Compensation and Benefits Issues and Motion

Compensation and Benefits Committee
Erik Grimmer-Solem (chair), Jeff Rider (vice-chair),
Joe Coolon, Amy Grillo, Khalil Johnson, Amanda Nelson, Helen Poulos, Phil Resor

December 7, 2021
CBC motion:

The faculty requests the President and administration take steps to address the erosion of faculty salaries from the pay freeze and accelerating inflation precipitated by the current Covid-related crises. These steps include measures to address the negative impact of the recent pay freeze and inflation and the problem of severely underpaid continuing faculty, visitors, and per-course instructors. In order to strengthen the quality of instruction and the ranking and reputation of the university, the faculty recommends returning to the compensation target agreed with the faculty in 2001 to place Wesleyan average faculty salaries at all ranks in the top third of our fifteen school comparison group.
Permanent austerity

• Cost-cutting and belt-tightening during the financial crisis and its aftermath (2007-10) became permanent policies. The mutually agreed peer group salary target was redefined lower without faculty advice or consent. Even that lower benchmark was often missed.

• New initiatives and programs have been expanded by relying heavily on severely underpaid continuing faculty, visitors, and per course instructors and by shifting administrative burdens to the faculty.

• Some of the highest tuition rates in the country and an expanded student body, yet comparatively low spending per student.

• New crises become opportunities to cut costs and bank the savings. Faculty salaries were frozen in 2020-21 and the 4% average pay increase for 2021-22 was below the rate of inflation, which is currently running at annualized rate of 6.2%.
Consequences

• Inability to hire and retain the best faculty due to uncompetitive salaries
• Immense cost and wasted faculty effort running searches year after year and mentoring faculty. Cumulative negative reputational toll on the university
• Already low faculty morale from chronic underpayment taxed to the breaking point by the demands of Covid, the pay freeze, and accelerating inflation. Deteriorating campus climate
• Perception among faculty that they have not benefitted from the financial success of the university. Growing pay and status gulf between the faculty and senior administration; eroded faculty governance
• Decline in the reputation of our teaching
• Alumni dissatisfaction with their Wesleyan education
• Decline in the main university ranking
• Threats to our status as a premier small university/liberal arts college
US News and World Report ranking among national liberal arts colleges for 2021-22. Wesleyan ranks

- # 17 among national liberal arts colleges (tied with Barnard, Colby, Colgate, and Smith). Overall score 84/100
- # 18 in student excellence
- # 42 in financial resources (based on average spending per student on instruction, research, public service, academic support, student services, and institutional support)
- # 45 in alumni giving
- # 48 in best undergraduate teaching (based on a 2021 survey of college presidents, provosts, and admissions deans asked to nominate 15 schools with strong undergraduate teaching. 7 nominations were needed to be ranked)
- # 23 in faculty resources (based on class size, faculty salary, # of faculty with highest degree in field, student to faculty ratio, and proportion of full-time faculty)
- # 15 in faculty compensation
- # 3 in tuition costs (compared with the 15 schools in our peer group)
Wesleyan’s compensation peer group: 15 schools

- 12 colleges: Amherst, Bryn Mawr, Carelton, Dartmouth, Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Pomona, Smith, Swarthmore, Trinity, Wellesley, Williams; 3 small universities: Brandeis, Brown, Tufts
- This peer group was agreed between the faculty and administration in 2001. The agreed compensation target was that Wesleyan salaries would fall into the top third of this group
To the Trustees of Wesleyan University

The Faculty of Wesleyan University has long supported institutional goals of excellence in teaching and scholarship. In national surveys, the academic reputation of the University is ranked consistently among the top ten liberal arts institutions in the country. Today we see this excellence threatened by inadequate support for the Faculty and their work. In the same national surveys, Wesleyan ranks 46th in faculty resources, including faculty compensation.

We note:
- In 2001 the Faculty and the Administration reached agreement on a group of 15 comparison schools and set the goal that Wesleyan faculty salaries would fall within the top third of this group. The Faculty has always agreed that this goal represents fair compensation.
- This goal has never been met by the Administration. Moreover, recent sub-inflationary salary increases have resulted in Wesleyan faculty salaries falling further in rank within the comparison group.
- In addition, institutional contributions to faculty retirement plans have been cut in half over the past 25 years. As a result, the Wesleyan Faculty can expect accumulated retirement savings at a level 30% lower than for faculty in the comparison group. This deficiency imperils the University’s ability to recruit and retain excellent young faculty.
- We applaud the recent successful capital campaign, the record-breaking levels of fund raising, the substantial enhancements to the physical campus, and continued support for need-blind admissions. At the same time, the Faculty have been told year after year that there are insufficient funds for their compensation to meet the agreed goal.

We expect the University to work with the Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee:
1) to honor its commitments and raise faculty salaries up to the previously agreed level before the end of the 2007-2008 fiscal year,
2) to maintain faculty salaries at least within the top third among the comparison group going forward, and
3) to provide retirement benefits for faculty comparable to those provided within the comparison group.

The Faculty is deeply committed to Wesleyan University. It is time for the University to show the same commitment to its Faculty.

Signed by 156 faculty members and professional librarians (attached)

Henry Abelove, Professor of English
Richard Adelson, Professor of Economics
Helen Aiello, Serials Librarian
Stephen Angel, Associate Professor of Philosophy
Michael Armstrong-Roche, Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures
Allan Berlind, Professor of Biology, Emeritus
Jonathan Best, Professor of Art History
Michaële Biddle, Head of Preservation Services
Steven Bischof, Science Librarian
Reinhild Dillan, Charlotte Augusta Ayres Professor of Physics
Petra Bonfert-Taylor, Associate Professor of Mathematics
John Bonin, Professor of Economics
Aan Burke, Associate Professor of Biology
John Carr, Professor of Theater
Douglas Charles, Professor of Anthropology
Barry Chemoff, Professor of Biology
Mary Ann Clawson, Professor of Sociology
Fred Coham, Professor of Biology
Karen Collins, Professor of Mathematics
Wistar Comfort, Edward Burr van Vleck Professor of Mathematics
Christina Crosby, Professor of English and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
Andrew Curran, Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures
Jonathan Cutler, Associate Professor of Sociology
Stephen Devoto, Associate Professor of Biology
Lisa Dierker, Associate Professor of Psychology
Alex Dupuy, Professor of Sociology
Fred Ellis, Professor of Physics
Nina Feldman, Curator of Exhibitions, Zilkha Gallery and Adjunct Lecturer in Art History
Adam Fieldsteel, Professor of Mathematics
John Finn, Professor of Government
William Finkelstein, Professor of Biology, Emeritus
Douglas Floyd, Associate Professor of Government
Albert Fry, Professor of Chemistry
Susanna Fusco, Professor of Russian Language and Literature
Valerie Gillispie, Assistant University Archivist
Antonio Gonzalez, Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures
Peter Gottschalk, Associate Professor of Religion
Laura Grabel, Professor of Biology
Lori Green, Associate Professor of Philosophy
Patricia Hill, Professor of History and American Studies
Manju Hingorani, Associate Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
Kendall Hobbs, Reference Librarian
Scott Holmes, Associate Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
Steven Horst, Associate Professor of Philosophy
Mark Howey, Associate Professor of Mathematics
Joyce Jacobsen, Andrews Professor of Economics
Ron Jenkins, Professor of Theater
William Johnston, Professor of History
Indra Karamcheti, Associate Professor of English
Marilyn A. Katz, Professor of Classical Studies
Michael Keane, Professor of Mathematics
Peter Kilby, Professor of Economics
John Kim, Associate Professor of Biology
Joseph Kneze, Professor of Chemistry
Ronald Kravala, Adjunct Professor of Music
EunYoo Lee, Head of Access Services, Olin Library
Lee Lenning, Professor of German Studies and Film Studies
Alvin Lucier, John Spencer Camp Professor of Music
Lewis Lukens, Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, Emeritus
Peter Mark, Professor of Art History
Bruce Masters, Professor of History
Michael McAlister, Associate Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
Elizabeth McAlister, Associate Professor of Religion
Sean McCann, Associate Professor of English
Prescilla Meyer, Professor of Russian Language and Literature
Jill Morawski, Professor of Psychology
Idith Miskoff, Associate Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
Russell Murphy, Professor of Government
Janice Naegle, Professor of Biology
Alan Nathanson, Bibliographer/Reference Librarian
Howard Needler, Professor of Letters
David Nelson, Artist in Residence, Music
Ellen Neugerm, Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures
Stewart Novick, Professor of Chemistry
Lauree Nussdorfer, Professor of History and Letters
Suzanne O’Connell, Associate Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences
Donald Oliver, Professor of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
John Paoletti, Professor of Art History
Christopher Purslow, Professor of Classical Studies
William Pynchon, Professor of History
Catherine Pissaro, Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures
Philip Pomper, Professor of History
Claire Potter, Professor of History
Rex Pratt, Professor of Chemistry
Wendy Rayback, Associate Professor of Economics
Michael Roberts, Professor of Classical Studies
Bruce Romano, Associate Professor of History
Rob Rosenthal, Professor of Sociology
Ashraf Rushdy, Professor of English
Irina Russu, Professor of Chemistry
John Salzer, Professor of Astronomy
### Comparison of Average Salaries by Rank Among 16 Institutions

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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Woesleyan average salary ($)</th>
<th>Woesleyan rank (out of 16)</th>
<th>Peer Group</th>
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<td>66,700</td>
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**Below peer group median in 3 of the last 15 years**

**Below peer group median in 10 of the last 15 years**

**Below peer group median in 6 of the last 15 years**

Colleges: Amherst, Bryn Mawr, Carleton, Dartmouth, Mt. Holyoke, Oberlin, Pomona, Smith, Swarthmore, Trinity, Wellesley, Williams
Universities: Brandeis, Brown, Tufts
Paying at the median

• A peer group salary target should be aspirational, not serve as a justification for the status quo. Aiming at the “median salary” has resulted in us landing in the bottom third far more than in the top third of our peer group over the last 15 years.

• We don’t expect “median” of peer group performance in teaching, research, and colleagueship as a standard for tenure and promotion, rather we expect nothing less than excellence in all three categories.

• Paying at the median has lost us many exceptional faculty members who took countless hours to recruit and mentor.
Compounding from the one-year pay freeze

For a 35 year old tenure-track Assistant Professor making $ 90,000 per year, a one year pay freeze (not receiving a 4% raise of $3,600) has knock-on effects:

• Year 1: $3,600 not received
• Year 2: $3,600 not received
• Year 3: again not received and so on… Until the year of retirement

If the 35 year old AP wants to retire at age 67: $ 115,200 lost

⇒ This is an underestimate. What it does not include is that merit and promotion increases are a percentage of existing salary and so will be lower

⇒ The opportunity to invest this money is also lost

⇒ The percentage of retirement contributions will also be lower

So this loss would be much larger
Wesleyan retirement plan 2019-20 compared with the CUPA median*

Employer Funding

- Employer Match:
  - Benchmark Median: 6%
  - Wesleyan: 3%

- Employer Contributions:
  - Benchmark Median: 6%
  - Wesleyan: 7%*

*7% under $80,500 in eligible earnings, 10% for eligible earnings over $80,500.

Employer match is contribution given to those employees who make elective contributions to the plan.

Employer contribution is made even if employee chooses not to make election contributions.

*CUPA=College and University Professional Association, an association of human resource professionals in higher education, which collects data on retirement plans via surveys. This median was derived from New England private college retirement plans.
Inflation

- The one-year Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all urban consumers in July 2021 was 5.4% [https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/consumer-prices-up-5-4-percent-in-12-months-ended-july-2021.htm](https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/consumer-prices-up-5-4-percent-in-12-months-ended-july-2021.htm). During the year of the pay freeze, Wesleyan salaries fell by 5.4% in real terms.

- In October 2021 the CPI was up 0.9 % for an annualized rate of 6.2% [https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.nr0.htm](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.nr0.htm). That is the highest rate in 30 years. The average salary increase paid in July 2021 was 4%, so if this trend continues, Wesleyan salaries will fall by 2.2% in real terms this academic year.
Continuing faculty

- Professors of the Practice (PoP) and Artists-in-Residence are docked twice for not being expected to produce scholarship: heavier teaching load and much lower pay. In most cases, PoPs are severely underpaid despite being critical to new program initiatives.

- Since a 2019 policy change, Continuing Faculty have not been eligible for regular sabbaticals by accrual of teaching. The CBC recommended a return to the accrual system for all Continuing Faculty (Adjunct Professors, PoPs, Artists-in-Residence) in January 2020, whereby eligibility for a sabbatical accrues after 10 semesters of teaching (the old policy for Adjunct Professors).
Visiting faculty, visiting assistant professors, and librarians

• Wesleyan’s pay for visiting faculty is unusually low. Institutions like Middlebury College and Yale University pay approximately $11,000 per course compared to Wesleyan’s starting pay of $5,600 per course. Very hard to recruit quality visitors with such low pay.

• Visiting assistant professors are currently paid about $55,000 for two semesters. The average salary in the state of Connecticut is just over $70,000 per year.

• Professional librarians have received lower average percentage pay increases than faculty.
CBC recommendations

1. A 4% raise, a 4% quality retention investment, and a 4% cost of living adjustment paid to all faculty in 2022-23 (a **12% total salary increase**)

   • The quality retention investment works toward correcting multiple years of below peer group target salary increases and helps assure that the university can hire and retain the best faculty in 2022-23

   • The cost of living adjustment recognizes that inflation is at a 30 year high. The CPI in July 2021 was 5.4% and is currently running at an annualized rate of 6.2%
2. As agreed between the faculty and administration in 2001, Wesleyan should aim to pay average faculty salaries at all ranks to place us in the top third of our 15 school peer group (i.e., # 5 or higher).

3. Bring the retirement plan employer match above the CUPA median to at least 7%

4. Continuing Faculty and visiting assistant professor salaries should be raised so that they reach the top third of our peer group

5. Per-course instructor pay should be raised so that it reaches the top third of our peer group

6. All Continuing Faculty should accrue eligibility for a sabbatical according to a regular schedule of ten semesters of teaching. Visiting professors turned into Professors of the Practice should have their teaching service as visitors accrue toward such a sabbatical. The sabbatical clock going forward should be set from the time of appointment or from the date of the last sabbatical

7. Bring professional librarian pay increase percentages to levels received by faculty
CBC motion:

The faculty requests the President and administration take steps to address the erosion of faculty salaries from the pay freeze and accelerating inflation precipitated by the current Covid-related crises. These steps include measures to address the negative impact of the recent pay freeze and inflation and the problem of severely underpaid continuing faculty, visitors, and per-course instructors. In order to strengthen the quality of instruction and the ranking and reputation of the university, the faculty recommends returning to the compensation target agreed with the faculty in 2001 to place Wesleyan average faculty salaries at all ranks in the top third of our fifteen school comparison group.