

UNC President Margaret Spellings is the 13th highest paid public university executive in the United States, according to a new report, and N.C. State Chancellor Randy Woodson is close behind.

Spellings was paid \$977,077 in 2017. Woodson ranked 19th, with total compensation of \$826,136. UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Carol Folt was 67th, with total pay of \$605,104.

The figures were published Sunday by the **Chronicle** of Higher Education in an annual report on compensation for public college presidents across the country. The report covered the 2017 fiscal year.

Woodson's pay was higher because of the terms of his contract. In 2015, he received a four-year deal that added to his base salary an annual stipend of \$200,000 in private funds paid through a special University Leadership Fund at NCSU. He's also eligible for performance bonuses in the contract, which came after he had been courted by other universities.

In fiscal 2017, Woodson was paid \$203,086 in bonus money and was third highest in compensation among a group of 11 presidents from similar universities. However, Woodson was paid less than some at NCSU, including football coach Dave Doeren (\$2.3 million), then-basketball coach Mark Gottfried (\$1.3 million) and athletic director Debbie Yow (almost \$842,000).

Folt did not receive the same type of stipend in 2017. She was seventh in compensation among a group of 11 presidents from similar public universities. On her own campus, Folt was paid less than basketball coach Roy Williams (\$3 million), football coach Larry Fedora (\$2.1 million), athletic director Bubba Cunningham (about \$934,000) and two professors in the medical school.

The **Chronicle** survey showed that a dozen public university presidents in the U.S. made more than \$1 million. The average pay was nearly \$560,000, up 5 percent from the previous year.

Some of the leaders received deferred compensation payouts, pushing them into the realm of top earners. In such cases, universities make annual payments to a fund that cannot be tapped for a number of years, so-called "golden handcuffs" that entice presidents to stay in the job longer. An executive who leaves earlier than the agreed upon date forfeits the money.

"In general, average pay for public college presidents continues to go up every year, this increase being 5 percent from last year," said **Dan Bauman**, a **Chronicle** of Higher Education journalist.

The highest paid president in 2017, by far, was James Ramsey of the University of Louisville, who was ousted amid controversy that year but whose earnings topped \$4.29 million.

Ramsey, who was vice chancellor for finance and administration at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1998-99, is now embroiled in a legal battle with the University of Louisville and its foundation, which sued him earlier this year, according to multiple media reports. The lawsuit claims that Ramsey and other officials had excessive compensation packages and engaged in improper spending of the university's endowment, according to the Courier-Journal of Louisville. Ramsey left the university a month into the 2017 fiscal year, was paid a \$690,000 settlement and received a deferred compensation package of \$3.55 million, according to the **Chronicle** report.

Others in the top 10 were the leaders of Auburn University, the University of Texas system, Temple University, Texas A&M University, University of Central Florida, University of South Florida, Northern Illinois University, the University of Florida and Ohio State University.

Spellings was among four female presidents in the top 20 earners. Earlier this year, the UNC Board of Governors voted to give her a \$95,000 bonus in addition to her base pay, which is \$775,000. Three board members voted against the bonus this year.

In fiscal 2017, according to the **Chronicle's** report, Spellings received a \$45,000 bonus and \$122,500 in additional pay, which was set aside in a retirement account. She also lives in a university-owned house and has a car benefit, as do chancellors in the system.

Compared to 12 other university system heads around the country, Spellings was paid well more, according to the **Chronicle**. But that comparison group did not include the two higher education systems in Texas, which each compensated their presidents with more than \$1 million that year.

Spellings' base salary is \$175,000 more than that of her predecessor, Tom Ross, and she is the first UNC president to be hired on a multi-year contract. A former U.S. education secretary under President George W. Bush, Spellings is in the third year of a five-year contract at UNC.

"As time goes on, in order to stay competitive, it becomes a lot tougher for a university board of trustees to swear off any sort of outside compensation other than base compensation," Bauman said.

There's another reason to boost the base salary with other forms of compensation, he added.

"Universities and colleges understand that political pressure that comes with paying someone six figures or seven figures at a taxpayer-funded institution," Bauman said. "Just because a taxpayer or a faculty member sees someone's pay listed in a pay database as this is what they're making in terms of base compensation, that doesn't really tell us the whole story of what they're making overall from all the different financial instruments that the board of trustees is using to pay them."

Other leaders listed in the compensation survey were: UNC Charlotte Chancellor Phil Dubois, at \$508,050; East Carolina University Chancellor Cecil Staton, at \$457,925; UNC Greensboro Chancellor Frank Gilliam, at \$434,998; and N.C. A&T State University Chancellor Harold Martin, at \$380,210.