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Judge approves \$12 million for part-time profs

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A King County Superior Court Judge has approved a \$12 million settlement that increases the retirement benefits of part-time community college instructors that worked in Washington up to 25 years ago.

The state Legislature this year approved a \$12 million appropriation to pay the settlement, according to Stephen Strong of Bendich, Stobaugh & Strong, the Seattle law firm that represented the teachers.

The settlement stems from a 1996 regulation by the state Department of Retirement Systems requiring the state's colleges to count part-time instructors' work outside the classroom, in addition to their in-class teaching hours, when determining the retirement benefits to which a teacher is entitled.

That's the same system already employed to decide the retirement benefits of full-time instructors.

King County Superior Court Judge Steven Scott originally ruled in favor of the instructors in February 2000, then late last week approved the settlement between the teachers and the state.

The Department of Retirement Systems said teachers covered under the TRS retirement plan between 1977 and the present time must contact the state to request an adjustment to service credits. The retirement accounts of teachers covered by the TIAA-Cref retirement plan will automatically be credited for work between 1990 and 1999.