

Priority Letter: Faculty Salaries at the College of William & Mary are Too Low.

Nearly a decade ago, the College sought to increase faculty salaries so that they would be in the 60th percentile relative to peer institutions. The College has not met this goal. A 2017 report by the Board of Visitors found that the faculty salaries [remained well below the 60th percentile](#). The study found that salaries were well below private competitors like Notre Dame, Emory, and Tufts. And well below public competitors such as Rutgers, Connecticut, UNC, and the University of Delaware. Indeed in the BOV's analysis of salaries at competing schools, William & Mary came in 22nd of 26 schools – near the bottom.

Although there is no comparable report from the BOV for the last five years, there is no reason to believe matters have improved. There were [no faculty salary increases for the 2018-2019 academic year](#), nor in the 2020-21 academic year. Faculty were grateful to receive raises this year (and hopefully for the coming year), though the overall percentage raise was modest.

Low faculty salaries are a major problem for the College for at least three reasons:

1. Low salaries make it hard to recruit talented faculty. When William & Mary competes with other universities that pay more, we lose the battle for talent. Candidates who have more than one job prospect are heavily influenced by salary when deciding which offer to accept. A [2022 Gallup study of more than 13,000 employees](#) found that salary is the, “Number 1 [factor for selecting a job,] with 64% of employees naming it as a critical factor in taking a new job.” Faculty at William & Mary agree. [In the 2019 William & Mary Faculty Survey Report](#), both tenure-track and non-tenure eligible faculty members ranked low faculty salaries as one of the biggest problems at the College. If William & Mary loses the battle for talent at the very beginning of an instructor's career, it loses those faculty forever.
2. Low salaries make it difficult to retain our best faculty. William & Mary hires exceptionally talented scholars and teachers. But other universities quickly take notice and seek to poach our best faculty members. The main way competitors steal faculty is by offering higher salaries and the College's faculty are not immune from this recruitment effort. [In the 2019 Faculty Survey](#), of the 218 tenure-track and NTE faculty who were surveyed, a total of 150 – nearly 70% of respondents' disappointment with faculty salaries was the most common reason faculty members gave for considering leaving the College. Low salary is not an isolated retention problem – it is the most common reason why faculty leave.
3. Low salaries also hurt the morale of the remaining faculty who we are able to hire and retain. Faculty with low morale surely still do their jobs effectively, but they are less likely to go “above and beyond.” The College should reward faculty who go the extra mile – to publish more than required, to mentor more students, and to put even more effort into their excellent teaching. Low morale is likely to effect faculty motivation to push further.

The College has long recognized the need to improve faculty salaries. Efforts to date have not been sufficient. The College should re-double its energies to raise salaries so that we can hire, retain, and motivate the very best faculty.