituents that I have been elected to represent, and the largest employee group at Iowa State University today, they know the work they do for Iowa State University is valued. That's worth repeating: our work as Professional and Scientific employees **is valued**. I see it every day from our senior administration and leaders throughout campus, from Carolann Jensen and her work at the statehouse, and by all of you here today. And most importantly – by our student population.

A senior leader shared with me a conversation they had with a collection of students who when asked, while in the midst of the pandemic and shortly after a derecho had ripped its way through Iowa, **"How are you making it through all of this?"** The resounding answer was, **'it's the staff'**. When I heard this, I could not help but feel emotional as many of us have taken on additional roles of counselors and mental health advocates, that while valued, add weight to many of our shoulders. Hearing our work is valued by a variety of stakeholders, from our immediate supervisors and colleagues to the Board of Regents and the State of Iowa to the Iowa State students and the 99 Iowa counties we serve, is a good start.

But is that enough?

In late March, I had the privilege of presenting awards to over 40 P&S employees during the Professional and Scientific Council Awards ceremony. Much like yesterday's awards presented upstairs, our ceremony was a wonderful celebration of so many who have gone above and beyond—and often

then some. President Wintersteen and other senior leaders were present to give their remarks and praise for the work being done by Professional and Scientific employees. As always, these remarks were timely and generous, but we all know, certificates and praise do not pay our bills, nor our increased health insurance costs, nor make up for lost retirement contributions, nor cover inflationary trends.

This is not unlike to those asks that past Council presidents have made. And yet, as we look towards a post-pandemic world, there are numerous challenges, different ones, than what we faced the past two years. Last year you heard numerous examples of P&S staff carrying out the University's mission to create, share, and apply knowledge to make Iowa and the world a better place. Providing a residential experience for those students who wanted it, adapting to hybrid and online models for those who felt safer off campus, our Cyclones Care measures were so successful in slowing the spread that research, innovation, and outreach could continue. None of this would have been possible without the tireless devotion of Professional and Scientific employees.

And now a year later, we see the value the state legislature places on these heroic efforts – with flat appropriations yet again.

As we will put forth to you later this month, Iowa State University will be initiating a new strategic plan. I have had the good fortune to be a part of the steering committee for this plan. Within, there are several 'To Be' statements that I, along with my steering committee members, are proud to present as representative goals over the lifetime of the 9-year strategic plan. One of these 'To Be' statements is: "To Be the most student-centric major research university."

It is an admirable statement and one I am confident we will achieve. Another 'To Be' statement is: "To Be the university that cultivates a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where students, faculty, and staff flourish."

To think about how these two To Be statements are intertwined and contingent on the other's success, I would like to read a July 2021 quote from Regent President Mike Richards, "Our regent universities have found many ways to be more efficient and have exceptionally low administrative costs compared to their peers...[n]evertheless, even with cost cutting and flat appropriations for the last two years, our costs continue to rise. We still need financial resources to provide a quality education for our students."

Last year it was suggested we must continue to do more with less. I am here to tell you we can no longer sustain doing more and more with less. The assessment of our academic programs ensures that Iowa State University is providing excellence in all academic areas. Will we be at risk of losing accreditation by continuing to expect and do more with less? As Iowa State University goes through accreditation and program review processes on a regular basis to ensure excellence in program quality; I share with you we simply cannot do more with less.

While my primary mission here today is a salary statement, I do not believe we can separate the discussion of salary and benefits any longer. As we continue to look for ways to improve our compensation, with meaningful, consistent, and performance-based raises, how else can we attract and retain employees? We must evolve and be responsive to keep pace with our industry counterparts; to keep our professional and scientific jobs attractive to quality talent. We have implemented a flexible work program that will continue to be improved upon. Perhaps for some – a fully remote work position will become a reality. Perhaps improvements will be made to adoption benefits? Establishing paternity leave?

I am not here today to beg for more money, despite this being a salary policy statement — although please don't get me wrong... none of my constituents will turn down a raise. I am here today asking for your *support* as Iowa State University continues to **reimagine** its future, *support innovative* ways we can reward high performing individuals, *support* additional benefits to **recruit and retain** quality employees, and *support evolving* methods to allow for meaningful, annual raises.

With all of this said, I am proud to say – we will still succeed. The To Be statements you will see over the next 9 years will be achieved. We believe in our senior administration, our regents, and ourselves. We continue to provide incredible value to Iowa State University and the State of Iowa. We know that while Faculty represent the brains of our organization, and Merit staff are the brawn, our P&S employees are the heart and soul of this organization.

This past year, Professional and Scientific employees at Iowa State University had the courage to do what was necessary and right to serve our students, our communities, and our state. And we will continue to do so.

We've leaned on and supported one another in ways we did not imagine possible. As we **reimagine**, **innovate**, and **evolve** our organization; I ask you today for your continued and unwavering support.

Our faculty, our staff, and our students' success depend on it.

Thank you.