Gender Equity in Salaries of Faculty at the University of Minnesota

Recommendations

Murray K. Clayton, Ph.D.
Professor, Statistics
Professor, Plant Pathology
University of Wisconsin-Madison

December 26, 2011
Introduction

In late 2010, Provost Tom Sullivan and Vice President Carol Carrier jointly sponsored the engagement of an external consultant to provide expertise and leadership in creating a credible salary analysis model to be applied to University of Minnesota tenure track and tenured faculty. A report issued in June 2011 summarized the main finding of the ensuing work, namely, that there is statistical evidence of a gap in salary between male and female faculty, and in particular, after taking into account various factors thought to influence faculty salary such as years of service and rank (but not merit), there is evidence that male faculty are paid an average of 2.2% more than female faculty. Additional analyses provide statistical evidence that this gap in salary is not evenly distributed across the schools/colleges nor is it evenly distributed across the faculty ranks.

A concern was raised in the June report that rank may be a “tainted” variable in the regressions used therein. Therefore, Provost Sullivan asked for a statistical analysis to determine whether rank at time of hire may be associated with gender. Based on further statistical analysis, an addendum to the June report was issued in December 2011 providing evidence that the assignment of rank at time of hire does favor male faculty. Specifically, there is statistical evidence that a newly hired female is more likely to be assigned a lower rank than a newly hired male. This pattern exists even after factors such as college/school and years since degree are taken into account.

The June report outlined three general recommendations: 1. Develop a system for adjusting the salaries of female faculty as warranted, on a case-by-case basis. 2. Work to identify the causes of salary inequities, and develop policies to prevent their recurrence. 3. Routinely monitor faculty salaries at the institutional level. Provost Sullivan asked that these general recommendations be developed further so that the study could move into a Phase Two remedy stage. This document expands upon the recommendations provided in the June report and provides a list of specific items for action. First I recommend actions to address existing gaps in salary between male and female faculty, and I then outline future actions regarding the collection and monitoring of data related to salaries, assignment of rank, and other aspects of the professorial job. The primary rationale for these recommendations can be found in the June report; the findings of the December addendum serve as a further basis for these recommendations. Additional details relevant to the recommendations follow in this document.

Almost 20 years ago, the University of Wisconsin-Madison underwent a parallel series of activities. A report in 1992 provided evidence of a gap in salary between male and female faculty and in 1993 an exercise was implemented to address this gap. Later in 1993 a “follow-up” committee was charged with assessing the impact of the exercise. This included both statistical analyses of salaries post-exercise and a survey of faculty to assess the impact of the exercise, to look at potential causes of the original gap, and to solicit recommendations for the future.

The recommendations in this report are informed and influenced by the findings of the UW-Madison follow-up study. UW-Madison and the University of Minnesota are similar institutions in terms of size, mission, and stature, and the general findings of the UW efforts are relevant to future action by the University of Minnesota. In addition, the exercise at UW-Madison was
successful in many ways. Beyond reducing or eliminating the statistical gender gap in salaries, survey results indicated a high level of faculty satisfaction with the exercise.

The Present: Recommendations for Addressing Existing Gender Gaps in Salary

As noted in the June report, an across-the-board salary adjustment, whereby each female faculty member receives a salary adjustment of 2.2% is not recommended. Not least, with an across-the-board adjustment, some female faculty with low salaries will still have low salaries, while some others who do not merit an adjustment will receive one. The regression analyses used in the June report provide evidence of an overall gender gap in faculty salary, and while those analyses are useful for understanding broad trends, absent quantitative merit data, those methods cannot assess whether a gap in salary exists for any given individual. Indeed, even in a school or college where there is an average estimated gap favoring women, it could still be the case that there exists a female faculty member whose salary is too low. Likewise, in a college where there is an average estimated gap favoring male faculty, there might still be some female faculty whose salaries are too high relative to their merit. Given these factors, an appropriate approach for adjusting salary is on a case-by-case basis.

Case-by-case salary assessments

I recommend implementing a process similar to that used in the 1993 UW-Madison exercise, and that it be used in all colleges and schools, including units in the Academic Health Center.¹

1. For large departments, create Gender Equity Pay Adjustment Committees (GEPACs) to determine, on a case-by-case basis, the size of the adjustment appropriate for each eligible woman faculty member.² This committee should be composed of an uneven number, not less than three, of tenured faculty members in the department. In the case of three-person committees, two of the members should be selected by the chair of the department in consultation with the senior (i.e., tenured) faculty or appropriate standing committee in the department. The other member(s) of the committee, one in the case of three-person committees, should be selected by the women in the department by an election. It will be the function of these GEPAC committees to recommend the pay adjustment for each woman in the department. Women should be represented on the GEPAC committees insofar as possible, given the makeup of the department. Of course, a female committee member will not participate in discussions of her own salary adjustment. In the case of small departments, a single GEPAC can be formed for each group of two or three departments with similar mission and activities. The grouping should be by mutual agreement of the relevant department heads, the appropriate dean(s) and the Provost.

¹ Given the statistical evidence of a gender gap in salary for many of the schools and colleges at the University of Minnesota, and given the evidence that the gaps might be different for different schools and colleges, it is reasonable to investigate whether there are salary inequities in AHC units, even though the statistical analyses in the June report excluded AHC faculty.
² “Eligible,” in this context, means regular faculty, for example, not holding administrative appointments.
2. Each college/school should also appoint a college GEPAC whose function will be to review the recommendations of the departmental committees as described below. The college GEPACs should be made up of five tenured faculty members from the college and should include at least two women. Three members of these committees should be appointed by the dean of the college/school. The remaining two members should be appointed jointly by the Women’s Faculty Cabinet, the Faculty Consultative Committee, and the Provost.

3. For each school or college that is not departmentalized (e.g., Law), a single GEPAC should be formed with functions analogous to the departmental GEPACs. For all such colleges and schools, the function of a college GEPAC will be performed by a GEPAC appointed jointly by the Women’s Faculty Cabinet, the Faculty Consultative Committee and the Provost.

4. The departmental GEPACs are to make a recommendation for each female faculty member by examining her record and those of three male faculty deemed by the GEPAC to be comparable or nearly comparable. As a starting point, each departmental GEPAC should be provided (by the Office of Institutional Research) with a table listing, for each faculty member, date of degree, date of hire, and current salary. Comparables should be chosen on the basis of (in order of importance):
   i. years since degree; years of work experience relevant to the position; years of service at the University of Minnesota;
   ii. responsibilities of the position, nature of work performed (e.g., laboratory research in contrast to extension/outreach, basic research vs. clinical translational research, etc.);
   iii. rank;
   iv. affiliation with a particular department, program, center, office, etc.

5. Comparables should be chosen from within the department, unless the male faculty members in the department are so unlike the female faculty with respect to the listed variables that valid judgments cannot be made. Comparables chosen from outside the department should be chosen from units that do similar work and that have similar market value.

6. Gender equity adjustments should be made taking into account justifiable differences in pay based on degrees attained, years since terminal degree, years of experience, rank, differences in responsibilities, differences in market and differences in performance. The latter should be based on cumulative career merit, and on qualitative and/or quantitative assessments of performance in teaching, research, outreach, and service as appropriate to the departmental missions and/or the individual’s job description.

7. Once the departmental GEPACs have determined their recommended adjustments for each woman, their recommendations and justifications for those recommendations should be forwarded to the college/school GEPAC. Each female faculty member should receive a copy of the department's recommendation for her as well as a copy of the justification. In addition, each female faculty member should be told that she can make a counterproposal to the recommendation and send it with a written justification directly to her college GEPAC. Her counterproposal should be framed in terms of the criteria outlined in item 6 above.

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3 For example, within the same department some faculty might be involved in applied research and therefore compete in a different market than those doing basic research. This issue is already partially addressed in item 5, whereby comparables chosen outside a department should come from units with similar market value.
8. The college GEPACs should review the recommendations of the department GEPACs. They should also review individual women’s counterproposals to departmental recommendations. The college GEPACs will either affirm the departmental GEPACs’ recommendations or make a different recommendation. When a college GEPAC departs from a departmental GEPAC recommendation, it should write a justification for the differing recommendation, again based on a comparison of the female with males of comparable years of experience and merit. Both the departmental and the college GEPACs’ recommendations will then be forwarded to the deans of the colleges for appropriate action. Women who are dissatisfied with the action taken on their particular cases may appeal through normal University procedures.

9. The above processes should be conducted outside of the usual annual salary adjustment exercise for merit. GEPACs should not make recommendations that rely on a future merit exercise, and departments should not reduce subsequent merit adjustments in response to a GEPAC recommendation for an increase.

The Future: Recommendations for Data Collection and Monitoring Equity

The goal of the proposed exercise outlined in the previous section is to address existing gaps in salary between male and female faculty members. This addresses the first of the three recommendations in the June report. Here I propose actions to address the two remaining recommendations of the June report: (1) work to identify the causes of salary inequities, and develop policies to prevent their recurrence; and (2) routinely monitor faculty salaries at the institutional level.

In the literature a number of factors have been identified as potential causes of gender gaps in faculty salary. These include:

- salary at time of hire;
- recognition for each of research accomplishments, teaching performance, outreach and/or extension performance, service duties;
- startup package at time of hire;
- assignment of each of teaching duties, service duties, outreach/extension duties;
- retention efforts by department;
- rank at time of hire and timing of promotions;
- access to research facilities and funding;
- access to departmental support facilities;
- access to clinical practice plan (in units with clinical activities);
- being a spousal or internal hire;
- being unwilling/unable to seek outside offers to enhance salary.

Some of these factors are more easily quantified and monitored at a campus level than others; administrators from department leaders on up should be cognizant of these factors (and others) that can impact salary. Here I suggest monitoring a number of factors related to the above that are easily collected and monitored. That said, such monitoring might require changes in current data collection practices if various information is not now being collected.
At the end of each academic year, for the university as a whole, and again for each college/school separately, collect data on:

- average starting salary for male faculty and for female faculty;
- average starting salary for male faculty and for female faculty, by rank;
- numbers of male faculty and female faculty hired into each of the assistant, associate, and full professor ranks;
- dollar value of “start-up” packages for male faculty and for female faculty;
- average percentage raise for male faculty and for female faculty;
- for each retention sought, either by the faculty member or the department: the gender of the faculty member; the value of any salary increment, other support dollars, other conditions (provision of staff, laboratory space, etc.) in a University of Minnesota counter-offer; whether or not the retention bid was successful;
- for male faculty and female faculty promoted in the academic year, the average number of years to promotion (subtracting out, as appropriate, approved tenure-clock extensions, leaves of absence, etc.).

Noting the sensitivity of these personnel data, their collection and review should be conducted with care. Deans will be natural sources of much of the data, although some can be collected automatically through payrolling processes. I recommend that, at the campus level, reviews of these data be conducted by the Provost’s office, with feedback to deans and department chairs/heads as needed.

Because the above data have not generally been collected on the campus, it would be valuable to collect retrospective data, ideally from the last five years. For example, it would be valuable to have average starting salary information for each of the academic years 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010. Data on some of the other factors listed above (e.g., the dollar value of start-up packages) may be more difficult to obtain, but clearly the more complete the record, the better the dynamics of the salary/support structure can be understood.

In general, discrepancies in the above data between male and female faculty serve as sentinels of potential sources of a gender gap in salary. As noted in the June report’s discussion of salary patterns, “… it could be that a sizeable average gap in salary exists between male and female faculty, but upon examining merit information, it is clear in that instance that the gap is justified. … If upon examination a gap is allowed to stand, then the reasons for doing so must be well-articulated and supportable.” The same applies for the other factors outlined above – if the average starting salaries, for example, for male and female faculty are substantially different, then this difference must be justified. The December addendum already indicates an association between initial rank and gender. This and future monitoring of rank data will help the University ensure that rank is appropriately assigned.

Finally, I recommend that the more comprehensive statistical analysis summarized in the June report be repeated, if not annually, then every two or three years.

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4 At the University of Wisconsin-Madison it has been argued that it is not a candidate’s responsibility to negotiate for an equitable starting salary and start-up package in an adversarial manner. Rather, it is the responsibility of the department chair and dean to ensure that starting conditions are equitable.
Additional Comments and Recommendations

The above recommendations deal with the average gap in salary between male and female faculty discussed in the June report, and include recommendations to address the existing gap, and recommendations for data monitoring to better understand the causes of the gap and how to prevent its recurrence. It may be instructive to describe what happened after similar recommendations were followed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

First, as noted on page 1 of this report, there was a high degree of acceptance of the exercise conducted at UW-Madison: of survey respondents, more that 60% of male faculty and more than 70% of female faculty were satisfied overall with the exercise. Perhaps the most common concern was with regard to the dissemination of information before, during, and after the exercise. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that adequate information be distributed to all faculty regarding the implementation of an exercise such as that outlined above. An additional concern was that faculty did not know, in general, how salaries were set in their department. When not already in place, departments can benefit from having systematic, written processes describing the salary/merit process in the department.

Again, the current document outlines recommendations for addressing a gender gap in salaries. It may be that other salary inequities exist. At UW-Madison, policy now exists directing periodic review “to assess whether individuals are appropriately and equitably paid in comparison with peers at UW-Madison.”5 These reviews can occur at any time, but especially at times of promotion and at each five-year post-tenure review. The form of such a review at UW-Madison was adapted from the initial 1993 GEPAC exercise.6

Not so long ago, universities did not pay much attention to matters of equity and diversity. The existence of an Office for Equity and Diversity at the University of Minnesota underlines the institutional recognition of the importance of these matters and how they can positively benefit the University. The recommendations made in this report are offered in the spirit of helping the University of Minnesota achieve greater and long-lasting equity for faculty.

5 http://www.provost.wisc.edu/facsal.htm
6 http://www.provost.wisc.edu/salaryequitypolicy.htm