

Salaries and Pay Equity Discussed at CSW Presentation

University Communications
March 2019

The factors that determine salaries, strategies for evaluating pay equity, and ways to support women in getting high-level positions at the University were among the topics covered in a presentation organized by the UA [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CWSW)'s Equity and Mentoring Workgroup.

"I think we're lucky here that pay is public," said **Allison Vaillancourt**, vice president for business affairs and human resources, who led the Feb. 28 presentation along with **Jan Myers**, director of compensation. "We're a public employer, you can go to the database and find out what people are paid. I think that's a good idea because when people can see what is happening, people behave better."

Jeannine Relly, associate professor of journalism and chair of the workgroup, said the commission organized the talk "to look for solutions and to find out whether there's any room for policies to be instituted, conversations to be had, changes to be made" in regard to pay equity at the UA.

How salaries are set

Vaillancourt opened the discussion by noting there is a growing national demand for pay transparency.

At the UA, market data analysis plays a large role in determining salary ranges for positions, Vaillancourt and Myers said. That is often done with salary surveys, which provide data that can help inform how to set fair and competitive salaries for employees. But there are many salary surveys, they added, and not all are the best reference when it comes to setting UA salaries.

The UA, Myers said, collects market data from a variety of salary surveys, which can include those from the UA's peer institutions, from members of the Association of American Universities, from Research I institutions, and from general industry.

"We really have to be careful in the salary surveys that we're utilizing that they are legitimate and defensible data points for us," Myers said, adding that access to those salary surveys are often quite expensive.

Other factors for determining UA salaries, Vaillancourt and Myers said, include the job's discipline, the minimum qualifications required to do the work, the labor market's demand for the type of work the job entails, and geographic location.

Pay equity

Myers clarified the difference between "market-based pay" which reflects how much one should normally be expected to be paid for a role, and "pay equity," which is the evaluation of salary variances, which sometimes are caused by illegitimate factors, such as gender bias.

"I've heard people say here, 'There's a serious pay equity problem. If I were to go someplace else, I could get paid a lot more,'" Vaillancourt said. "That's not really what pay equity is."

When it comes to evaluating the pay equity in individual units, it's not simply a matter of looking at the average and median salaries of the employees in that unit, Vaillancourt said.

A more sophisticated method, Myers said, is known in statistics as a multiple regression analysis, which looks at the various legitimate factors that influence compensation – such as the scope of a role, the years of experience employees have, and performance ratings.

When asked about ways that other universities have made their pay equity studies more transparent, Vaillancourt said many institutions have those studies done by a third party, which can result in more objective data. Some universities publish those studies, which may provide good models for pay equity transparency.

The discussion also covered ways that UA employees can support women to obtain the highest paying roles. Vaillancourt said simply encouraging women to apply for high-level positions is a start.

"Even for some administrative roles, I would think, 'Oh my gosh, 50 people are going to apply,'" she said. "And then no one applies for these jobs because they assume someone else can do it better than them."

Vaillancourt noted that the equity discussion took place in the midst of the University Career Architecture Project, which aims to better define nonfaculty job titles, support career progression, and better match compensation practices with those used outside the University. It will be easier to complete market analysis and pay equity studies, she said, once the

University has a new job architecture in place.

CSW Chair **Holly Brown**, senior academic adviser in the Department of Physics ^[2], said the commission plans to continue examining pay equity at the UA, and plans to share any findings with campus leadership.

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