

UWOFA Bargaining Bulletin

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Faculty Salaries at UWO – Behind and in Danger of Falling Further Behind

Faculty at Western cannot accept a salary freeze. Why not? There are two reasons. First, our salaries lag behind those at our comparators. Second, most other large Ontario universities already have salary agreements in place for 2010-11 that will see them getting base salary increases of up to 5% and generally exceeding 3%. Unless we have comparable increases this year our salaries will fall further behind.

We have excellent comparative data on full-time university faculty salaries from Statistics Canada's annual UCASS survey. Western's traditional comparison group has been the "Bovey 6". Here are some key numbers from the 2008-09 survey (the latest for which complete results are available):

Full-Time Salary Indicators at "Bovey Six" Ontario Universities, Non-Medical/Dental Faculty, Excluding Administrators Above Rank of Assistant Dean, 2008-09

University	Mean	Median	10 th Percentile	90 th Percentile
Toronto	\$130,145	\$126,725	\$84,900	\$178,775
Queen's	119,922	119,300	90,000	147,275
Waterloo	118,271	118,550	80,000	151,050
Mc Master	115,320	117,550	74,350	147,600
Guelph	112,195	111,675	85,950	137,600
Western	111,663	105,800	75,500	153,700
Mean of above figures excluding Western				
	\$119,171	\$118,760	\$83,040	\$152,460
Mean of above figures excluding Western and Toronto				
	\$116,427	\$116,769	\$82,575	\$145,881
Gap between Western and other universities listed above				
	\$7,508 (6.3%)	\$12,960 (10.9%)	\$7,540 (9.1%)	\$-1,240 (-0.8%)
Gap between Western and others except Toronto				
	\$4,764 (4.1%)	\$10,969 (9.4%)	\$7,075 (8.6%)	\$-7,819 (-5.4%)

Source: Compilations provided to OCUFA by Statistics Canada from the 2008-09 Universities and Colleges Academic Staff Survey (UCASS).

We see first that Western is behind in terms of average salaries in every comparison: our mean salary is \$7,508, or 6.3%, behind the other five universities, and if Toronto is omitted (as our Employer suggests) there is still a \$4,764, or 4.1% gap. And if we look at the median, which tells us the salary of the person precisely in the middle, things are worse – gaps of \$10,969 or \$12,960 depending on the comparison group. The large inequality between mean and median salary at Western, which is not seen at the other universities, reflects the fact that our salary distribution is positively skewed. It has a long upper tail, with a small number of faculty members making exceptionally large amounts. This suggestion is borne out by the last two columns of the table.

The last two columns of the table show the 10th and 90th salary percentiles. (The 10th percentile is your salary if 10% of your colleagues earn less than you; you are at the 90th percentile if 10% earn *more* than you.) Western's relatively unequal salary structure is exposed by these numbers. At the bottom end, that is at the 10th percentile, Western faculty make \$7,000 - \$7,500, or about nine percent less, than our comparators. However, at the top end, they make more – almost \$8,000 more than at the comparators excluding Toronto, and even \$1,240 more when Toronto is included.

How does Western manage to pay people in the middle and lower end of its salary distribution so much less than its peer institutions in Ontario, while at the same time paying people at the top more than elsewhere? The answer is a policy of divide and rule. The bulk of faculty members are hired at the lowest starting salaries the Employer can get away with, given market conditions, and receive modest annual increases from scale and career increments (“merit pay”). The high fliers also get career increments, but those are smaller at Western than elsewhere and not a very important part of the explanation. More significant are the handsome starting salaries received by star recruits in some areas of the university and the fact that there is no limit on market adjustments our Employer may make for individual faculty members.

Most faculty at Western would like to see the situation reflected in the numbers above corrected. In recent months, the provincial government has been trying to make that more difficult for us by weighing in on the side of employers, promoting its idea of a two year wage freeze. Fortunately, our right to free collective bargaining is relatively secure and we do not have to knuckle under to such pressures. That's not only nice to know, it is also vital for our salary future. Among large Ontario universities, the decision to accept a salary freeze in collective bargaining would only affect Western and Carleton. As we will outline in an upcoming Bargaining Bulletin, the other universities have all already put substantial salary increases in place for 2010-11 or, in the cases of Waterloo and Toronto, have sent their agreements to arbitration – a process that is likely to result in 2010-11 increases similar to those that have been agreed at other Ontario universities. So if we don't get significant and competitive salary increases for 2010-11 we will lose further ground, which could be very hard to regain.