

Competitiveness at UVM: Some Facts from United Academics

In its Oct. 23rd edition, The View asked Provost John Bramley "How competitive is UVM in terms of hiring top, young faculty?" Bramley responded:

... I would say that in general, and in the searches I've been involved in very directly, I think in the vast majority of those we got our first-choice candidate. I don't accept that we aren't very competitive. ... [U]nless we are able to recruit and retain faculty, then none of our other goals will be achievable.

United Academics certainly agrees that we need to be competitive to recruit and retain faculty, and that unless we do that we cannot achieve our other goals. But we thought Bramley's suggestion that UVM is already competitive should be held up against some facts. To explore this issue, we compared UVM's salaries to a list of colleges and universities that President Fogel used at a recent appearance before the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences. At the meeting, Fogel compared UVM on a number of criteria to what he called "peer" institutions and "aspirant" institutions (i.e., schools he thinks we should aspire to be like). We compared average salaries at UVM to Fogel's peer and aspirant schools. The results are below.

	Full Prof.	Assoc. Prof.	Assist. Prof.
UVM as % of peers			
2001-2002	87.7%	91.0%	91.8%
1996-1997	91.8%	94.2%	91.7%
UVM as % of aspirants			
2001-2002	75.4%	82.5%	82.2%
1996-1997	82.5%	87.4%	85.4%

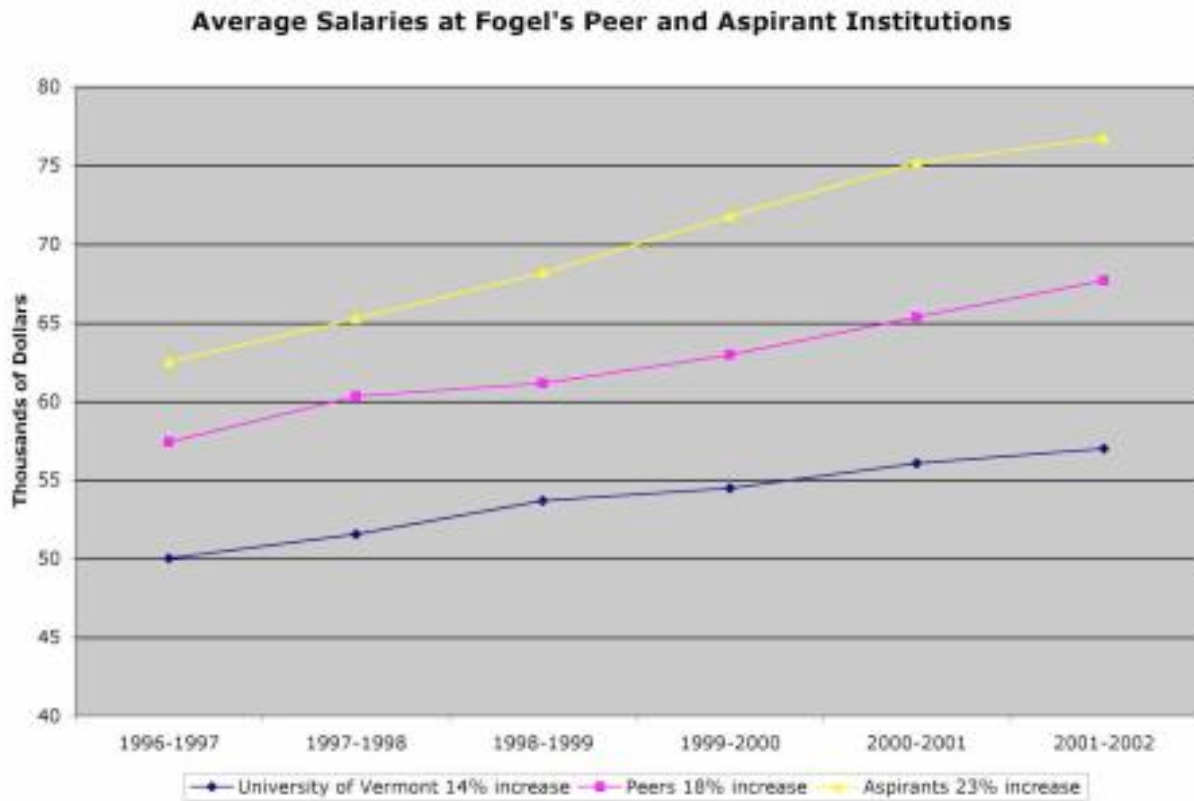
There are several conclusions:

1. We are well behind peer institutions now.
2. We are much farther behind aspirant institutions.
3. We have been declining relative to both groups over the past five years.

Regarding Bramley's claim that the "vast majority" of job searches get their first choice, we've found that the majority is hardly vast. Getting "first choice" in job searches is a very indirect measure of competitiveness, confounded by numerous other factors, but in an informal survey of 12 departments, of a total of 49 searches, 28 (57%) got their first choice, 13 (27%) got less than first choice, and 8 (16%) failed to hire outright. While hiring decisions typically involve multiple considerations, salary is frequently cited as a key reason candidates turn down offers from UVM. Just as importantly, along with the numerical data came numerous stories that provide a better, but more qualitative view of things: for example, how some departments try to get their first choices by actively looking for candidates with special reasons to come to Vermont that might make up for the lower salaries, how others bend over backwards to find various alternative resources to try to attract

quality candidates. And we have no quantitative data but know by experience how hard it is becoming to retain the best young faculty who are easily lured elsewhere by higher salaries that go unmatched by UVM.

United Academics has proposed a salary structure that would, over the course of three years, bring UVM more into line with its peer institutions. And the union's proposal would cost roughly only \$3 million more per year than what the administration is proposing. The administration's final salary offer at the beginning of September (after nine months of negotiating, and several months after Fogel became President) might only make the gap between UVM and its peers grow, and certainly would not make it shrink, in the coming years.



Selected Average Salaries at UVM 1993-2001

