David Petraeus trades $200,000 New York university salary for $1 after outcry

- Administrators first tried to calm outrage by lowering offer to $150,000
- The pay was for only three hours-per-week of actual work
- The CUNY staff union accused school administrators of 'stealing' from them to pay the exhorbitant salary

By Ryan Gorman


Former Central Intelligence Agency director David Petraeus has decided against the huge payday from the City University of New York.

In the face of mounting public outcry, the retired four-star general and top spy Monday announced that he has decided to forgo the offered $200,000 salary from CUNY’s Macaulay Honors College and take a token salary of $1, according to reports.

No stranger to scandal, Petraeus quickly decided this was one battle not worth fighting.
Change of heart: Former general and CIA head David Petraeus announced Monday he would forgo a salary at CUNY

Explaining that Petraeus didn’t take the job for the money, his lawyer Robert Barnett told the New York Times that ‘he decided it was much more important to keep the focus on the students, on the school and on the teaching,’ causing him to propose the change.

First reported by Gawker, the astonishingly high salary, worked out to about $2,250 an hour, according to the site. An average full-time faculty member pulls in just under $90,000, and adjuncts in the CUNY system usually make less than $3,000 per course, according to reports.

The salary sparked outrage among faculty routinely seen picketing through the streets of the city demanding higher wages and better health insurance, among other things.

Though eventually lowered to $150,000, the salary still infuriated the CUNY staff union.

'It is obscene for a university that operates on a bare-bones budget to pay anyone $150,000 for a single course,' Professional Staff Congress President Barbara Bowen said in a statement. 'Every dollar raised at CUNY, whether from public or private sources, should go to providing broad access to a quality college education,’ the statement continued.

The Brooklyn chapter of the PSC even accused CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein of ‘stealing from PSC members to pay Petraeus’ bloated salary.’
In addition to working only three hours per week, Petraeus was given access to graduate student support 'course research, administration, and grading, as well as limited travel funds,' according to the offer letter first obtained by Gawker and reviewed by Mail Online.

As time passed, vitriol over the shocking pay only grew.

Brad Lander, a city Councilman, began a petition demanding CUNY ‘rescind the $150,000 payday for David Petraeus, and put those funds toward supporting low-income students or hiring more teachers.’ The petition has 3,200 signatures to date.
City Advocate Bill DeBlasio, currently running for mayor, prodded CUNY to reconsider the pay it offered to their big ticket hire.

Correspondence between Petraeus and university administrators uncovered by Gawker showed that CUNY planned to fund the salary through ‘funds from a private gift.’ That gift appears to have never materialized.

To his credit, Petraeus, in emails exchanged with a dean, didn’t seem preoccupied with the salary, even bragging he could have made more and chosen a more prestigious institution.

CUNY administrators defended the salary, telling the Times that Petraeus is ‘an extremely valuable teacher for our students,’ and called the furor over the pay ‘unfortunate.’

Mail Online was unable to reach CUNY or Petraeus for further comment.
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Yup, he'll take a buck as salary and then the school will pay his living expenses ... Probably an increase over the original pay.

- **LaChat**, LA, United States, 16/7/2013 15:52

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A real military expert is worth whatever you're paying any of the history teachers.

- **userpete86**, Irvine, United States, 16/7/2013 15:23

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Elizabeth Warren made $500,000 for teaching at Harvard, no one squawked about that.

- bostonrepubguy, Boston, 16/7/2013 15:01

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Most American university professors have spent their entire lives in the ivory towers of academia and have no real world experience or practical common sense to contribute to the education of their students. They have been coddled in the petri dish of leftist indoctrination, and do little more than pass that rote indoctrination along, imparting nothing more than a biased and singular viewpoint, and lockstep liberal progressive dogma. How they think they are worth anything more than minimum wage is beyond me. Petraeus would likely have been a much needed breath of fresh air and fresh real world perspective for CUNY, which is why the profs were squealing so loudly in protest.

- Iowa48, Portland Oregon, United States, 16/7/2013 14:36

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Here's hoping that public outcry will get Mr. Petraeus to tell us Americans what really went down in Benghazi and who is responsible for the death of 4 Americans.

- Harif2, Chicago-Il.USA, 16/7/2013 12:56

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Whoever wrote this must've sweated a bit with Y and T next to each other on the keyboard.

- neilw, Manchester, 16/7/2013 08:23

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Money is confetti... just ask the British tax payer and the BBC license payers.

- Rollo Tomassi, Bangkok, United Kingdom, 16/7/2013 06:00

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