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Saturday, March 18, 2006 - Page updated at 10:52 AM

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Information in this article, originally published March 17, was corrected March 18. University of Washington professor Duane Storti's name was misspelled in an earlier version of this article.

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Snohomish Co.

Politics

Education

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Washington

Inside The Times

Here and Now

Nation / World

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Editorials / Opinion

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Entertainment

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Settlement approved in UW's pay lawsuit

By **Jennifer Sullivan**
Seattle Times staff reporter

The University of Washington ended a nearly two-year court battle over faculty pay raises Thursday when the school's Board of Regents approved a \$17.5 million settlement.

The announcement came almost five months after a King County Superior Court judge found that the UW had violated its own policy by not awarding most of its 3,000 faculty members an annual merit increase in the 2002-03 academic year.

"The administration and regents have talked a long time that faculty salaries are a top priority," said mechanical engineering Professor Duane Storti, who in 2004 filed the legal action. "I hope it doesn't take prodding from the courts from here on out."

Storti, who has worked at the UW almost 22 years, says faculty are owed several weeks of back pay — which, he says, averages out to a few thousand dollars each. Using \$70,000 as an average faculty salary, Storti says he and co-workers are owed about a \$1,500 raise.

The UW has also agreed to pay Storti \$50,000 to settle a related public-disclosure claim.

UW spokesman Bob Roseth declined to comment in detail about the settlement because it will go before a King County judge today for approval.

About \$5.2 million of the settlement will go to lawyers handling the case.

"The top budget priority then and now for this university is ensuring competitive salaries," UW President Mark Emmert said in a written statement. "... The UW cannot continue to thrive unless we are able to attract and retain the quality of faculty that will ensure this institution's continued excellence."

The university agreed in 1999 to grant merit raises of at least 2 percent to faculty members as a way to help keep their salaries competitive; up to that point, many of the UW raises were going to newly recruited professors and to professors who threatened to leave.

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The 2 percent raises were provided every year since 2001 except for 2002-03, which was the subject of the lawsuit. The university had argued that the Legislature did not provide funding for a raise that year, but the judge found that the raise was promised by the faculty code, which constituted a contract.

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Information from The Associated Press is included in this report.

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