

THE DAILY

of the University of Washington | since 1891 | dailyuw.com

Rare misstep could prove costly

Jan 12, 2006

It's a rare blunder for UW President Mark Emmert.

King County Superior Court Judge Mary Yu ruled in October of last year that the University owes the faculty back pay that could amount to millions of dollars. On Nov. 30, Emmert sent out an e-mail to the faculty that purportedly provided "information regarding the lawsuit involving faculty pay."

The e-mail proved to be rather one-sided and, as a response, on Monday Judge Yu barred all communications from the University to the faculty regarding the lawsuit.

The court's ruling adds insult to injury for the University and is out of character for Emmert, who usually handles public affairs with polish and aplomb.

Whether this e-mail was an overt attempt to apply pressure onto faculty members or merely an attempt by Emmert to present the administration's viewpoint, it undoubtedly strained relations with the faculty at a time when relations are already taxed by the ongoing suit.

Emmert has resolutely defended his decision, saying that the salary shortages were due to "a very challenging fiscal environment" during the school years between 2001 and 2003. But, during times of tight finances, it seems our professors are some of the last people we should shortchange.

The UW is consistently ranked among the top public universities, a feat made impossible without retaining a first-rate faculty. If we develop a reputation for salary stinginess, however, faculty here will leave for higher-paying jobs elsewhere while other talented scholars will avoid our institution.

To maintain the quality of our education, let's pay the professors what they're promised and play by the rules.