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Petraeus's Pay for Part-Time CUNY Job, Criticized at \$200,000, Drops to \$1

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It was supposed to be a feather in the cap for the City University of New York's ambitious honors college. Or perhaps a careful first step back into public life for a leader sidelined by scandal.

One way or another, the [news](#) that David H. Petraeus, the former C.I.A. director and commander of the allied forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, would be a visiting professor at the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY this coming academic year was supposed to be great publicity all around.

Instead it turned into a minor scandal all its own, as some professors and politicians expressed outrage over his six-figure salary, and others accused the university's administration of lying about just what the salary was.

On Monday, it was announced that Mr. Petraeus would, on second thought, teach for just \$1.

"The general never was taking on this teaching assignment for the money," said Robert Barnett, his lawyer, who, along with CUNY, confirmed the salary change. "Once controversy arose about the amount he was being paid, he decided it was much more important to keep the focus on the students, on the school and on the teaching, and not have it be about the money." So Mr. Petraeus proposed waiving his salary "to remove money as a point of controversy," Mr. Barnett said.

Mr. Petraeus declined to comment.

When CUNY appointed him in April to teach a seminar now called "Are We on the Threshold of the North American Decade" each semester and deliver two public lectures, his salary was said to still be under discussion. But according to documents obtained by Gawker through a Freedom of Information Law request and later reviewed by The New York Times,

he and the CUNY chancellor at the time, Matthew Goldstein, had agreed two months earlier on “\$200,000 per annum, supplemented by funds from a private gift.”

Mr. Petraeus, who earned a doctorate from Princeton University, later wrote Ann Kirschner, the dean of Macaulay, to thank her for her interest and to confirm his own, noting, “The truth is that I could have had gotten more money or more prestigious places.”

Those documents and others provided by CUNY reveal an extensive and friendly e-mail correspondence between Mr. Petraeus and Dr. Kirschner. The two went back and forth about the seminar, an op-ed article they contemplated writing together, and even their day. They do not appear to have exchanged e-mail about reducing his salary until word of his compensation — far more than most CUNY professors receive, for far less work — began making headlines.

CUNY officials insisted that those headlines were wrong, that despite the offer of at least \$200,000, Mr. Petraeus had agreed to a smaller sum, all from private funds. To back up that point, Dr. Kirschner then wrote him a letter “memorializing our discussions over the past few months regarding your appointment as Visiting Professor at Macaulay Honors College at \$150,000.”

That “memorializing” letter failed to convince critics. So a while later she released a document that was described as an early draft of the agreement. But that draft had never been sent, making its relevance unclear, and it was not included with the original cache of documents that had been released.

A chorus of observers accused CUNY of a cover-up. State Assemblyman Kieran Michael Lalor wrote a letter of protest. City Councilman Brad Lander started a [petition](#). Bill de Blasio, the public advocate and a candidate for mayor, [urged](#) CUNY’s interim chancellor to renegotiate the salary. Salon.com [declared](#) the matter “a veritable second Petraeusgate.”

The skepticism in part reflects the disparity between what CUNY offered Mr. Petraeus and what it pays other professors. The average salary for full-time faculty members is \$89,768. Adjunct professors, who currently teach more than half of CUNY’s courses, get just a few thousand dollars per course.

Most professors teach multiple courses each semester and do all of their own grading. Mr. Petraeus will teach one seminar with 16 students, and CUNY has arranged for two graduate students to assist him, in addition to the three Harvard graduate students who helped him assemble the syllabus.

In his downtime from CUNY, Mr. Petraeus — whom Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Company has hired to be chairman of its new KKR Global Institute — will be on the lecture circuit and teach at the University of Southern California, a job that he said paid extremely well.

Dr. Kirschner said, “We felt that we had the opportunity to bring somebody of extreme stature to be with our students and that whether the salary was \$200,000 or \$150,000 he was absolutely worth it.” The dean also said, “I sympathize with the concerns about salary, but I also believe he is an extremely valuable teacher for our students.” As for the controversy, she dismissed it as “unfortunate.”