

Where We Stand: UVM's Compensation Levels in Comparison

May 5, 2005

by Tom Streeter

Secretary, United Academics

Why compensation levels matter

We did not become professors to get rich. Aside from the desire for a little more money, however, there are several reasons why salary and compensation levels matter for all of us. Compensation levels, of course, shape the university's ability to hire and retain quality faculty, as many of us know from experience. Faculty compensation also shapes a university's reputation, both directly because it is an element in determining annual national rankings like *U.S. News and World Report's*, and indirectly because it is a factor in creating a general impression of the University in the minds of other professionals around the country. And the ways in which a university spends its money expresses its values; salary levels suggest to those both inside and outside UVM what the University thinks is important. Faculty compensation levels shape the University's future.

Where we stand

The last union contract created, for three years in a row, an increase in the overall salary pool of more than 5% each year, the most substantial raises the faculty had received in more than a decade -- by a hair. This raised UVM in *Academe's* annual rankings from the bottom quintile of its category, a five, into the next notch up, a four. But this was after a long period of serious stagnation in faculty salary levels. So by most measures, UVM salaries remain at best modest.

Typical UVM starting salaries for assistant professors in most disciplines are below what the Federal Government calls "low income" for a family of four in the area.ⁱ According to the recent annual report on compensation by *Academe*, out of 220 doctoral level Universities in the US, UVM ranks 169th, still a 4 in both salary and compensation in all categories; we have been treading water for the last two years.ⁱⁱ We remain substantially below average.

Among the 17 "Public Ivy" schools with which we are frequently compared (particularly in the "market" for students), we are the lowest paid. When President Fogel declared his intention of making UVM "the nation's premier small public research university," he identified a group of "peer" institutions, institutions he designated similar, and "aspirant" universities, schools with which we should strive to compete. We are dramatically behind all of the aspirant schools. When measured by compensation (salary plus benefits), we are also near the bottom of our peers: number 12 out of 15.

Possibilities for Improvement

How much can this be improved? UVM is not poor. While there are a few comparable schools that are in a similar position to us in the compensation rankings, such as Miami University of Ohio (another Public Ivy), or the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, these have been faced with draconian budget cuts since 2001, due to dramatic fiscal crises in their respective states. UVM is doing well by contrast, judging by the evidence of UVM's internal reports and its current ambitious building projects (see, e.g., UVM's *FY 2005 Sourcebook*; also see [this](#).) UVM's single largest revenue stream is out-of-state tuition, and the percentage of out of state undergraduate students at UVM has risen in recent years to an all-time high of nearly 75%. UVM certainly can afford to bring us up to the average of our peers, and most likely can afford to bring us higher in the rankings.

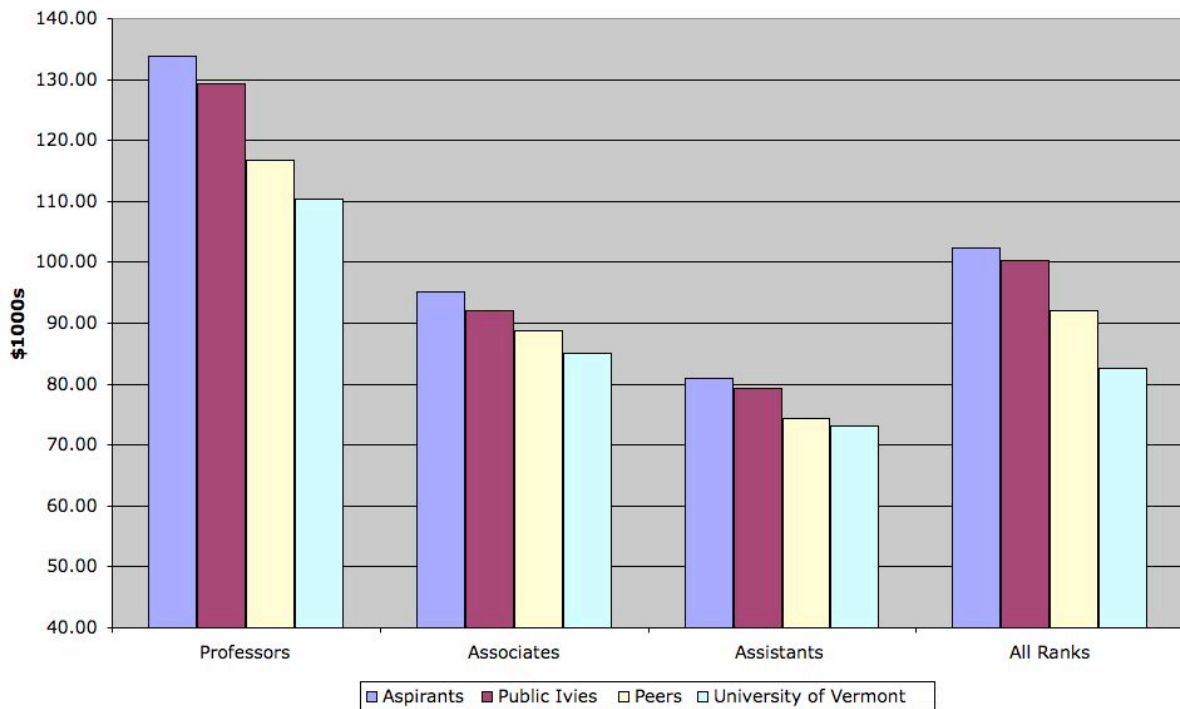
UVM Compensation Levels

But historically, UVM's central administrators have always resisted this; three years ago, when the negotiations came to an impasse, Provost John Bramley publicly called a salary offer that was barely half of what was eventually agreed upon -- an offer that would have kept UVM in the absolute bottom of our category -- "competitive" and "eminently reasonable."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ It took impasse and a hard, public campaign to persuade the administration otherwise. Our union is now central to setting compensation policy at UVM. Our negotiating team is determined and working hard and effectively to do their best for the University, but they need the support and input of the rest of us to succeed in the months ahead.

Some Details

The tables and graphs below are based data in the March-April 2005 edition of *Academe*, the bulletin of AAUP. With the exception of the second table, figures used reflect total compensation, i.e., salary plus benefits, which is for most purposes a better reflection of relative standing.

UVM Compensation Compared
2004-2005 Academe Data



Average Compensation (in \$1000s)

NAME	Professors	Associates	Assistants	All Ranks
Aspirants	133.77	95.13	80.86	102.37
Public Ivies	129.31	92.00	79.29	100.27
Peers	116.80	88.80	74.26	92.12
U Vermont	110.39	85.11	73.17	82.53

UVM Compensation Levels

Average Salaries

NAME	PR	AO	AI	AR
Aspirants	109.71	75.95	64.06	82.56
Public Ivies	104.32	72.51	62.33	79.83
Peers	91.50	68.20	57.05	71.35
U Vermont	\$86.86	\$65.31	\$55.26	\$63.29

Total Average Compensation Rankings of Aspirant Institutions^{iv}

University of Virginia	35
Univ. Wisconsin-Madison.	54
Univ. of Michigan-Ann Arbor	73
Univ. of N.C. at Chapel Hill	74
College of William and Mary	81
Univ. of Colorado, Boulder	103
Penn State Univ.-Main Campus	106
University of Vermont	169

Total Average Compensation Rankings of Public Ivies:

University of Virginia	35
Rutgers	41
University of Illinois at UC	48
University of Wisconsin Madison	54
University of California Santa Cruz	62
University of Michigan Ann Arbor	73
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill	74
Indiana University Bloomington	79
College of William and Mary	81
University of Texas Austin	88
University of Florida	94
University of Washington	96
SUNY Binghamton	99
University of Colorado Boulder	103
Pennsylvania State University College Park	106
Miami University (Ohio)	139
University of Vermont	169

Compensation rankings of Fogel's "peer institutions":

University of Connecticut	49
University of Delaware	53
Univ. Massachusetts-Amherst	68
University of New Hampshire	78
SUNY at Albany	91
University of Rhode Island	98
SUNY at Binghamton	99

UVM Compensation Levels

Clemson University	128
Miami University	139
University of Oklahoma (Norman)	148
Oklahoma State Univ.-Main	163
University of Vermont	169
Washington State University	173
University of Maine	184
Kansas State University	192

Our "True Peers" (i.e., other doctoral institutions in Category I with similar compensation rankings):

	Professors	Associates	Assistants
U Kentucky	4	4	4
U Oklahoma	4	5	5
Miami U	4	4	5
U Washington-Bothell	4	3	3
U California-San Francisco	4	5	5
Kent St U-Kent	4	4	5
Cleveland St U	4	4	5
Florida St U	4	4	3
U Missouri-St. Louis	4	5	5
Ohio U-Main	4	4	4
U Louisville	4	4	5
U Alabama-Birmingham	4	4	5
U New Mexico-Main	4	4	4
Wright St U-Main	4	4	4
Baylor U	4	3	3
U Vermont	4	4	4
U South Florida	4	4	4
Catholic U America	4	4	4
Louisiana St U-Health Sci Ctr	4	4	4
Florida International U	4	4	3
U Toledo	4	4	4
U North Carolina-Greensboro	4	4	4
U Texas-Arlington	4	4	3
Old Dominion U	4	5	4
U Rhode Island	4	5	4
Western Michigan U	4	4	5
Florida Atlantic U	4	5	4

UVM Compensation Levels

U Arkansas-Fayetteville	4	4	4
U Wisconsin-Milwaukee	4	4	4
U Memphis	4	4	4
Bowling Green St U	4	4	5

Notes

ⁱ U.S. Federal Govt. Housing and Urban Development, 2005 figures. “Low income” describes the amount at or below which a person can qualify as technically low enough income and be eligible for Federal subsidy. For a family of three in Burlington, an income of \$52,200 or below counts as "low income." In 2005, the Burlington Housing and Conservation Board, determined that a Vermont household would need an annual income of more than \$62,000 to purchase a median-priced home.

ⁱⁱ Assistants are 136, Associates 138, and Full Prof.'s 153. Our overall ranking is lower than the rankings by job category because, I suspect, we are "bottom heavy" relative to other universities; the early retirement buyout of several years ago created a situation where we have a higher percentage of faculty at the lower end of the hierarchy, which means our overall average salaries are lower. This does not make the average number irrelevant in negotiations, because it reflects the total amount the University spends on salary per faculty, i.e., the actual cost of salaries to the University. It is cheaper for UVM to lift us in our salary and compensation rankings than it is for other schools.

ⁱⁱⁱ As reported on Vermont Public Radio, 2002-09-04.

^{iv} as designated by President Dan Fogel in his presentation to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 2002.