

GMU SALARIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A major role of GMU's Faculty Senate is to inform the faculty about relevant issues, and pay is certainly high on the list of priorities, especially in view of the fact that no pay raises have been given to GMU faculty in several years.

It is important to provide a comparative perspective on pay data rather than consider them in isolation. In this regard, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) has designated 24 universities throughout the U.S. as peer institutions for GMU which are the basis for our comparison.

First, consider the salary data in Table 1 published by GMU's office of Institutional Research and Reporting (IRR) in the annual GMU *Factbooks*. The Average GMU salary is compared to the Average Peer Group salary for Fall 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Note that GMU's average salary appears right on target with the averages from the peer group. One source of concern is that GMU's average salary actually dropped slightly from Fall 2000 to Fall 2001, while the average peer group salary rose during the same period.

Table 1
Comparison of Peer Group Average Salaries

Year	GMU	Peer Group
Fall 1998	\$61,807	\$61,212
Fall 1999	\$64,857	\$62,982
Fall 2000	\$66,845	\$65,633
Fall 2001	\$66,802	\$67,820

As any statistician knows, however, averages can be misleading and can hide information—a person can drown in a river that averages two feet deep. In Tables 2, 3, and 4, the salary data provided by the American Association of University Professors are disaggregated by rank (Full Professor, Associate Professor, and Assistant Professor) and by university for the single academic year 2001-2002. To obtain a more accurate picture of relative salaries, it is critical to take into account the cost of living (COL). Living costs in the Fairfax/DC area generally are much higher than almost everywhere else in the continental U.S. For example, the price of a home for a professor at the University of Kansas is much, much lower than that of a comparable dwelling in Fairfax and vicinity, and housing costs are the largest component of family budgets.

Consider first the unadjusted salaries for Full Professors. The average salary of a Full Professor at GMU (Table 2, column 1) is \$99,800, which places us sixth in the ranking of our peer group. GMU compares reasonably well with our peers when only DOLLARS are considered and the cost of living differences between the GMU area and other places are ignored. (Information on data sources and the cost-of-living adjustments is given at the end of this report.)

Table 2
2001-2002 Salaries for Full Professors:
Dollar Amounts and Adjusted for Cost of Living

Peer University	(1) Full Professor	(2) Comparable Fairfax Salary	(3) Additional Income to Cover Fx COL
Georgia State Univ.	\$111,600	\$129,797	\$18,197
Univ. of Connecticut	107,600	149,635	42,035
SUNY-Buffalo	103,200	152,333	49,133
Univ. of Pittsburgh	102,400	132,295	29,895
Temple University	100,400	118,246	17,846
George Mason	99,800		
Univ. of Iowa	99,400	150,597	51,197
SUNY-Albany	95,200	137,192	41,992
Wayne State Univ. (MI)	90,500	117,112	26,612
Univ. of Utah	87,200	123,438	36,238
Syracuse University	86,700	132,869	46,169
Univ. of Missouri, Kansas City	86,700	130,780	44,080
Univ. of Rhode Island	86,400	109,869	23,469
Univ. of S. Carolina, Columbia	86,400	131,480	45,080
Univ. of Kentucky	85,900	136,697	50,797
Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman	84,800	139,185	54,385
Univ. of Cincinnati	84,700	118,427	33,727
W. Michigan University	84,600	116,948	32,348
Univ. of Kansas	84,600	129,165	44,565
Loyola of Chicago	84,000	66,236	-17,764
Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee	83,600	111,814	28,214
Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville	83,400	138,187	54,787
Univ. of Louisville	82,600	129,331	46,731
Univ. of South Florida	81,000	110,437	29,437
Univ. of New Mexico	79,900	106,136	26,236
AVERAGE:	\$95,750	\$117,967	\$22,217

The cost of housing, taxes, utilities, etc., varies widely across the U.S., however, and when those are taken into account, GMU's salaries suffer seriously by comparison. Consider a Full Professor at the University of Iowa making \$99,400—roughly the same dollar figure as GMU's Full Professor making \$99,800. If the Iowa professor moved here, a salary of \$150,597 (Table 2, column 2) would be required to maintain the same standard of living as she or he enjoyed in Iowa City. The Iowa professor would need a raise of \$51,197 to enjoy the same lifestyle here as in Iowa. Column 3 of Table 2 shows the salary increases that would be required to adjust for cost-of-living differentials for Full Professors from different institutions. With the exception of one peer group institution (Loyola of Chicago), thousands of dollars of additional income would be required to compensate professors who might move to GMU from any of the peer

institutions for cost of living differences. On average, a Full Professor coming to GMU from one of our peer institutions would need a raise of \$22,217 to maintain the same living standard.

Table 3
2001-2002 Salaries for Associate Professors:
Dollar Amounts and Adjusted for Cost of Living

Peer University	(1) Associate Professor	(2) Comparable Fairfax Salary	(3) Additional Income to Cover Fx COL
Univ. of Connecticut	\$77,900	\$108,332	\$30,432
Temple University	74,100	87,271	13,171
SUNY-Buffalo	73,000	107,755	34,755
Wayne State Univ. (MI)	69,300	89,678	20,378
George Mason	69,000		
Georgia State Univ.	68,800	80,018	11,218
Univ. of Pittsburgh	68,000	87,852	19,852
SUNY-Albany	67,000	96,553	29,553
Syracuse University	66,500	101,913	35,413
Univ. of Iowa	65,800	99,691	33,891
Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee	65,300	87,338	22,038
W. Michigan Univ.	64,400	89,024	24,624
Univ. of Rhode Island	63,600	80,876	17,276
Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville	63,500	105,214	41,714
Univ. of Cincinnati	62,800	87,806	25,006
Univ. of Louisville	62,600	98,016	35,416
Univ. of Missouri, Kansas City	62,600	94,427	31,827
Univ. of S. Carolina, Columbia	61,900	94,197	32,297
Univ. of Utah	61,500	87,058	25,558
Univ. of Kentucky	61,300	97,550	36,250
Loyola of Chicago	60,800	47,943	-12,857
Univ. of South Florida	60,300	82,214	21,914
Univ. of Kansas	59,900	91,454	31,554
Univ. of New Mexico	58,900	78,240	19,340
Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman	57,900	95,033	37,133
AVERAGE:	\$63,850	\$79,129	\$15,279

Similar data are shown for Associate Professors in Table 3. The average salary of a GMU Associate Professor is \$69,000, which, in dollar terms, compares quite favorably with our SHEV-approved peer institutions (Table 3, column 1). However, consider again cost-of-living differences. While the average dollar salary for all institutions (Table 3, column 1, last row) is \$63,850, the average salary would have to be raised to \$79,129 if the Associate Professors at our peer institutions came to GMU and maintained the same standard of living as they had previously. In other words, an average raise of \$15,279 would have to be awarded to compensate for the higher costs of living in this area.

Table 4
2001-2002 Salaries for Assistant Professors:
Dollar Amounts and Adjusted for Cost of Living

Peer University	(1) Assistant Professor	(2) Comparable Fairfax Salary	(3) Additional Income to Cover Fx COL
Univ. of Connecticut	\$62,600	\$87,055	\$24,455
Univ. of Pittsburgh	59,600	77,000	17,400
Univ. of Iowa	59,300	89,843	30,543
SUNY-Buffalo	58,000	85,614	27,614
Georgia State Univ.	57,200	66,527	9,327
Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee	56,900	76,103	19,203
SUNY-Albany	56,200	80,990	24,790
Wayne State Univ. (MI)	56,200	72,726	16,526
Syracuse University	55,200	84,595	29,395
Univ. of Rhode Island	54,400	69,177	14,777
George Mason	54,400		
Univ. of Utah	54,100	76,583	22,483
Loyola of Chicago	53,400	42,107	-11,293
Temple University	53,300	62,774	9,474
Univ. of S. Carolina, Columbia	53,100	80,805	27,705
Univ. of Kentucky	52,900	84,182	31,282
Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville	52,300	86,657	34,357
Univ. of New Mexico	51,200	68,012	16,812
W. Michigan Univ.	50,900	70,362	19,462
Univ. of Kansas	50,700	77,407	26,707
Univ. of South Florida	50,700	69,125	18,425
Univ. of Cincinnati	50,400	70,469	20,069
Univ. of Missouri, Kansas City	49,700	74,969	25,269
Univ. of Louisville	49,600	77,661	28,061
Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman	48,500	79,604	31,104
AVERAGE:	\$54,200	\$67,270	\$13,070

Salary data for Assistant Professors are shown in Table 4. The average salary of a GMU Assistant Professor is \$54,400, which, in dollar terms, is roughly in the middle range of our SHEV-approved peer institutions. However, consider again cost-of-living differences. While the average dollar salary for all institutions (Table 4, column 1, last row) is \$54,200, the average salary would have to be raised to \$67,270 if the Assistant Professors at our peer institutions came to GMU and maintained the same standard of living here as they had at home. In other words, an average raise of \$13,070 would be needed to compensate for the higher costs of living in this area.

In sum, GMU salaries compare favorably to salaries at our SCHEV-approved peer institutions IF one looks *only at dollars*. However, the cost of living is far greater in this

area than in cities that host our peer institutions. For Full Professors at GMU, the average salary would have to be raised from the current \$95,750 to \$117,967 if our peers at this rank moved here and maintained the same standard of living. For Associate Professors, the average salary would have to be raised from the current \$63,850 to \$79,129; comparable numbers for Assistant Professors are from \$54,200 to \$67,270. Thus, for each rank, a raise of about 23 percent is required to adjust for higher costs of living in this area. Put simply, GMU salaries don't measure up to those of our peer institutions when cost-of-living differences are taken into account.

Data Sources/Cost-of-Living Information

Table 1 Source: GMU Office of Institutional Research and Reporting, *GMU Factbook*, various years.

Tables 2-4 Source: "Unequal Progress: The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession 2002-2003," *Academe*, Bulletin of the AAUP, March-April 2003.

Cost-of-Living Data: The cost of living data are based for the most part on those adopted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The five major categories for U.S. data are housing costs (33%), utilities (8%), consumables (16%), transportation (10%), and other services (33%). Information is also provided by real estate offices; government agencies at the state, local, and national levels; and Chambers of Commerce. Jeffrey R. Wilson, Ph.D., Professor of Statistics, Arizona State University and Yolanda D. Strozier, President and Managing Director of Statistical Data Analysis and Research (SDAR), coordinated the development of the databases, developed the formulas and calculations, and provide the ongoing testing of the statistical integrity of the information and data. The database is updated quarterly. We have used Oakton, Virginia as the locale for our study; it was not clear whether the location "Fairfax" referred to Fairfax City exclusively or to Fairfax County as a whole. For additional information and the cost-of-living conversions between any two locations in the U.S. by city name, see the homepage of the National Association of Realtors:
<http://www.homefair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html?type=to>.