



Three Percent Raises?!

Action Needed on Minimum AP Salary, Market Equity, and True Merit Raises

By Jenny Barrett

“The Illinois General Assembly enacted a FY01 budget for the University of Illinois that ranks among the best this institution has ever received,” James Stukel proclaims in his April 25 PRESMAIL. The highlights of that support include “\$21.6 million for salary increases averaging 3 percent for all employee groups... All in all, the level of operating and capital support makes this one of the strongest budgets ever.”

We in the AAP are ecstatic, of course, that the university did so well. But we are also concerned that in this “record budget” year, only 3 percent is allocated for salary increases. President Stukel said he couldn’t justify asking for more because the rate of inflation is so low.

Those of us who were here in the early '90s, when the state economy was suffering, can remember FY1991-92, with 0 percent raises and 3 percent inflation, and FY1993-94, with 1 percent raises and 2.6 percent inflation. In other years, average salary increases were barely ahead of inflation (see table). We tightened our belts, hoping we would catch up when the economy got better. Therefore, we are disappointed to see average raises of 3 percent in this booming economy.

The university did set aside funds to augment salaries of those who had fallen behind others in their rank. But it is difficult to compare academic professionals—even those with the same job titles—because duties vary so greatly and job titles do not necessarily match duties. Equity issues for APs could be examined more easily if we had a clearly defined career path, but few, if any, of the university’s 2400 APs enjoy this luxury.

The administration has an obligation to address at least a few issues: the minimum AP salary, market equity, and true merit raises. Currently, the minimum salary for APs is \$22,000, while many other employee groups have significantly higher minimums. Locker room attendants, police officers, electricians, and even graduate assistants have higher minimum salaries than APs.¹ If APs are as highly valued as administration reports claim, then our salaries should not scrape the bottom of the barrel.

We need to raise our collective voices to call attention to the inexcusably low minimum salary, the need for true and fair merit pay, and equity for all.

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1. <http://webster.uihr.uiuc.edu/ahr/faq/faq7.htm>

The Association of Academic Professionals is a group of academic professional employees at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that is attempting to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining. The AAP is affiliated with the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association. We are part of a national movement of academic professionals who seek collective bargaining rights.

In order to maintain and improve on the benefits of working at this great university, we believe that we need to organize so that our voice commands attention when administrators make decisions that affect our jobs.

The AAP seeks to ensure certain rights such as:

- ☆ clear paths for career development and advancement
- ☆ third-party resolution of disputes with supervisors
- ☆ fair, timely, and consistent evaluation procedures
- ☆ safeguards against arbitrary dismissal
- ☆ rewards for good job performance
- ☆ compensation for mandatory overtime
- ☆ paid and unpaid leaves
- ☆ *a meaningful voice in decisions that affect our employment*

AAP Advocate
UIUC Association of Academic Professionals

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Jenny Barrett (chair), *Psychology*
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IEA STAFF: Peter Miller

Riddle Me This!

Questions about Domestic Partner Health Benefits

By David Perkins

Here's a riddle for you:

- * *What do Juilliard, Ford, Coors Beer, ABC Television, the Culinary Institute of America, the California State University System, and Levi Strauss have in common that the University of Illinois doesn't have?*

The answer isn't a funny one: it's a domestic partnership health benefit plan. As of January 2000, 110 college and university systems have DP benefits, some in place since 1992! According to the Human Rights Campaign, almost 3,500 employers (not counting colleges and universities) offer them—and that number includes 97 Fortune 500 Companies.

Here are a couple more riddles:

- * *When did all three U of I Faculty Senates recommend that benefits should be extended to employees' domestic partners, whether those partners are of the opposite or the same sex?* 1996.
- * *What happened to that Senate resolution?* No one has an answer to that riddle. Following that recommendation, domestic partnership health benefits disappeared completely from the University radar screen.

Let's set aside for a moment those tired old concepts of "justice," "fairness," and "equality" and focus on cost. Could that be the key? According to a 1997 study by the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, covering same-sex couples raised overall health insurance costs by less than 0.5 percent, while covering both same-sex and opposite-sex couples increased costs by 1 percent to 3 percent. A 1997 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 85 percent of respondents reported no increase in their health care costs as a result of offering domestic partner benefits. Those costs wouldn't even amount to one coach's salary. I suspect, therefore, that it probably isn't the cost that keeps the university antediluvian.

Domestic partnership benefits would be a giant step toward equal pay for equal work. Why should the person in the next office get married one day and have her spouse covered the next, yet my partner of 18 years is denied coverage?

The 1999 Society for Human Resource Management/Commerce Clearing House Recruiting Practices Survey (*Human Resources Management: Ideas & Trends*, Chicago, No. 460, June 16, 1999) reported that domestic partnership benefits were ranked as the No. 1 most effective recruiting incentive for executives and the third most effective recruiting incentive for managers and line workers. If the university values talented staff and the concept of diversity as much as it says it does, then it's missing out on a terrific recruiting tool.

Why are they ignoring that particular lure if they want to hire the best of the best? Hmmm, no answer there, either.

I do have one question that can be answered decisively, though:

- * *When should the University of Illinois start offering domestic partnership health benefits?* That's easy: yesterday. ■

APs Discuss Benefits, Professional Development

By Peter Miller

What if you could choose your benefits package from a menu, the way you order at a restaurant? You might choose health insurance with low deductibles and good eye care, but minimal dental and no child care coverage. Or you might choose child care, domestic partner health insurance, and a wellness benefit with a free IMPE pass.

A benefits package like this, known as a “cafeteria plan,” is the benefit improvement most desired by APs who attended the AAP’s brown bag lunch discussion on benefits. A one-size-fits-all benefits package may not work for the diverse community of APs, so why not offer flexibility?

Other benefits improvements discussed included health insurance, full tuition waivers, education/sabbatical leaves, better dental insurance, retirement health insurance, dependent (child or elder) care, and increased university contributions to 403(b) retirement accounts.

At a brown bag lunch on professional development opportunities, attendees learned that paid sabbaticals, clearly defined career paths, institution-wide professional development funds, and reimbursement for conferences and professional licenses have been negotiated into contracts by AP unions elsewhere. (Write to aap@shout.net for a copy of this list.)

Improvements are possible only when APs discuss their needs and organize to win changes. Dramatically better benefits and professional development opportunities at union campuses show that collective bargaining is the best way to improve working conditions for APs. ■

Raises

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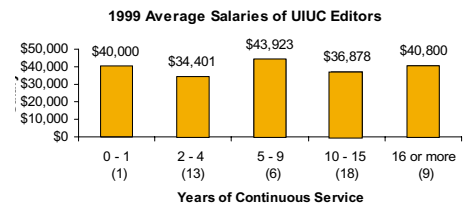
Equity is also a concern. Frequently, new hires make almost as much as or more than experienced people because they are offered the market rate. For example, the average starting salary for May 2000 UIUC Computer Science graduates with B.S. degrees is \$52,500.² Research programmers at UIUC average \$43,000. Maybe it isn’t surprising that a negative correlation connects service and salary (i.e., generally, the longer you serve, the lower your salary). The message is that new hires are valued, but loyal, long-term employees are not. The constant turnover is costly for the university as it pays to conduct searches and train new people.

True merit pay would be great, but while Academic Human Resources encourages units to base raises on performance reviews, there is no formal link between pay and performance and no recourse for APs dissatisfied with their raises. With this system, I can leverage a higher raise by looking for other jobs and presenting counteroffers to my supervisor than by concentrating on doing an outstanding job. Again, the system does not reward loyal employees but encourages people to find a career path elsewhere.

Last year, the AAP raised concerns about AP salaries. Some units responded this year by designating money specifically for APs. For instance, LAS set aside an additional 1 percent for AP merit raises.

In a large complex bureaucracy, silent partners tend to be forgotten. We need to raise our collective voices to call attention to the inexcusably low minimum salary, the need for true and fair merit pay, and equity for all. ■

UIUC Salary Snapshot: Editors



(N) = sample size for each category. Total sample = 47. Includes all full-time (9- and 12-month appointment) academic professionals with these titles: Arts Editor, Assistant Editor, Assistant Publications Editor, Associate Editor, Associate Publications Editor, Editor, Editorial Associate, Managing Editor, Research Editor, Visiting Editor, or Visiting Editorial Associate. Nine-month employees’ salaries were pro-rated.

Inflation and raises over the past 10 years

Year	Inflation	UI raise
1990-91	4.1%	?
1991-92	3.0%	0.0%
1992-93	3.0%	4.0%
1993-94	2.6%	1.0%
1994-95	2.8%	3.5%
1995-96	3.0%	5.3%
1996-97	2.3%	3.5%
1997-98	1.6%	?
1998-99	2.2%	3.0%
1999-2000	3.1%	3.0%

2. <http://ecs.cen.uiuc.edu/ms/salary4.htm>

Ask AAP

What's happening in the child care crusade?

Q ■ After last fall's Baby-In rally, the provost promised to increase child care facilities on campus. What's happened since then?

Send your questions about UIUC policy, employment/labor law, unions, and collective bargaining to aap@shout.net.

A ■ The proposed expansion of the Child Development Lab was put on hold in response to complaints that plans called for destroying the historic Illini Grove. A new site has not yet been selected.

Meanwhile, two members of the Child Care Task Force (a coalition with representatives from AAP, AFSCME, UPE, and GEO) have been named to the provost's Work-Life Committee. Penny Carpenter, Baby-In organizer and AFSCME representative, and Mark Leff, UPE representative, are among those charged with again "gathering information" about service gaps in family-friendly policies on campus.

The Child Care Task Force recently teamed with Women in Computer Science to request that the \$74 million computer science building being constructed include a lounge where working parents could bring children. (Units at the University of California-Berkeley and Yale have similar spaces.) Computer science departments everywhere are struggling to attract and retain qualified female faculty members; the lounge could put the university at the forefront of family-friendly policies.

However, the request for the lounge was quashed by the provost's office. Associate Provost Kathleen Pecknold rejected the proposal, citing a state requirement that university property may not be used for "personal purposes." For more on this effort, see <http://women.cs.uiuc.edu/building/>.

If you'd like to get involved in campus child care issues, please contact me at mjreilly@uiuc.edu. ■

— *This month's answer provided by Maeve Reilly*

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