

**FINAL REPORT  
OF THE DIFFERENTIAL STARTING SALARIES TASK FORCE  
TO CHANCELLOR WILSON**

**June 12, 2009**

In the fall of 2008, Chancellor Wilson called for the formation of a Differential Starting Salaries Task Force (DSSTF) to examine the starting salary structure at the UW-Colleges. The members of the Task Force (Bill Bultman, CSEPA; Timothy Dunn, PHI; Carol Fischer, BUS/ECO; Elizabeth Hayes, BIO; Andy Keogh, UW-Marshfield/Wood Dean; Mark Kemp, CHE; Cary Komoto, GEO/GLG; Ken Grant, ENG; Tom Peneski, MAT; Abbas Taheri, BUS/ECO; Elizabeth Zanichkowsky, ENG) represented a cross section of departments, campuses, and stakeholder positions. Greg Lampe, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Steve Wildeck, Vice Chancellor for Administrative and Financial Services; and David Prucha, Director of Human Services provided institutional staff support to the Task Force.

Currently, newly hired faculty receive the same starting salary regardless of discipline, with the exception that a foreign national receives a starting salary in line with that discipline's prevailing wage in the region. Repeated failed searches in certain disciplines have prompted a re-examination of the starting salary structure. In particular, Chancellor Wilson asked the Task Force to answer five questions:

1. Should the Colleges continue its practice of giving the same starting salaries to all incoming tenure track faculty, regardless of discipline?
2. Should the Colleges move to a more market-driven approach, with beginning faculty in higher demand disciplines being awarded starting salaries beyond that of faculty in other disciplines?
3. If the Colleges move to a more market-driven approach, how can we implement the change in a way that would preserve the esprit de corps that has been built in the Colleges over the years?
4. What would be the long term effect on the quality of the academic program if the Colleges continue to experience failed searches?
5. If we are unable to compete for outstanding tenure-track faculty, should we move more toward an IAS model?

The Differential Starting Salaries Task Force held three face-to-face meetings: November 22, 2008; January 23, 2009; and March 23, 2009. At its first meeting, the DSSTF received its charge from the Chancellor and began an exploration of the issues raised in the Chancellor's five questions. In addition, the group requested supporting materials needed to address the charge. At its second meeting, the DSSTF reviewed the supporting materials requested at the November 22, 2008 meeting. These included the following:

- A History of Faculty Salaries in the UW Colleges
- 2008-09 UW System Assistant Professor Starting Salary Rates
- Failed Faculty Searches from 2004-2008
- Faculty Separations from 2004-2008 by Department
- Faculty Separations from 2004-2008 by Campus

- CUPA Four-Year Public Institutions Salary Averages
- CUPA Community Colleges Salary Averages
- IAS Staffing since 2005 by Campus and Department

After a review of the materials, the DSSTF engaged in a discussion of arguments for and against differential salaries based on a draft document crafted by Tim Dunn summarizing arguments for and against the issue. At the end of its second meeting, the DSSTF once again reviewed the Chancellor's charge and assigned Tim Dunn to draft a DSSTF response to questions 1, 2, and 4; they assigned Ken Grant to lead an e-mail discussion of questions 3 and 5; and Bill Bultman, Carol Fischer, Tom Peneski, and Abbas Taheri to explore a master teacher model or some variation that might be acceptable to meet question 5.

At its final face-to-face meeting on March 23, 2009, the DSSTF discussed each of the Chancellor's five questions and sought to reach consensus on them. It is important to know that many members of the committee struggled reaching the recommendations this report makes to the Chancellor. Every member of the DSSTF will acknowledge the difficulty of the charge and the passion members brought to the work. Every member was focused on solving a problem that has made it extremely difficult for some campuses to offer effective academic programs in all disciplines. The recommendations listed below were arrived at by focusing on the UW Colleges' ability to continue to deliver its course array and meet its mission. The DSSTF considered what it felt was a complete range of solutions to the problem of hiring in certain disciplines, including the dissolution of certain departments. It was the conclusion of the group that all the academic departments as currently configured are necessary for the UW Colleges to meet the needs of its students. Coming from a variety of campuses, departments, and ideological positions, the DSSTF was able to reach consensus on its response to the Chancellor's charge.

The following report summarizes our recommendations regarding each of the five questions.

**Question 1: Should the UW-Colleges continue offering the same starting salaries in all disciplines?**

After considerable discussion and debate, we recommend that the Chancellor strongly consider increasing the starting salary in those disciplines that, primarily for financial reasons, continue to experience failed searches. The primary argument in support of this recommendation is as follows. First, offering a variety of high quality educational programs is an essential part of the UW-Colleges' mission. Second, the current starting salary may be too low to hire qualified faculty in certain disciplines. Third, if the UW-Colleges cannot hire qualified faculty in certain disciplines, it cannot adequately fulfill its mission. If these premises are accepted, the need for differential starting salaries becomes apparent.

We recognize the potential impact of such a significant change in policy. However, we believe that impact could be significantly reduced if the following caveats were observed.

1. Changes in the starting salary structure should depart from the status quo only to the extent necessary to fulfill the mission of the Colleges. In other words, only those departments that cannot hire qualified faculty at the existing salary should be allowed to hire new faculty at an increased salary, and the increase in starting salary should be limited to the minimum amount necessary to hire qualified faculty.

2. Departments wishing to hire faculty at an increased rate should be required to demonstrate that their new faculty searches fail primarily for financial reasons. In other words, to receive permission to offer an increased starting salary to new hires, departments must demonstrate a clear need. In practice, we expect that only a few departments will meet this condition. This will limit the budgetary impact of the increase in starting salaries.
3. Faculty receiving higher starting salaries should be treated in all other respects the same as faculty in other disciplines. They should be expected to carry the same workload, receive the same kind of merit pay increases and promotion bonuses, and so on. This would help to reinforce the idea that they are paid more purely out of necessity.
4. For a variety of reasons, a more systematic and comprehensive review of the Colleges' salary and merit pay structure may be needed, but the Task Force considers those issues to be outside the scope of our mandate.

### **Question 2: Should the UW-Colleges change to a market-driven approach?**

Our rationale for supporting differential starting salaries is primarily market-based: some departments simply cannot hire qualified faculty at the existing rate. We assume that the primary reason for this is that there is an insufficient supply of qualified candidates in certain disciplines who are willing to work for the amount we offer. This is most likely due at least in part to the much more lucrative opportunities offered by the private sector in certain disciplines. Of course, faculty in many disciplines could receive greater compensation elsewhere, but the UW-Colleges does not consistently face failed searches in most disciplines (if it did, we would have a case for increasing salaries across the board). Accordingly, we think that, to some extent at least, market-based incentives are appropriate at our institution.

Many institutions allow market-driven considerations to play a significant role in determining faculty salaries, resulting in wide discrepancies in starting salaries among the various disciplines. We believe that a strong case could be made for differential salaries in a few disciplines. However, we believe that, for most disciplines, the mission of the Colleges is currently well served by our existing salary structure. Whether a more dramatic change in the salary structure is warranted or desirable is not something that we addressed directly. We see a shift to differential starting salaries not as a change in philosophies but as a practical concession to market realities.

### **Question 3: If the Colleges move to a more market-driven approach, how can we implement the change in a way that would preserve the esprit de corps that has been built in the Colleges over the years?**

We quickly discovered that "fairness" often involves paradox in that what some faculty believe is equitable salary administration may be perceived as inequitable by others in a market driven department. Our single starting salary does not match the pattern of salary administration at the comprehensive campuses. The attached bar chart, "2008-2009 Assistant Professor Starting Rates" clearly shows that the UW Colleges starting salary is roughly \$7,000 below the average starting salary at the comprehensive campuses.

If the UW Colleges must selectively employ differential salaries in some market-driven disciplines, it absolutely must address the larger problem of low starting salaries in the rest of its departments. If the Chancellor chooses to establish differential starting salaries without simultaneously developing a plan to address the lagging starting salaries for faculty across the disciplines, the institution's esprit de corps will suffer.

A starting salary that reflects the current market is only one component that affects esprit de corps on a campus; other considerations including the quality of campus and community life are important as well. All of these items help reassure faculty that they are valued. We hope that the Employee Assistance Program staff may be engaged to help manage change should the Chancellor accept our recommendations.

**Question 4: What would be the long-term effect on the academic program if the Colleges continue to experience failed searches?**

We begin by noting that it is unlikely that the market will improve on its own. There is little reason to think, for example, that the market for MBAs willing to accept a starting salary of \$45,000 is likely to improve, at least in the long run. We therefore assume that unless something is done, the Colleges can continue to expect failed searches in certain disciplines.

We regard the deleterious effects of failed searches on the mission of the Colleges as unacceptable; that is why we recommend offering differential starting salaries. Granted, there are other ways of dealing with this problem: we could, for example, lower the necessary qualifications for new faculty or, even more drastically, scrap certain departments and programs altogether. But having examined various alternatives carefully, we believe that offering differential salaries is the least harmful way of dealing with an unacceptable problem. Offering a variety of programs is an essential aspect of our mission, and failed searches should be seen as a failure to support that mission. A consistent failure to hire qualified faculty deprives students of the opportunity to take courses they need, adversely affects recruitment and retention efforts, and hurts the reputation of our institution and its members. We regard these consequences as unacceptable.

As for the potential harmful effects of introducing differential starting salaries, at least some of these effects are addressed elsewhere in this document.

**Question 5: If we are unable to compete for outstanding tenure-track faculty, should we move more toward an IAS model?**

The DSSTF considered two options: one in which a faculty member has oversight of IAS (currently in place in larger departments and on larger campuses where there is often a faculty member overseeing multiple IAS in one discipline); the other in which a statewide course coordinator develops course materials (much like the Master Teacher model currently used in the online program.) The DSSTF is absolutely confident that the UW Colleges can compete for outstanding, qualified faculty and that hiring faculty to meet program need is a priority at the institutional level. Further, the DSSTF recommends that the chancellor encourage the hiring of IAS when faculty cannot be hired. Not considering IAS would be a detriment to the institution.

If the Chancellor accepts these recommendations, the DSSTF feels strongly that a comprehensive communication plan should be developed and implemented. Brown bag lunches, compressed video town hall meetings, articles in institutional publications such as the Chancellor's newsletter will help educate the faculty on the necessity for differential starting salaries.

In addition, we hope the Chancellor will begin a conversation with governance groups and stakeholders as well, including the Senate, academic department chairs, and the campus executive officers and deans.



**CUPA Four-year Public Institutions  
Salary Averages**

	New Asst	Asst	Assoc	Prof
UW Colleges	42,500	45,867	53,526	65,513
Liberal Arts, Sci., Humanities	44,976	49,427	60,863	78,748
Music	46,447	47,432	56,756	72,161
For Lang	46,494	48,503	57,806	75,900
English	47,066	47,611	56,862	74,596
History	47,084	47,741	57,987	77,397
Communication	48,404	49,623	59,509	77,277
Philosophy	49,195	49,322	58,888	79,257
Sociology	49,590	49,758	59,258	78,260
Physical Ed	50,048	50,287	59,629	75,685
Pol Sci	50,053	49,894	60,873	79,760
Education	50,550	50,984	60,209	78,385
Anthropology	50,739	50,631	60,854	80,475
Psychology	50,877	51,193	60,029	79,505
Biology	51,175	51,404	59,840	78,799
Mathematics	52,107	52,078	61,126	78,553
Engineering	62,566	64,078	73,917	98,082
Economics	68,951	66,489	73,312	91,830
Comp Sci	71,337	70,364	77,862	94,140
Business	86,345	72,848	81,769	101,368

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