

Faculty Compensation Board Report 2009-10

The Faculty Compensation Board has not been busy this year. Because of the state budget shortfalls and the resulting cuts in the William and Mary budget, there has been little room to make progress on increasing faculty compensation. This should not be interpreted to mean that faculty compensation issues are not important. When funds become available faculty compensation should be a very high priority.

Importance of Faculty Compensation

The 2009 faculty survey shows that compensation is an area of grave concern to the faculty. The answers to the question, “On the whole, how satisfied are you with your position at the college?” suggest that the faculty are quite satisfied; 83% of the faculty answered they were “Very” or “Moderately Satisfied.” Satisfaction levels dipped considerably when the questions concerned compensation. Only 18% of the faculty reported being “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” with faculty salaries in general. Only 22% of the faculty reported being “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” with their own salary. And only 26% of the faculty reported being “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” with overall compensation. In addition, when the faculty survey asked faculty to rank their priorities, increasing faculty salaries came out on top.

The highest priority was identified as *increased funding for faculty salaries*. Faculty salaries outdistanced the second highest priority by a considerable margin, leaving no doubt as to the importance faculty placed on reversing the trends of the last couple of years in which faculty salaries were stagnant, not even keeping up with the rising cost of living. (page 213-214)

While increasing faculty compensation has been a high priority of the College of William and Mary for quite some time, the data indicate that the priority that the College puts on faculty salaries is not as high as the priority given to faculty salaries at other Virginia institutions. The Faculty Compensation Board is disturbed by these findings, and we think that the College should do everything in its power to change the situation we find ourselves in.

Comparative Analysis of Salaries in Virginia

We collected data for salaries from the AAUP. We have compared salaries by rank at the College of William and Mary with those at the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and George Mason University. We will use a series of graphs to make the comparisons.

Figure 1, 2, and 3 present the comparison of salaries for Full, Associate, and Assistant Professors for the 1999-2000 to the 2009-2010 academic years. Figure 4 presents the ratio of the average Full Professor salary compared to the average Assistant Professor Salary.

The story of the first three graphs is quite consistent. At each rank, in 1999-2000 salaries at the College of William and Mary were in the middle of the pack, second or tied for second. By 2008-2009, full and associate professors at the College of William and Mary are the lowest paid

faculty among the four institutions. The results for assistant professors are only slightly better. While the pattern at every rank is similar, the results are much more pronounced at the full professor level. In 1999, full professors at William and Mary had roughly the same average salary as those at George Mason and made quite a bit more than the average full professor at Virginia Tech. By 2008, George Mason's full professors had moved ahead of those at William and Mary and Virginia Tech's full professors had caught up to and passed those at William and Mary.

We recognize that salary comparisons are very difficult. The composition of the faculty in each rank changes as faculty members retire and are promoted. But this happens at all schools, and we have no reason to suspect that faculty turnover is more or less rapid at William and Mary than at any of the other institutions. If we had observed falling relative salaries at only one rank, we might have been suspicious, but the pattern is stable across ranks. Also, each one of the institutions in the comparison group has had to deal with the same budget conditions as we have. The only conclusion we can come to is that these institutions have put a higher priority on increasing faculty salaries than we have at the College of William and Mary.

Two possibilities come to mind when trying to explain these graphs. First, it might be that the other Virginia institutions have been more successful in raising money dedicated to faculty salaries, either from the state or from private sources. Second, it might be that the other Virginia institutions have given faculty salaries a greater weight in their resource allocation decisions. If the fall in relative salaries results from poor fundraising, we urge the administration to redouble its efforts to convince the state government and private donors of the importance of keeping a competitive compensation package. If the fall in relative salaries results from shifting salary funds to other sources, we think that this practice should be reevaluated.

Figure 4 gives the percentage of full professor salaries to assistant professor salaries. The downward slope of the lines for William and Mary, University of Virginia, and George Mason indicates that these institutions have experienced salary compression. There is no evidence of salary compression at Virginia Tech. Salary compression is likely in situations in which starting salaries are driven up by market forces while salaries for more experienced faculty rise more slowly. Some salary compression is to be expected given the recent history of salaries. The graph shows, however, that salary compression is much more pronounced at William and Mary. We wonder whether this is a result of a conscious policy or simply a matter of drift from one year to the next.

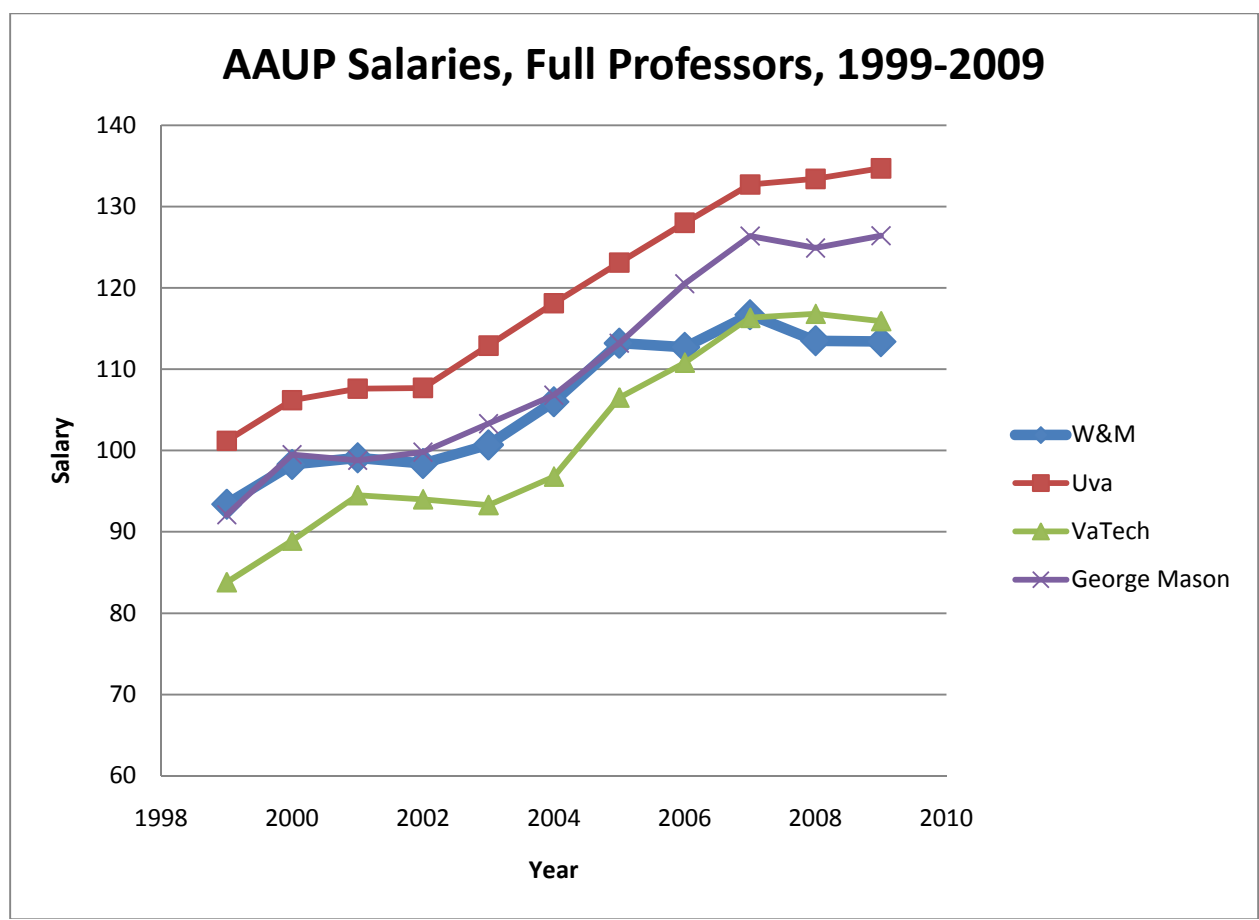
Conclusions

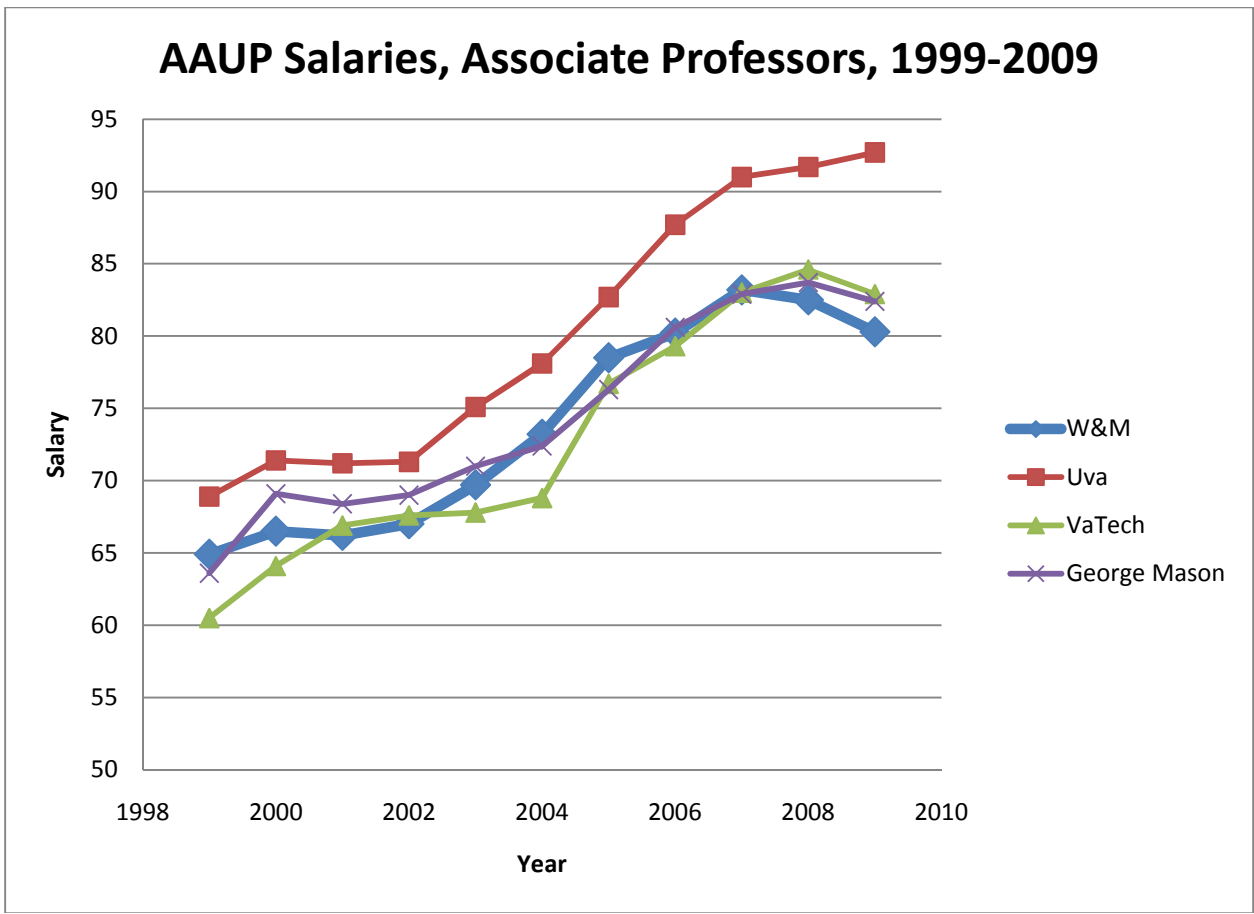
It is most likely that the slip in our relative position among state institutions traces to decisions we have made on campus. The normal turnover of faculty should result in some salary savings. If a full professor retires and is replaced by an assistant professor, in most cases the college saves some salary money. If that money is recycled in the salary pool, the average salary per faculty member would be unchanged. If that money is put to other uses, the average salary will go down. The results we have seen are consistent with a pattern of diverting salary savings to other uses. In this situation, assistant professors salaries should keep up or come very close to keeping

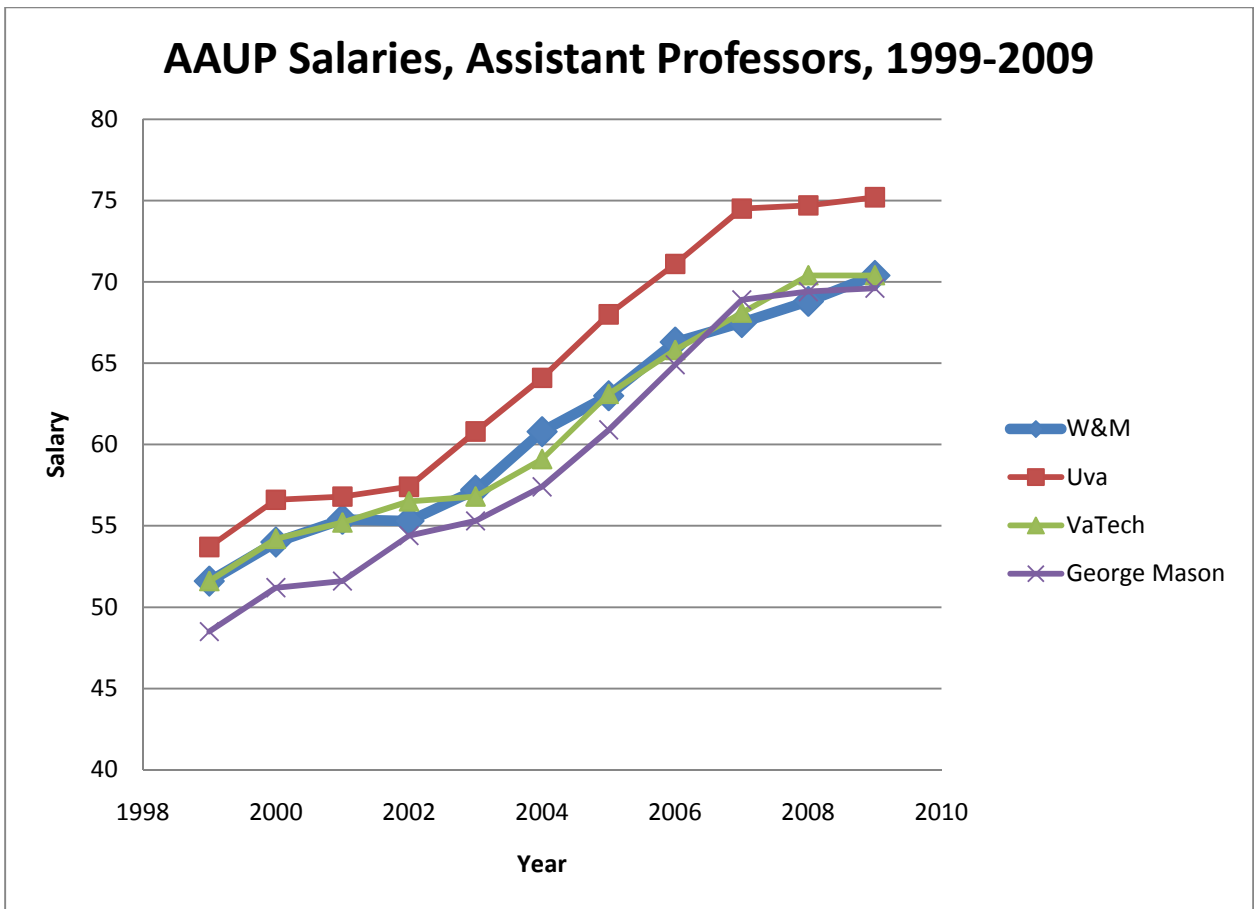
up, but associate professor and full professor salaries would start to lag. We recommend that the practice of diverting salary savings to other uses be stopped.

We recognize that this report deviates with the Faculty Compensation Board's normal pattern of comparing William and Mary salaries with our state peer group. We have no doubt that such comparisons would not be encouraging. We decided to compare our salaries with other state institutions to see if we are at least keeping up with other institutions that have weathered the storms we have. We are not happy to see that William and Mary salaries are not keeping up with this group.

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Ratio of Full Professor Salary to Assistant Professor Salary, 1999-2009

