

Northern Illinois University
Report from the Faculty Salary Equity Task Force
Executive Summary
July, 2005

During the 2002-2003 academic year, the Provost assembled a task force to review potential issues of salary equity among the faculty, specifically potential issues related to gender and ethnicity. Membership of the task force included 30 participants. After several meetings, the task force was split into two working groups: a quantitative and a qualitative group. The quantitative group was charged with designing a method of analyzing salary and performance data to determine whether statistical anomalies existed based on gender or ethnicity. The qualitative group was charged with determining whether there were environmental issues on campus that were contributing to perceptions of salary inequity particularly among minority and women faculty.

The quantitative group conducted a statistical analysis of faculty salaries within each College in order to identify those factors most relevant in determining faculty salary levels. At the University level, a key global question of interest pertains to whether these analyses across colleges point to gender and/or ethnicity as significant factors that impact upon faculty salaries. In order to address these issues, two analytic approaches were utilized. The first involved state-of-the-art multiple regression analyses, specific to each College, that included a number of potential relevant variables that might impact upon faculty salary levels (including gender and ethnicity). The second approach was to identify individual salaries that were markedly below the level predicted by the regression equation and examine whether the individuals with such low salaries (low-side outliers) could be placed into certain demographic groups (e.g., female, minority) with greater frequency than might be expected.

The factors typically examined in these regression analyses included (but were not limited to) the following:

Gender	Current salary	Present rank
Ethnicity	Market value	Years in current rank
Merit rating	Matching offers	Years at NIU
Starting salary	Starting rank	Presidential Research Professor Award
		Presidential Teaching Professor Award

The key factors found across colleges that significantly enhanced the extent of predictability of faculty salary levels included the following: discipline market value; starting salary or other years (at another institution) prior to joining NIU; present rank, particularly full professor; and merit (i.e., knowledge of average merit rating across an extended period of time, or knowledge of merit in combination with professorial rank).

In all colleges, gender failed to enter significantly into the regression equations. Therefore, the results of the multiple regression analyses failed to detect salary inequity as a function of gender in any of the colleges. The results of the multiple regression analyses also failed to detect salary inequity as a function of ethnicity in virtually all the colleges. Thus, across the university overall, ethnicity was not found to be a significant predictor impacting upon faculty salary.

Each college also examined whether female or minority faculty members showed up more frequently as low- vs. high-side outliers with respect to the degree of discrepancy of actual salary from that predicted, as measured in standard deviations (greater than or less than 1.00). The results failed to detect any differences in the frequency with which female or minority faculty members showed up as low- vs. high-side outliers. In fact, in each college, the frequency with which female or minority faculty members showed up as low-side outliers was quite similar to the frequency with which female or minority faculty members showed up as high-side outliers.

Thus, the key global question of interest from a university perspective as to whether the analyses indicated faculty salary inequities as a function of gender and/or ethnicity must be answered negatively. The results from the regression analyses and from the examination of low- vs. high-side outlier frequencies failed to detect gender and ethnicity as key factors that contribute to salary differences among faculty.

The qualitative working group identified areas related to climate and context that might lead to perceptions of salary inequity and/or perceptions of inequity in working conditions. These areas included hiring practices, support mechanisms, power and leadership structures, personnel evaluations, competitive offers, and family work issues. The committee hired an external agency to conduct a study at NIU using a focus group approach to examine perceptions of the issues related to climate and environment. Seven faculty focus groups (African American faculty; Latino/a faculty; Asian American faculty; female tenured faculty; female non-tenured faculty; male tenured faculty; and male non-tenured faculty) participated in the study.

Few differences were found in perceptions of inequities attributable to gender or ethnicity. There were only two areas identified where differences in perceptions were observed between groups. While faculty mentoring was noted as a strength overall, the need for additional mentoring was particularly important to women faculty and faculty of color. Comments indicated that for these groups, it would be helpful to provide mentoring focused on the socialization process and on developing leadership skills. Faculty members from underrepresented groups were also more likely to express a perception of challenges within their work environment. Their comments suggested a need for increased attention to issues of diversity and increased sensitivity to challenges faced by women faculty and faculty of color. It was noted that there was a need to increase opportunities for members of the campus community to examine issues of diversity and to learn about the challenges that can be encountered by members of underrepresented groups.

Five areas of strength were apparent from the focus group process. First, faculty viewed the culture of shared governance at NIU, including a focus on collaboration and communication, as creating a supportive environment for faculty. Second, faculty felt that senior faculty and administrators were committed to helping junior faculty achieve their goals and provided positive mentoring to that end. Third, faculty appreciated the opportunities provided at NIU to pursue research and teaching interests and commented on the support available for their activities. Fourth, several groups commented on positive role models in administration, particularly noting the number of women in leadership positions. Fifth, the physical environment was perceived as positive and safe.

Five themes seemed common across the groups. First, while perceptions of salary inequity within campus were not evident in the focus groups, faculty did express concern that there were inequities relative to national salary comparisons. In other words, there were perceived issues with NIU's general competitive status with respect to faculty salaries. Second, faculty perceived the need for a clear, focused institutional mission, expressing concerns about dual pressures to excel in both research and teaching. Third, faculty commented that the reward system is not clearly connected to, nor measured by, faculty work efforts. Faculty commented on increasing work load expectations in not only research and teaching, as noted above, but also in service. Increased teaching loads, increasing class sizes, increasing enrollments, loss of faculty positions, and increasing reliance on part-time faculty were seen as negatively affecting the work environment. The general perception was that increased work-load expectations and service obligations are not recognized in the reward structure. Fourth, mentoring, while viewed as a positive at NIU, was also perceived as an area for continued enhancement. Faculty called for more systematic faculty mentoring. Fifth, faculty noted the need for increased diversity in leadership, particularly at the department chair and dean levels.

Lastly, the external agency's report noted that the themes identified at NIU are not unique and are, in fact, common in the higher education literature and other university contexts reviewed by the consultant.

The Salary Equity Task Force also forwarded a number of recommendations intended to sustain and build upon the work that has been accomplished by the Task Force. Among these recommendations are:

- Establish a standardized approach to maintaining faculty salary data sets so that the essential data for conducting multiple regression analyses are easily retrievable. A multiple regression analysis of faculty salary data should occur across the institution every three years at a minimum.
- Continue examination of faculty salary data and comparisons with peer institutions.
- Continue and enhance already solid university efforts to promote an understanding of and sensitivity to issues of diversity on campus.

The Task Force and Provost Legg noted that the development and completion of regression analysis systems for each college represented a milestone for Northern Illinois University and placed the institution well ahead of most peer universities with respect to implementing a data-driven analytical framework concerning faculty salary equity. Thus, it is essential to maintain and continue to run the analysis systems. The co-chairs will coordinate updating of the university's relevant committees and commissions. The Task Force conclusions, analytical systems, and follow-up actions will also become incorporated into the university's Affirmative Action Plan.

Provost Legg thanked the Task Force for its extensive efforts and conclusions and released the membership as of June 29, 2005.