

USA Today article based on *Student Leader's* "Student Government Salary Survey"

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College students are picking up paychecks for being leaders

By Eileen Smith
USA TODAY

Armando Sanchez administers a \$16 million budget. He heads a work force 1,000 employees strong. His salary: \$700 a month.

Education

That's paltry pay for an executive whose corporation operates a bookstore, feeds 13,000 people and runs a flotilla of vendors.

Yet many who do similar work receive no wages at all. Sanchez is Associated Students president at California State University at Chico. His modest salary reflects a growing trend: paying elected student officials at colleges and universities.

"I think it's only right that people in student government be paid," says Sanchez, a 24-year-old political science major. "I work between 40 and 50 hours a week."

That issue is examined in the current edition of *Student Leader*, a magazine for college government officers that surveyed 150 schools on what compensation — if any — elected officials receive.

The survey says 70% of colleges offer student leaders some type of remuneration, ranging from tuition and board to a monthly salary. Almost all — 88% — of state universities compensate officers; only 48% of private institutions do. (Com-



'Pure service': Michael Shapiro, student body president of Rutgers University, receives no salary and doesn't think student officials should be paid. But he does think academic credit should be awarded.

plete results are on *Student Leader's* Web site, www.studentleader.com)

Student Leader publisher W.H. "Butch" Oxendine Jr. is in favor of pay for those who serve in student government. Oxendine, 34, earned a tuition waiver as student body vice president at Lake City Community College in Florida.

"If athletes get tuition and board, shouldn't we expect that student leaders would be compensated the same way?" he says.

Students who advocate pay for school leaders echo those who support good salaries for elected officials outside academia. They say only the elite will be able to afford to hold of-

ice in college in an era of rising tuition.

"How many politicians would we have in government if there were no compensation?" asks Calandra Moore, the student secretary of state and the survey respondent from DeKalb College, Decatur, Ga.

Yet at least one school, Blue-

Schools with top salaries

These schools offer the highest compensation for student body presidents, according to a survey in *Student Leader* magazine:

Private colleges

- ▶ University of Miami, \$19,140 tuition scholarship
- ▶ Gannon College, Erie, Pa., \$16,760 tuition waiver
- ▶ St. Louis University, \$15,000 tuition waiver

Public universities

- ▶ Washington State University, Pullman, \$15,463

- ▶ Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, \$13,121 in salary and tuition

- ▶ San Diego State University, \$11,000 stipend for living expenses

Community colleges

- ▶ Morton College, Cicero, Ill., \$1,900 tuition waiver

- ▶ DeKalb College, Decatur, Ga., \$1,800 stipend

- ▶ Southeast Community College, Lincoln, Neb., \$1,300 tuition remission

field State College in West Virginia, has reduced its compensation to the student body president to discourage people from seeking office merely for the paycheck. The president's salary, about \$70 a week, has been abolished; a \$2,000 tuition waiver is still in effect, according to the survey.

One college administrator, who served in student government a generation ago, says student leaders should zealously guard their amateur status, serving without reward.

"It is an honor to serve the student body and the college," says Anne Hoehn, 45, director of the leadership program at the College of St. Elizabeth, a women's school in Morristown, N.J. "Students need to learn to give to their communities with-

out monetary remuneration."

At least one student leader agrees. "I like the idea of pure service," says Michael Shapiro, student body president at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

Yet Shapiro, who receives neither perks nor pay, was roundly criticized for attending a three-day student government conference in Orlando, Fla., subsidized by school fees. When he returned to the New Brunswick campus, he was greeted by headlines in the student newspaper, *The Daily Targum*, decrying his "junket."

Shapiro survived a call for his resignation, noting that the editors who lambasted him are paid for their work. But he has nixed the tradition of renting a cabin for the student officers'

annual retreat.

"This year it will be on campus in a multipurpose room," he says.

Shapiro says holding office has not been a monetary sacrifice for him; he has several academic scholarships, and his parents pick up the rest of the tab.

"While some of us in student government do have financial constraints, most of us don't have families to support," Shapiro says.

But some students do. For Andy Ortiz, 28, a third-year law student, the \$4,080 stipend he would receive was enough of an economic boost to enable him to run for Associated Students president at Arizona State University in Tempe.

"Otherwise, I probably would have done a paid internship for a law firm," says Ortiz, who has a wife and three stepchildren.

Many schools offer perks in lieu of paychecks. At Baylor University in Waco, Texas, student leaders are treated to laptop computers. Sweet Briar College in Virginia offers first dibs on dorm rooms. And officers at Emory University in Atlanta have dinner with former President Carter.

Despite his opposition to salaries, Rutgers' Shapiro thinks those who serve in student government should receive academic credits in political science.

"Student government — it's an education," he says.