CAMPUS PAY EQUALITY

2015 PERSPECTIVES ON FACULTY AND STAFF SALARY TRENDS
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<td>FACULTY SALARIES ARE UP SLIGHTLY BUT STILL RECOVERING FROM THE RECESSION'S EFFECTS</td>
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Whether wages are up, down, or stagnant one thing about salaries in higher education will never change: people inside and outside of academe pay a great deal of attention to how much faculty, staff, and college administrators are paid. When it comes to what academics earn there is plenty to scrutinize. Some question whether there is a link between professors’ salaries and rising tuition prices. The lowest-paid employees at universities are joining unions to push for better pay, while some college presidents receive increasingly rich compensation packages. Meanwhile, graduate student stipends can be so paltry that students are forced to pick up outside work or take out hefty loans to make ends meet. Salaries vary widely across disciplines, experience, and institutions. Please enjoy this compendium of news stories and columns we’ve recently published in The Chronicle on the wide range of perspectives on salaries in higher education.

CHRONICLE DATA

EXPLORE FACULTY AND STAFF SALARIES AT MORE THAN 4,700 COLLEGES

Search and sort comprehensive information, going back more than a decade, about the salaries of faculty and staff at more than 4,700 colleges and universities. With The Chronicle’s new interactive tool, users can browse data by state, sector, and Carnegie classification and break out salaries by institution, rank, and gender.

http://data.chronicle.com/
Growing inequality threatens our society.

A few years ago, such a provocative claim might have had limited support beyond a public park in lower Manhattan. Today a rising tide of voices warns of the ill effects of the increasing concentration of wealth and income. The warnings come from academics like Thomas Piketty, politicians like Sen. Elizabeth A. Warren, a Democrat from Massachusetts, and, at times, President Obama. Now even the self-described “zillionaire” Nick Hanauer, in a recent Politico article, implores us to avoid what he characterizes as an impending rush of pitchforks.

Higher education could continue following Wall Street, vaulting more college presidents into the top 1 percent and coursing toward calamity—or it could lead by example, joining Kentucky State University’s interim president, Raymond Burse, on a different path. He recently declined a salary of nearly $350,000 per year when he returned to the helm of this historically black university, where he had been president from 1982 to 1989, and where the lowest-paid employees are making the state’s minimum wage of $7.25 an hour. Instead, he volunteered to take a $90,000 pay cut, to be used to raise the bottom pay level on campus to $10.25 an hour.

Burse’s decision, while newsworthy and important (especially to those getting a 40-percent raise), is only a temporary fix. Without further changes, inflation will return the lowest-paid workers to their former paltry purchasing power. Burse’s noble but one-time action could be swept away in wave of increasing costs and increasing inequality. The power of growth will eventually overwhelm any fixed minimum wage, even Seattle’s $15 per hour.

As for the other side of Burse’s decision, his own pay cut, this solution again is only temporary. The practices that lead to soaring administrative pay remain in place, among them pegging administrators’ salaries to those at richer and reputedly better institutions, and the misplaced belief that one person at the top deserves credit for successes generated by an entire campus community.
While the path Burse took is but a detour that ends right back on the same road toward the pitchforks, it does suggest a permanent solution. There is a way higher education could return to its mission and work to permanently avoid the revolt that Hanauer predicts.

At St. Mary’s College of Maryland, a public honors college, a group of faculty and staff members, students, and alumni have put together a proposal that would permanently cap the growing ratio between the top and bottom earners on the campus. The St. Mary’s Wages plan would establish a benchmark minimum salary for the lowest-paid full-time employees that would rise with inflation. Tenure-track faculty members would make at least twice that benchmark. Different groups of workers (for example, associate professors, professional-staff members) would be guaranteed wages above specified fixed multiples of the lowest salary.

On the other end of the salary scale, no professor would be allowed to make more than four times the benchmark. Vice presidents would be capped at a factor of seven times, and the president’s total compensation package would never exceed 10 times the lowest worker’s pay.

By establishing a minimum wage that rises with inflation, workers at the bottom, including assistant professors, would be protected from having their earning power erode. Multiplying by that slowly rising benchmark to cap pay for everyone would guarantee that increasing inequality didn’t threaten our campus community. If others followed suit, we could reduce the threat that the Occupy movement, Piketty, and others see to our society.

We proposed the plan in the 2013-14 academic year, but the Faculty Senate decided by a narrow margin not to forward it for fuller discussion at that time. Since then we have fostered more-extensive conversations among faculty and staff members, students, and our new president, with the goal of ensuring that the details are acceptable to all.

Academics around the world are on the front lines of the fight to protect the environment from the dangers that climate change will bring. In the same way, we should be taking up the fight to protect society from the dangerous rising tide of economic inequality.

Raymond Burse, a retired executive at General Electric, was well positioned to take the first step, at Kentucky State. Other institutions, especially public colleges whose missions include protecting the public trust, should step forward and turn higher education, and eventually the private sector, down the path of more fairness and fewer pitchforks.

David Kung is a professor of mathematics and Laraine Glidden is a professor emerita of psychology at St. Mary’s College of Maryland.
As a full-time, tenured faculty member and emerging entrepreneur, I was fascinated by Katie Rose Guest Pryal's recent Vitae post, "The University Is Just Another Client." She argues that contingent faculty members, especially those who teach at multiple campuses, should start thinking of themselves as freelancers and their institutions as clients—meaning, among other things, that they should not give their work away free.

But here's the line in her essay that really caught my eye: "If you are a tenure-track professor ... and you've noticed that higher education might not be able to sustain you either, then I'm also talking to you."

I came to that exact realization a few years ago, after receiving my last promotion and struggling through several years without so much as a cost-of-living raise. The resulting epiphany has changed the way I look at my work, revitalized my career, and improved my life immeasurably. For the record: I enjoy my job and feel very fortunate to even have one in this academic market. I know I am one of the lucky ones. But I still have a family to support, bills to pay, braces and college tuition to fund, and luck will only take you so far. It dawned on me a few years ago that if the state wasn't going to give me a raise, then I would have to give one to myself.

This is a sensitive subject, which is why I'm writing it under a pseudonym. To be completely honest, my other motivation for seeking freelance work is that I have become somewhat disenchanted with higher education—the business of it, not the vocation. Once I was as idealistic as any professor. I loved my institution and constantly volunteered for anything I thought would promote it or make it better. But a series of events that took place over several years led me to realize, finally, that my institution probably loves me a lot less than I love it. Even for the tenured, loyalty is not necessarily a two-way street in higher education.

That didn't make me want to quit my job and do something else instead. It made me want to do something else in addition to my faculty job, something over which I would have more control.
So I did. Although it didn't come naturally to me at first, I became an entrepreneur, or what Pryal calls a freelancer. I began peddling my hard-earned skills—teaching, training, speaking, writing, editing—on the open market. The result? Last year I grossed about a third of my annual teaching salary in additional income. And I have plans to improve on that in the near future by reinvesting some of the profits and expanding my business.

If you find yourself in a similar position—a tenured professor with too little income and no obvious next step, careerwise—and you’re considering taking the plunge as an entrepreneur, here’s what you need to do:

**Identify your marketable skills.** Pryal’s Vitae column covers this step pretty thoroughly, and I see no reason to reproduce her effort here. Suffice it to say, you might be surprised at just how marketable some of your faculty skills really are.

For example, when I began editing for a local web designer, I discovered that even educated people don’t write particularly well. Most of the jobs I did for that company involved working with existing content. The customer just wanted the designer to make it look better. To his credit, the designer understood that it also needed to read better, and he was willing to pay me $60 an hour to accomplish that.

Good teaching—the ability to present information clearly in a manner that people can understand and relate to—is also a highly marketable skill. Obviously, our government-funded educational system doesn’t value it very highly, but there are plenty of organizations out there willing to pay top dollar for good speakers and trainers. Your skill as a presenter is something that can’t be taught, and companies know that.

**Identify potential markets.** Once you’ve decided what you can do to earn extra money, you have to find someone who will actually pay you to do it.

A good place to start is with friends, family members, and acquaintances who might be in a position to hire you or know someone who could. These could be friends from your schools days who have gone into other fields, family members who have their own businesses, former colleagues who have left academe, or people in your social circle outside of work. (Here’s a handy tip for the budding professorial entrepreneur: *Have* a social circle outside of work.) Call up some of those people, take them out for coffee, tell them what you’re trying to do, pick their brains. And don’t be afraid to ask them for work, or at least a referral.

A simple Google search will reveal numerous marketplaces for writers, editors, speakers, and so forth. As is always the case with the Internet, some of those options might be a bit dodgy. But picking out the legitimate ones is where your research and reasoning skills will come in handy. You should also have a profile on LinkedIn—completely separate from your faculty profile—that outlines what you view as your marketable skills. Then work at building your list of contacts.

The objective is to get that first freelance job—just one, to start with. That provides a line for your entrepreneurial résumé, and gets your name out there. Word of mouth is incredibly important: From working with that one web designer, whom I knew personally to begin with, I’ve gotten work from two other web designers.

**Market yourself.** That, for me, has been the hardest part, mostly because “selling” doesn’t come naturally to me. I suspect that’s the case for many academics.
It’s also extremely time-consuming. Lately I find I have time for my full-time job and my freelance work, but I don’t have time to do those two things and do the marketing necessary to bring in more work.

I just have to do it, anyway. That means setting aside time each week, or at least a couple days a month, for data mining, making phone calls, working LinkedIn and other social media sites, and writing and sending marketing emails.

Every day, I make myself do at least one thing that could potentially bring in extra money. Most days, that involves working on actual freelance projects, but if I have no work right then, I’ll do some marketing. And if I have as many paying projects as I can handle, as is often the case—well, I make myself do some marketing anyway, so when the current work is finished I’ll have more.

**Understand that time really is money.** Becoming an entrepreneur requires a significant change in mindset: realizing that each hour of your workday actually has monetary value. As salaried faculty members, we’re not used to thinking that way. We may have idly calculated how much we make “per hour” — and the answer is usually “not much” — but that’s about as far as we’ve gone down that path.

The whole “time is money” concept didn’t really strike home for me until I started getting paid for copywriting and editing work by the hour. That led me to look at my schedule in an entirely different way: What was I spending my time doing, throughout the day? Was I getting paid for it or not? And where could I find the hours necessary to generate the extra income I needed?

The next logical question, when faced with any optional task, is: What’s in it for me? I know that goes against the grain for many professors; I used to be one of them. But I reached a point where I realized that my institution was not really looking out for me and my family. I had to do that. And anything that took too much of my time away from that goal—like excessive committee work, unnecessary meetings, and volunteer assignments—needed to go.

Of course, in academe, there are certain “extra” things you have to do just to keep your job, such as publishing articles in nonpaying venues and serving on a certain number of committees. It’s also true that there are other forms of compensation besides money. I sometimes take on additional assignments if I believe doing so might help my career in some way or earn me a certain amount of goodwill that I can leverage to my advantage down the road.

But I no longer do things for my university free, purely out of the goodness of my heart. I’ve learned the hard way that there is no future in that. There are only a certain number of working hours in the day, and I plan to use as many of those as possible to earn money. If that sounds calculated or jaded, then you’re probably not going to be very successful as an entrepreneur.

**Observe clear boundaries.** If you’re a full-time faculty member, tenured or not, your greatest challenge on this front will be keeping your freelance work separate from your “day job.” You owe it to your employer, your colleagues, and your students to give your best effort during the hours you’re “on the clock.” In addition, many institutions have rules about what you can and can’t do during working hours.

Fortunately, tenured professors tend to have flexible schedules, in terms of when they teach, hold office hours, and so forth. As my freelance business has grown, I’ve begun designing my schedule to create blocks of “free time” that I can use to earn extra money. I’ve just been very, very careful about not mixing the two. For instance, I never use my office hours, when I’m supposed to be
meeting with students, to work on outside projects that have nothing to do with the university. I do almost all of my freelance work on my own time, using my own cellphone, computer, printer, email account, and website.

I say “almost,” though, because there is some overlap between what I do as an entrepreneur and my day job as a professor. After all, I’m using the same skills, and there are bound to be cases where something I get paid for outside of my regular job—such as giving a lecture in my area of expertise or writing an article for a paying publication—actually qualifies as part of my job. In those cases, I don’t feel bad about using university resources. I even put those items on my CV and list them in my annual evaluation. But apart from those situations, I work hard to keep my professorial life and my freelance life as separate as possible.

Far from making me feel more cynical about my chosen profession, becoming an entrepreneur has rejuvenated my career in a way that carries over to the classroom and even to my research. I’ve never felt more content or fulfilled, professionally. And my family has enjoyed the fruits, as well.

The administration would probably not approve if they knew the full extent of my “outside activities.” But the truth is that the university would be a much better place, a happier place, a more dynamic and vital place for both faculty and students, if more of my colleagues embraced the entrepreneurial spirit.

Sam Johnson is the pseudonym of a tenured professor in the humanities at a regional university in the South.
I teach a capstone for history majors that attracts students who plan to become high-school teachers or pursue other history-related careers. In a recent class discussion, one of my students commented dismissively on the "commercialization" of history in academe. When I asked what he meant, he said he was referring to professors making all that money writing books.

I laughed. And then I nearly cried, thinking about the royalty check for 30 Euros (or about $34) sitting on my desk from European sales of my most recent book. (Barbados here I come!)

I explained to the students that academic books offer trivial-to-nonexistent financial returns. They were skeptical. The view that professors are making a decent amount of cash from book sales is obviously out there, as well as the notion that we are coasting along on our cushy university salaries.

Don’t get me wrong: I’m paid a good salary by my institution. (Thank goodness I’m not trying to scrape a living from those royalties.) Salaries at my university are on a scale that is public information on the university website. While there is no list of names attached to specific salaries (as is available in some places, under “sunshine” laws), any of my students could look at the scale for my rank and know within a few grand how much I get paid each year. I doubt they’d find my salary lavish.

I’ve actually had a couple of students ask me point-blank how much I get paid. They wanted to know how my salary compared with what they would earn teaching high school. But a lot of colleges and universities aren’t required to keep their salary information publicly available, so the sense that academics all make a fortune is perpetuated among the public—especially among parents writing ever-larger tuition checks.
Not long ago I mentioned the parlous academic job market to a friend who works on Wall Street. He said that academics had been doing too well for too long, implying that the poor job outlook was some kind of natural market correction. I sat there slack-jawed, and attempted to explain that all the money goes to support new buildings, coaching staff, administrative salaries, excessive regulations, and fancy climbing walls for undergraduates—as opposed to being spent hiring faculty members. But my friend brushed that off as my inability to face market realities.

About six months later he apologized, having discovered that his son’s college adviser—a full professor at an elite Ivy League institution—earned $80,000. He had been convinced that faculty salaries were routinely in the six figures.

It’s obvious that students (and their parents) have only the vaguest sense of where their tuition money goes. They assume (not unreasonably) that it is funneled in large part to those people that students actually interact with: faculty members, librarians, advisers and support-staff employees.

Those of us within academe are familiar with administrative bloat, and the ever-growing layers of professional staff members drawing salaries under various themes relating to the university’s “mission statement.” But that reality is largely invisible to most people outside the university.

Students might be able to name their university president or vice-chancellor, but not the massive web of deans, associate deans, and assistants. Some of those administrative staffers have little contact with faculty, let alone with students. But the forces of this shadow university are growing in scope, and faculty members seem powerless to resist.

So I’d like to offer a solution. In Britain recently, taxpayers have been issued pie charts, demonstrating how their taxes are spent. Perhaps students could receive a similar breakdown with each tuition bill? What proportion of tuition goes to facility maintenance (gardeners, janitors, electricity, security)? How much to libraries and labs? How much to faculty salaries? And yes, how much to the salaries of administrators and their staff members?

Maybe even more effective: Create a similar pie chart for potential donors. Attach a note: “Please give money so we can send the deputy dean of whatever on a business-class junket to discuss stakeholder governance at an educational summit in Barcelona or Buenos Aires.” That doesn’t have quite the same ring as “support tomorrow’s leaders” or “give disadvantaged students access to college.”

In Hungary, taxpayers can designate how they’d like to allocate a small amount of their taxes. Perhaps students could choose where a percentage of their tuition gets spent? It would be interesting to see how much they want to throw our way as opposed to spending it on the gym, library, or food court.

Greater transparency might even lead to more donations. Meanwhile, students who don’t feel they’re getting their money’s worth would see why that might be the case.

Katrina Gulliver is a lecturer in the humanities at the University of New South Wales in Australia.
Academe’s part-time instructors have long complained about low pay and poor working conditions, and now their protests are finally being heard.

By joining together in labor unions, part-time instructors at several colleges have managed in recent years to win major improvements in their pay, benefits, job security, and overall working conditions. And even where they could not unionize, such instructors have used greater activism to send the message that there are limits to their exploitation by college administrations seeking to stretch instructional budgets.

“Five years ago, we were still trying to get people to understand there is a problem,” says Maria Maisto, president of the New Faculty Majority, an advocacy group for contingent academic workers formed in 2009. Now, Ms. Maisto says, a growing consensus around the difficulties faced by adjuncts means college administrators can no longer “pretend that the conditions of adjunct faculty don’t need to be addressed.”

For their part, college administrators have begun to see payoffs—educational, financial, and otherwise—in taking steps to make adjunct instructors feel more satisfied and supported in their work.

Sanjay Rai, senior vice president for academic affairs at Montgomery College, where adjunct instructors are unionized, says administrators at his Maryland institution not only meet regularly with adjuncts’ union leaders but are helping integrate such instructors into the faculty. This approach, he says, helps the college attract talented part-time instructors with “real-world experience,” one of its selling points.
Even before part-time instructors at Tufts University voted to form a union in September 2013, they earned more per course than their peers at most other Boston-area colleges. Tufts’s administration did little to oppose their unionization, and their first contract provides them with pay increases, professional-development funds, guaranteed interviews for open full-time positions, and opportunities to earn two- or three-year contracts after several years with good performance reviews. James M. Glaser, dean of Tufts’s School of Arts and Sciences, says Tufts respects the adjuncts’ contributions and wants them to “feel like they have been treated well by the administration.”

Many administrators used to argue that their colleges could not possibly afford to alleviate adjuncts’ complaints without big increases in tuition or public support. Where adjunct unions have forced their hands, however, administrators have been finding the money to offer such instructors benefits, better pay, and job security, even if their pay still lags well behind what is offered to tenure-track professors.

More broadly, administrators have been discovering low-cost, or even free, ways to buy goodwill among part-timers. They include soliciting part-timers’ feedback, instructing department heads to avoid last-minute class assignments or cancellations, and providing part-timers with orientation sessions, basic academic-freedom protections, and access to instructional resources, support services, and campus facilities.

Previously, “people didn’t realize that you could improve the conditions for non-tenure-track faculty without spending a ton of money,” says Adrianna Kezar, a professor of higher education at the University of Southern California and co-director of the Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success. The project has contributed to a growing body of research on steps colleges can take to help adjuncts do their jobs.

The change in college administrators’ thinking is evident in shifts in the academic work force. After decades of steady growth, the proportion of college faculty members employed on a part-time basis has begun to shrink everywhere but at doctoral institutions, according to a recent analysis by Colorado State University’s Center for the Study of Academic Labor.

The job growth at associate, baccalaureate, and master’s institutions is in positions that represent a middle ground between part-time and tenure-track: gigs employing instructors full-time on contracts lasting one to five years. Full-time contingent instructors fare much better than part-timers in terms of their pay and benefits and how much say they have in shared governance. Some research has found such instructors to be every bit as satisfied with their jobs as tenured or tenure-track professors.

One reason for the move toward hiring more full-time instructors has been a growing recognition that reliance on part-timers carries hidden costs. It’s expensive to recruit and hire a big chunk of the academic work force at the start of every academic term. And a mounting number of studies suggest that a college’s heavy reliance on part-time instructors, who are generally not compensated for helping students outside class, hurts students’ prospects of academic success.

At colleges where part-time instructors have unionized, they have been reaping significant bread-and-butter gains through collective bargaining. Such is the case at the University of Oregon, where adjuncts are part of a broader faculty union affiliated with the American Association of University Professors and the American Federation of Teachers. Their first contract, which took effect in 2013, provided most contingent faculty members with renewable appointments lasting at least a year, sabbatical rights, clearly defined criteria for promotion, and base salaries of $24,000 to $36,000.
The Service Employees International Union has used an organizing strategy that focuses on entire metropolitan regions to bring about similar gains. At Washington, D.C.-area colleges, where about three-fourths of adjunct instructors now belong to SEIU-affiliated unions, contracts negotiated so far include provisions shielding them from arbitrary dismissal, establishing clear evaluation standards, setting minimum compensation rates per course, and guaranteeing some payment for courses canceled at the last minute.

"Patterns are developing in the contracts that are beginning to set standards across the institutions," says Anne McLeer, a former George Washington University instructor who oversees organizing efforts for the SEIU’s local affiliate. With job security, she says, adjunct instructors feel empowered to speak out on other issues on campus.

Ms. Maisto of the New Faculty Majority says she still hears about “a lot of abusive practices.” But, she says, a sense that they are part of a national movement is emboldening adjunct instructors to speak out for themselves.

“People are no longer feeling as isolated as they used to feel.”

Peter Schmidt is a senior writer for The Chronicle of Higher Education, where he covers affirmative action, academic labor, and issues related to academic freedom.

**Takeaway**

**How Job Conditions Are Improving for Part-Time Instructors**

- College administrators are learning that they can make adjuncts feel much more supported in their jobs with low-cost measures like systematically soliciting their feedback and providing them with access to orientation sessions, instructional resources, support services, and campus facilities.
- Poor working conditions have left part-time instructors ripe for unionization, and unions have been negotiating big improvements in their pay, benefits, and job stability.
- Research tying student success to the job conditions of adjunct faculty members is putting pressure on colleges to ease the strains on such instructors.
Being represented by a union appears to pay big financial dividends for full-time instructors at community colleges, a new study concludes.

Depending on the size, location, and public-financing sources of their institution, unionized full-time instructors earn from about 5 to 50 percent more in pay and benefits than do their nonunionized peers at similar community colleges, says a paper summarizing the study’s results.

“The differences are stunning,” says Stephen G. Katsinas, a professor of higher education at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa who is one of the study’s three co-authors.

Among the forces influencing how much community colleges pay their instructors, “collective bargaining, in itself, matters,” says Mr. Katsinas, who plans to present the study’s findings in New York on Sunday, at an annual conference held by the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions.

Other research on the impact of collective bargaining on faculty pay has struggled to quantify how much differences in instructors’ earnings were attributable to unionization versus other contributing factors, such as differences in institutional size or in the regions that colleges served.

Mr. Katsinas and other scholars reached conclusions similar to the new study’s in a 2006 analysis of community-college data, but that effort was hampered by a reliance on outdated data on where unions existed. It also failed to take into account 113 institutions — among them, large community-college districts such as Miami-Dade — that could not be factored into an analysis of community colleges under the classification scheme used by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The new analysis uses a modified classification scheme to factor in the previously excluded institutions, which include community colleges that either offer four-year degrees or are offshoots of four-year public institutions, as well as public
baccalaureate colleges that primarily offer associate
degrees. It uses federal data on faculty earnings from the
2010-11 academic year, the last for which the Education
Department collected information on benefits.

“There are amazing differences in monetary
compensation of full-time faculty across the landscape
of community colleges when geography, collective
bargaining, and local appropriations are all accounted
for,” the new study concludes.

On average, it found, unionized full-time faculty
members annually received pay and benefits
amounting to about $95,000 at community colleges
that received a significant share of their funds from
local governments and about $77,000 at community
colleges that lacked such a local source of financial
support. Nonunionized faculty members received
less than $68,000 in pay and benefits, on average,
regardless of where their community college derived
its tax revenue.

The size of the community college where a faculty
member worked and the type of community it served
also made a big difference.

At the top of the pile, full-time faculty members at
suburban, multicampus, locally financed community
colleges annually earned an average of nearly
$106,000 in pay and benefits. At the bottom, such
faculty members at small, rural, locally financed
community colleges earned total compensations
averaging just over $61,000.

The other authors of the new study were Nathaniel
J. Bray, an associate professor of higher-education
administration at the University of Alabama, and
Barry R. Mayhall, a doctoral student in higher
education at Alabama and a mathematics instructor
at Snead State Community College, in Boaz, Ala. The
paper on their findings will be released after next
week’s conference.

Peter Schmidt is a senior writer for The Chronicle
of Higher Education, where he covers affirmative
action, academic labor, and issues related to
academic freedom.
For Ksenia Krylova, the years she has spent earning her Ph.D. have been largely worry free, at least when it comes to money.

As a doctoral student at the University of Houston’s C.T. Bauer College of Business, she receives $33,000 a year in stipend support. The assistance, which also includes a free laptop while she’s in the program, has helped her to focus on her coursework and dissertation. She is set to complete her program in the summer after five years and has a job offer for a tenure-track position at a university in Paris.

“We’re provided the environment and the equipment necessary to go through our program without any burdens,” says Ms. Krylova.

Across campus, Tracy Butler doesn’t feel the same.

When she began working toward her Ph.D. in history in 2010, Ms. Butler received a stipend of roughly $11,000 a year. It forced her to work as a part-time nanny, which distracted her from her Ph.D. studies, she says.

“If I didn’t have to work outside,” says Ms. Butler, “I would have had more time to focus on my dissertation and my comprehensive exams. I probably would have been finished with my Ph.D. by now.”

Disparities in stipends, at Houston and research universities elsewhere, stem from many factors. They include how nationally competitive a department is, and wants to be, in recruiting students; how much federal research money a program gets; how available university fellowships are; and where university donors put their dollars.
The unequal pay leads to an unequal education.

Students with larger stipends or better access to federal grants and other aid, often in the sciences, engineering, and business, are better able to focus on learning and career prospects, while the rest, more often humanities students, spend much of their time preoccupied with making ends meet.

Graduate-student activists say the disparity in stipend levels and its repercussions aren’t discussed enough on campuses. Little data exist about how programs compare in offering financial support, limiting graduate students’ negotiating power and ability to know just how big disparities are from university to university, across departments within universities, and even sometimes within departments themselves.

While universities are concerned about how long it takes humanities students to earn a degree, the growing debt levels among graduate students, and how best to prepare Ph.D.’s for a rocky job market, the question of what is fair financial support, which affects all of these problems, is rarely dealt with head on.

In an era of tight budgets, universities have struggled to raise stipends, and the trade-offs often bring controversy. At the Johns Hopkins University, administrators wanted to increase humanities and social-sciences stipends by accepting fewer students. At the University of Texas at Austin’s liberal-arts college, officials reasoned they could pay students more, but only if they paid them for fewer years. Graduate students protested both plans.

Debt Varies by Discipline for Graduate Students

Ph.D. recipients tend to accumulate more debt in disciplines that receive less financial support from their universities or external sources. About half of students finish their Ph.D. programs with no education-related debt at all; they are included in the averages below.

Average education-related debt by discipline for Ph.D. recipients in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Average Debt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>$34,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>$33,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$29,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>$28,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life sciences</td>
<td>$19,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical sciences</td>
<td>$12,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>$11,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All</strong></td>
<td><strong>$22,027</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Life sciences include agricultural sciences and natural resources, biological/biomedical sciences, and health sciences. Physical sciences include mathematics and computer and information sciences. Social sciences include psychology. “Other” includes all the nonscience and nonengineering fields that are not shown separately.

Source: Survey of Earned Doctorates by the National Science Foundation and five other federal agencies.
At the University of Houston, administrators are sympathetic to the financial concerns of Ph.D. students. The university raised stipends in low-paying disciplines in 2013. Ms. Butler, for example, received about $16,000 in 2014.

Some graduate students complain that the changes didn't go far enough, and the University of Houston shows just how hard it is to balance the needs of students with an institution's academic goals and financial priorities.

Doctoral students receive a variety of support from universities. Besides stipends, tuition assistance and health benefits are also common. Stipends are typically intended as financial support for living expenses and are often provided as compensation for teaching courses or conducting research.

Those Ph.D. students whose stipends don't go far enough usually have two options: Find a job outside the university, or take out loans. Both can be a gamble.

To make sure students focus on their studies and to help ensure timely completion, the University of Houston, like many others, prohibits most doctoral students from having outside jobs. (The ban includes those whose tuition is covered by a university fellowship, which is the majority of students.)

But many cash-strapped future Ph.D.'s ignore the rule and quietly work around town waiting tables, flipping burgers, and teaching at community colleges.

"For the university to survive in the 21st century, we have to tend our own garden"

Zachary D. Martin, a fifth-year creative-writing student at Houston, says he didn't feel he could go into debt to finance a degree that has bleak job prospects. So to supplement his stipend, which in 2012 was about $11,000, Mr. Martin taught writing outside the university, graded essays for an SAT-prep company, and did editing and proofreading for a publishing house, among other jobs.

Now on the academic job market, Mr. Martin says he has had one on-campus interview at a teaching-intensive liberal-arts college. He didn't get the job. He worries his résumé looks thin because he didn't publish enough stories.

In today's tight market, he says, even colleges that emphasize teaching are looking to hire "unicorns" — those rare candidates with exceptional teaching experience, a major publication history, and a track record of university service. This, he says, stacks the deck against people like him.

"If I didn't freelance and work as much," he says, "that would have given me more time for writing and publishing."

Giving students that time is partly the goal of the university's rule against outside employment. Students, however, call it unreasonable given some stipend levels. It's unclear to what extent the university enforces its work prohibition. Dmitri Litvinov, the graduate-school dean at Houston, says he's unaware of the university's ever punishing a student for working at another job.

But the rule does have an impact. Several graduate students who spoke with *The Chronicle* about their extra jobs didn't want their names published for fear of upsetting the university or their faculty advisers; one even worried it would look bad to potential future employers.

Critics of the rule say it has another effect: It pushes students into debt.

Not wanting to run afoul of the university's regulation, for example, Becky Smith took out loans to help her pay the bills. Now in her fifth year of a history Ph.D. program at Houston, she has racked up about $24,000 in debt while in her doctoral program, for about $70,000 total when counting her undergraduate and master's debt.
That amount will very likely grow. The university, like many others, limits stipend support after a certain number of years, in part to encourage students to finish in a timely fashion. Ms. Smith says she won’t receive any stipend support from the university after this academic year; she still has one semester to go before she completes her dissertation on lesbian and feminist activists in Houston in the 1970s and 80s.

While the loans will affect her future finances, Ms. Smith says she doesn’t regret her decision.

“I’ll deal with the financial consequences of my Ph.D. later because I know from having worked a retail job that I never want to be in that position again,” she says. “I’d rather be educated and with a stack of loans than the opposite.”

The problem hits certain disciplines harder than others, with some observers saying that low stipend amounts are part of the cause. Eight percent of all Ph.D. recipients in 2013 reported student debt totaling more than $90,000. In the physical sciences and engineering, that share was less than 3 percent, but in the humanities and social sciences, it was about 10 and 15 percent, respectively.

Houston and other universities should invest more in Ph.D. students, Ms. Smith says. After all, they are the nation’s future faculty.

By providing better stipends, she says, “you’re not only furthering the education of these students, but also every student who will ever be taught by them at any institution they ever teach at.”

For Ms. Krylova, the stipend she makes has helped her focus on her studies, but it doesn’t mean an extravagant lifestyle. Yes, she does most of her grocery shopping at Whole Foods or organic farmer’s markets, she says, but she has also had to wrestle with rising rents in the Houston area, which have increased in some apartment buildings by almost 30 percent in the last five years.

“I’m single, don’t have a family to take care of, and don’t have any health issues,” Ms. Krylova says. “The money the college and department offer, I’m not sure it would be sufficient in New York or Washington, D.C., but it’s enough to sustain a good living in Houston.”

The amount Ms. Krylova receives represents the higher end of the stipend spectrum at the university and nationally. Few Ph.D. students have stipends topping $30,000; even at elite colleges, some disciplines fall short of that. Stipends in humanities and social sciences on the same campuses tend to be lower, often in the $15,000-to-$20,000 range. Precise data are scarce. And students in some disciplines have more access to federal money and can improve their finances with grants.
For the first three years in her social-psychology program at Houston, Lindsey Rodriguez struggled. She supplemented her stipend with an extra job and took out loans. She says she was limited in her ability to do work crucial to landing a tenure-track job — writing papers, conducting research, traveling to conferences, and making presentations.

Then, in 2011, she received a National Institutes of Health grant that, at around $21,000 for the year, was about double what she was receiving when she started her program. The extra financial support, she says, “allowed me to focus much more on research and doing those graduate-student activities that I should have been doing from the start but couldn’t because I was so busy working to pay my bills.”

She recently completed her Ph.D. and landed a tenure-track job. She is set to begin as an assistant professor at the University of New Hampshire in the fall. Without the extra money, she’s not sure she would have gotten the job. “Those additional resources,” Ms. Rodriguez says, “really were the difference between having a mediocre graduate-student career and having a thriving graduate-student career.”

The University of Houston sees itself as a university on the rise. Led by Renu Khator, the president, it’s trying to shed its image as a commuter school. In recent years, it reached the top tier of the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, renovated its student center, drastically increased its dorm capacity, and built a $120-million football stadium. The president recently told legislators she wanted Houston to join the invitation-only Association of American Universities.

“I’ve seen massive changes to this place since I’ve been here,” says Ms. Smith, the history student, as she stood in the shadow of the football stadium. “President Khator has done a good job of transforming the school. But all those changes didn’t really help our lives as much.”

Two years ago, such frustrations boiled over.

Stipends in disciplines like creative writing and history were hovering around $11,000 a year, near the federal poverty line for an individual in 2013, and in some cases, hadn’t been increased in 20 years or more. Demanding a living wage, several dozen graduate students staged a sit-in outside Ms. Khator’s office.

Since then, the university has tried to bring more equity to its programs — and make them more competitive — by better financing graduate students. Many creative-writing Ph.D. students saw their stipends rise to roughly $17,000 from $11,000. Other disciplines, too, saw increases. In 2014, the university went further and provided additional financial support for graduate students, including paying for mandatory fees like the one for the recreation-and-wellness center, which amounted to an average savings of roughly $1,400 a year per student, Mr. Litvinov says.

These recent changes have improved the lives of students, several said, though working secret second jobs and taking out loans is still common.

The support the university provided, says Wyman H. Herendeen, chair of the English department, “was impressive and decisive, and has made an enormous difference in the morale of graduate students.”

But to some, the university didn’t go far enough. Mr. Martin, the creative-writing student, took part in the protest and says he wants a commitment to tie stipends, in part, to measures like cost-of-living increases. “Without a system in place to determine what is a fair living wage for the city that you live in,” Mr. Martin says, “there’s nothing that would prevent the need for future sit-ins.”

Ms. Butler, the history Ph.D. student, says it’s “almost immoral” that there remain large disparities in Ph.D. financial support on the campus.
For Mr. Litvinov, the dean of the graduate school, a position that was created after the protest, disciplinary inequities in stipend support are less a result of university policies than market forces. Colleges and departments set stipend amounts based in part on how competitive they want to be in luring the best students, and certain disciplines like the sciences and engineering have more access to external support because of federal priorities. Moreover, while the university allocates how much each college gets in overall funding, declining state support for higher education means there’s less money to go around at public universities.

The heads of colleges and individual departments say stipend levels are a concern.

Dan E. Wells, dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, says some departments in his college, like biology and biochemistry with its stipend of about $21,000, don’t offer nationally competitive rates. But if the college doesn’t receive more money from the university, Mr. Wells says, the only way to raise stipends is to accept fewer students, which would hamper the college’s growth.

“Our faculty is growing, so most departments would like to have more Ph.D. students,” Mr. Wells says. “We’re between a rock and a hard place.”

Even at the business school, setting stipends is a constant challenge, says its dean, Latha Ramchand. The money provided by the university to the college isn’t enough to offer the kind of stipends business students get. To fill the gaps, the college uses payouts from endowed funds, like one created from a $40-million gift that the college received 15 years ago. Ms. Ramchand says she eventually wants a fund exclusively designated for doctoral programs.

While most administrators say market forces should play a role in setting stipend rates, some say more factors need to be considered.

“The free market is not a thing with a soul,” says Kevin Prufer, director of graduate studies for the English department. “It’s a machine that functions, and in its functioning, some people are going to get more screwed than others.”

But the question of what, exactly, is fair compensation for Ph.D. students is complicated, he says. A couple years ago, he would have said the humanities students were getting “really abused.” But what they receive now is arguably fair.

“All the professors who are helping you and working with you on your dissertation and teaching your courses,” Mr. Prufer says, “that’s not free.”

There is, of course, no stipend-setting playbook. Each institution and program must figure out its own rates based on a complex combination of competition, state and federal money, external sources, local costs of living, and its sense of what is fair.

Decisions about stipends in Ph.D. programs are largely decentralized, with levels set by individual colleges or departments, but the central administration can play a role. Some universities have set minimum stipend levels, like Ohio State University and Cornell University. Some students at Houston wonder if the university should accept fewer Ph.D. students and pay them better, like Johns Hopkins proposed.

In response, Mr. Litvinov, the graduate-school dean, acknowledges a reality universities are often reluctant to recognize: One of many factors in deciding how many students to accept is how many undergraduate courses need to be taught. It’s one of many disincentives universities have for reducing the number of Ph.D. students they accept. Doctoral students also help bring status and prestige to the university and to individual faculty members.
Mr. Martin, meanwhile, continues to question the university’s priorities. “Build fewer football stadiums and don’t pay Matthew McConaughey to be commencement speaker,” he says, referring to the celebrity’s visit to the campus scheduled for this week, at a cost of $135,000.

Mr. Martin’s job search continues. Although he would like an academic post, he is open to other careers, like magazine writing or working for a nonprofit group.

Like almost every student who spoke with The Chronicle for this article, Mr. Martin does not regret his Ph.D., even though it came with financial difficulties. But universities, he says, do need to better appreciate the money challenges facing Ph.D. students, or risk hurting their own futures. “For the university to survive in the 21st century, we have to tend our own garden. That means responsible stewardship of the field,” he says. “You can’t go flooding the market with underprepared, indebted Ph.D.’s and expect the center to hold.”

Vimal Patel is a staff writer for The Chronicle of Higher Education where covers graduate education. Follow him on Twitter @vimalpatel232, or write to him at vimal.patel@chronicle.com.

3 Approaches to Raising Stipends

The University of Houston isn’t alone in its effort to raise stipend levels for graduate students as a matter of equity and to be more competitive in attracting applicants. But at times these changes have been contentious and left students dissatisfied.

Here’s what a few universities have done:

• Pay more, but for less time: The University of Texas at Austin’s liberal-arts college plans to pay its Ph.D. students more, but over fewer years, with the hope of encouraging doctoral candidates to earn their degrees faster. Some students balked at the idea, writing that the university’s plan “articulates a ‘one size fits all’ model of graduate-student funding and time-to-degree.”

• Pay more to fewer students: The Johns Hopkins University’s Krieger School of Arts and Sciences decided in 2013 to increase stipend levels for humanities and social-science students to roughly $30,000 from $23,000 with the catch of accepting fewer students. Some graduate students protested the plan, saying having fewer students would hurt the overall educational experience. The school ended up setting the floor for stipends lower, at $28,500, and gave the departments more flexibility in whether to decrease student numbers.

• Pay a minimum and set up an annual review: Following a resolution passed by its graduate-student government in 2011, Ohio State University established an annual process to examine graduate-student stipends to remain competitive. A committee of graduate students, faculty, and staff each year prepares a report that compares stipends within Ohio State and at other universities. Like many universities, Ohio State sets a minimum stipend, which since 2011 has increased to $13,500 from $9,000. Cornell University also has a floor for stipends, but its process is different. There the Board of Trustees sets a minimum nine-month stipend rate each year after receiving a recommendation from the provost and graduate school. Increases in the cost of living in Ithaca, N.Y., are part of the calculation.
Faculty salaries rose faster than inflation last year but failed to regain all of the ground lost after the most recent recession, according to an annual report on faculty pay released this week by the American Association of University Professors.

Controlling for inflation, salaries for full-time faculty members in the 2014-15 academic year were up 1.4 percent over the year before, marking the second year in a row in which they rose faster than the rate of inflation, the AAUP’s report says.

“We are not losing ground as we were in previous years immediately following the recession. That is the silver lining there,” says John Barnshaw, a co-author of the report and senior higher-education-research officer at the AAUP.

But faculty members continue to earn slightly less, in inflation-adjusted terms, than they did before the economic downturn six years ago, the report concludes. The recent trend, it says, represents the continuation of a long period of stagnation in pay for full-time faculty members.

The AAUP’s report, titled “Busting the Myths,” seeks to refute arguments the group says it hears routinely, such as that professors are overpaid and that their salaries are to blame for tuition increases.

The report also takes issue with those who argue that spending on faculty benefits is a primary driver of rising costs in higher education. Spending on those benefits, the report says, rose by roughly 6 percent over the five-year period from 2009-10 to 2013-14. Benefit packages—which represent about 30 percent of the compensation for full-time instructional faculty—remained fairly intact despite the nation’s economic troubles. But, the report adds, faculty benefits account for much too small a share of colleges’ total spending to explain their rising costs.

Medical and dental benefits accounted for about 11 percent, and retirement benefits just over 10 percent, of what colleges spent per faculty member in 2014-15, according to the AAUP report. The most-generous benefit packages, of just over $30,000 per faculty member, went to those at private, independent colleges. Religiously affiliated colleges offered the least generous packages, at just under $23,000 per faculty member.
**Big Disparities**

As in past years, faculty earnings continued to vary widely by rank and by type of institution.

Full professors at private independent doctoral institutions remained at the top of the pile, earning average salaries of nearly $178,000 and average total compensation packages of nearly $224,000 in the 2014-15 academic year.

At the bottom were full-time lecturers and instructors at community colleges, who earned average salaries of about $48,000 and total compensation packages of just under $67,000. The AAUP’s annual survey does not chart the earnings of instructors who work part time; they generally earn significantly less — even per hour worked — than do their full-time colleagues.

As had been the case in other recent years, faculty members with the title of associate professor experienced slower growth in their salaries in 2014-15 than others who were tenured or on the tenure track.

Disparities in pay also remain between men and women at nearly every rank and every type of institution. Over all, full-time professors who are men earned an average of nearly $96,000, while those who are women earned an average of just over $77,000.

The AAUP annually surveys more than 1,100 institutions in developing its report.

Peter Schmidt is a senior writer for The Chronicle of Higher Education, where he covers affirmative action, academic labor, and issues related to academic freedom.
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