

**Faculty Working Group on
Faculty Salaries and Resources
Report to the Faculty Senate
05/06/2025**

The draft report of the *Ad hoc* Committee on Faculty Salaries and Resources was discussed at the Faculty Senate meeting held on October 15, 2024. There was a follow-up meeting between FS President Chris Gabler, FS President-elect Sarah Williams-Blangero, Dr. Bailey, and Dr. Zayas on January 16, 2025. Both Drs. Zayas and Bailey expressed support for improving salaries of successful faculty. The *Ad hoc* Committee was made a standing Committee of the Faculty Senate in order to facilitate regular review of issues related to faculty salaries and resources, and to provide a means for making recommendations to the administration regarding faculty salary and resource needs.

The members of the Committee on Faculty Salaries and Resources include Sarah Williams-Blangero, Chair; Mataz Alcoutlabi; Michelle Alvarado; Norma Beardwood-Roper; Pauline Jojo; and Tamer Oraby. The Committee on Faculty Salaries and Resources met on February 20, 2025, and April 17, 2025. It's next meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2025. The current version of the report of the Committee on Faculty Salaries and Resources is shown below.

REPORT

Charge: The Faculty Senate Ad hoc Working Group on Faculty Salaries and Resources was formed to develop recommendations regarding faculty salaries and resources to be provided to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. The *Ad hoc* Committee reviews processes used at UTRGV for 1) determining salary at time of hire, 2) reviewing salaries for internal and external equity, 3) determining merit increases, and 4) addressing salary compression and inversion. The committee also will review the increases in the cost of living in the Rio Grande Valley in relation to average salary increases.

Prioritizing Faculty Compensation: The mission of UTRGV is to "serve the Rio Grande Valley and beyond via an innovative and unique multicultural education dedicated to student access and success. By championing leading research, healthcare, and application of University discoveries, we support sustainable development, community engagement, and well-being." Additionally, UTRGV has set a goal of becoming an R1 Research University by 2028, which requires the expansion of research and graduate education programs. UTRGV's mission and goal of attaining R1 status both rely on attracting and

retaining outstanding faculty who can advance the mission and research goals of the university.

Recommendation: Make the provision of competitive salaries to existing and incoming faculty an institutional priority for UTRGV as it makes its budgeting decisions. Recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty will be critical for the future development of UTRGV and its progress toward R1 status.

Increasing Competitiveness of Salaries: Current salaries are a function of starting salaries, equity adjustments, and merit adjustments. The frequency of reviews for internal and external equity is unknown. Faculty do not have access to CUPA data and limited access to AAMC data that are used to determine salaries at time of hire. UTRGV faculty salaries are public information at state institutions and until several years ago were available through the library. Currently, there is a lack of transparency regarding faculty salaries since salary information is not readily available to non-administrators.

UTRGV has demonstrated a commitment to improving market equity and internal equity for faculty, with a major faculty compensation review conducted in 2022. The goal was to achieve the 25th percentile for salaries at R-2 High Research Activity comparable universities. The goals for achieving market equity are changing as we progress towards the new higher status of an R1 university.

Non-tenure track faculty are essential for the success of educational and research programs, particularly in the School of Medicine, School of Podiatric Medicine, School of Nursing, University College, and the College of Health Professions. However, salaries for non-tenure track faculty are generally below those for tenured faculty and may not be competitive with the local or national market. For example, some University College lecturers are earning less than the entry salary for a starting teacher with a bachelor's degree in the local school districts. The hiring salary schedules for 2024-2025 were reviewed for school districts in the area. The starting salary for a new teacher at HCISD is \$54,000; for an individual with 5 years of experience is \$55,690; and for an individual with 10 years of experience is \$57,690. In the BCISD, the starting salary for a teacher with no experience is \$55,000; for an individual with 5 years of experience is \$56,430; and for an

individual with 10 years of experience is \$59,530. The PSJA ISD has a starting salary of \$58,300; 28% of PSJA ISD teachers earn a salary in excess of \$80,000.

Recommendations: Make CUPA and AAMC faculty salary data available to faculty for review and analysis through a website.

Conduct reviews of faculty salaries at least once every three years to assess internal and external equity for both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty.

Provide multi-year contracts to non-tenured faculty to improve retention of outstanding non-tenure track faculty.

Standardize processes for determining entry salaries and the associated review of internal salaries. Consider development of a policy on salary determination.

Determining Merit Increases:

The process for determining merit increases to salaries varies across departments and across colleges. However, all merit determination processes are consistent with the HR guidelines for distributing merit pay. While research is often highlighted in determining merit pay, the value of service and teaching also should be considered, since workload may be distributed more heavily in service and teaching than in research.

The annual evaluation is generally used to determine merit increases, but the evaluation process may vary from college to college.

Recommendations: Provide guidelines for use of evaluations in determining merit increases that are applied across all colleges.

Standardize the use of the Annual Evaluation for determination of merit increases.

For each college, develop criteria for exceptional or special merit that can be applied across the college.

Develop an incentive program that would be applied across all colleges and disciplines to recognize exceptional scholarly

productivity with a permanent increase in salary on top of merit increase.

Recognize exceptional academic achievements or major milestones (such as an exceptional 6-year post tenure review) with a significant permanent increase to salary.

Compensation for Summer Work by 9-Month Employees

Faculty who are on nine-month contracts may teach or conduct funded research during the summer to earn additional compensation. All faculty who teach or conduct research supported by a funded grant are compensated at the same rate as during the academic year. Faculty on nine-month contracts who provide service to the institution, college, or department during the summer may or may not be compensated. Faculty, especially junior faculty, are unsure if requests for service work in the summer without compensation must be met. For lecturers and faculty who are on one-year contracts, requests for service work during the summer may be coercive since the request may be made before the next year's contract has been offered.

Recommendations: Develop guidelines for nine-month contract employees, including expectations for service during the unpaid summer months.

Develop a model for compensating service work during the summer at the individual's normal hourly rate, when the time commitment meets or exceeds the equivalent of 10% effort (4 hours per week).

Additional Factors Impacting Faculty Salaries:

The lack of financial resources at the departmental, college, and university level to support publication costs and travel to professional conferences further impacts faculty salaries. Publications and presentations at conferences are required for tenure and for promotion. Available support for these efforts is very limited, with travel awards generally being approximately \$800. The level of available support for conferences means that faculty without grant funding have to absorb a portion of their travel costs from their salary. Similarly, faculty without significant grant funding frequently have to cover part or all of their publication costs from their salary. The lack of resources to support faculty travel and publication costs particularly impacts junior faculty who are working to obtain their first papers and grants. Publications and national reputation developed through conference

presentations are also critical for obtaining grant funding. The goal of moving towards R1 status makes conference presentations and publications institutional goals in addition to being the goals of individual faculty since ultimately both lead to increased grant funding and an increased number of students in doctoral programs.

Recommendations: Allocate resources to departments and colleges to support travel to national conferences for faculty who do not have available grant funding to support conference travel.

Allocate resources to departments to support publication costs, recognizing that costs will vary by discipline.

Cost of Living in South Texas

While South Texas still has a lower cost of living than many areas in the country, the cost of living in the areas served by UTRGV has increased over the past nine years since UTRGV was formed. Merit increases have not been provided in every year since the formation of UTRGV, and when they are provided, they average 2%. The funds available for merit increases are not sufficient to compensate for changes in the cost of living.

Utilizing data on loss in buying power as determined from the consumer price index changes from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$1,000 in August 2000 had the same buying power as \$1,822 in August of 2024.