

**Faculty Salary and Workload Task Force  
Preliminary Salary Recommendations  
April 8, 2025**

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## I. Executive Summary of Taskforce Salary Recommendations

1. Faculty salaries at Dickinson College should be based on number of years at rank.
2. Benchmark Assistant, Associate, and Full faculty salaries to an external target group. We recommend the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of AAUP Category IIb.
3. Benchmark Instructor, Lecturer, and Visiting Assistant Professor salaries to the salaries of starting tenure-track Assistant Professors. Visiting Assistant Professors should be benchmarked at 75% of starting tenure-track salaries. Lecturer salaries should be benchmarked at 90% of starting tenure-track salaries; upon promotion to senior lecturer, the salary should be benchmarked to 90% of starting Associate Professor salaries. Newly hired instructors should be benchmarked to 80% of starting tenure-track salaries; when instructors have reached ten years of service, they should earn 90% of starting tenure-track salaries.
4. Establish a system of term chairs, prizes, and awards that reward outstanding faculty accomplishments in all aspects and at all stages of the career.

## II. Charge and Process of Faculty Salary and Workload Task Force

In August 2025, Provost Renée Cramer tasked Senior Associate Provost Amy Steinbugler with forming a task force to examine faculty salaries and workload. This request followed two recent salary studies at the College—a 2023 [study](#) about faculty salaries in relation to gender; and a 2023 [report](#) from a Salary Subcommittee of FPC.

Provost Cramer posed five charges to the Faculty Salary and Workload Task Force (hereafter, “task force”).

1. Should salary recommendations move from the chair of departments to FPC?
2. Should we institute a true merit system, a benchmarking system, or a combined system?
3. If benchmarked or hybrid, what should our peer group be and what expectations should faculty have regarding where they will be, in relation to peer group median (or other market), at particular years at rank?
4. How can we best identify, standardize, and compensate faculty workload that falls outside of the usual 3:2 teaching load (independent studies, advising, lab time, student research, theater and dance productions)?
5. Is the sub-committee satisfied that we are able to address any concerns about gender equity, disciplinary equity, and market-driven demands on faculty salary, via the processes being recommended?

The task force is chaired by the Senior Associate Provost of Academic Affairs and includes the current chair and senior member of the Faculty Personnel Committee, two authors of previous salary analyses, three at-large members of the faculty, and a non-voting data specialist.<sup>1</sup>

Our principal task for the fall semester was to identify and evaluate compensation strategies that best align with Dickinson's culture and values. We reviewed literature on merit-based compensation practices and considered variations in approaches to salary benchmarking.

### III. Background and Context

#### **Faculty Salaries: Stagnation, Compression, Lack of Recognition of Achievement**

An institution's compensation system reflects its values. Dickinson College's academic handbook affirms a commitment to "providing a rigorous and exceptional education in the liberal arts" (Chapter 1, page 1). Critical to this mission is our capacity to offer competitive salaries to recruit, retain, and support a diverse community of faculty and staff (Strategic Plan 4, 2022). However, in recent years, higher education has faced a series of disruptive events that have negatively affected faculty compensation at many institutions, including Dickinson.<sup>2</sup> During this period, the College responded in a variety of ways:

Annual raises were limited, and on average were below rates of inflation during most years. There were no increases to the salary pool in FY 10 and FY 21 due to the global 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, respectively.

The College declared financial stringency and temporarily suspended faculty and staff retirement contributions for 10 months in FY21.

The College also suspended the salary step system, which allocated "merit" pay (see below).

Between 2018 and 2023, the College removed salary differentials between retiring senior faculty members and incoming junior colleagues from the faculty salary pool, resulting in an overall loss of funds for salaries and raises.

To its credit, the College weathered these challenging times without layoffs, realized impressive growth of its endowment, and maintained a healthy position in college rankings. Though faculty continued to achieve in their fields and to deliver to students a world-class education, faculty salaries fell in real dollars, salary compression worsened to a point of crisis, and there was a lack of reward or incentive for high performance.

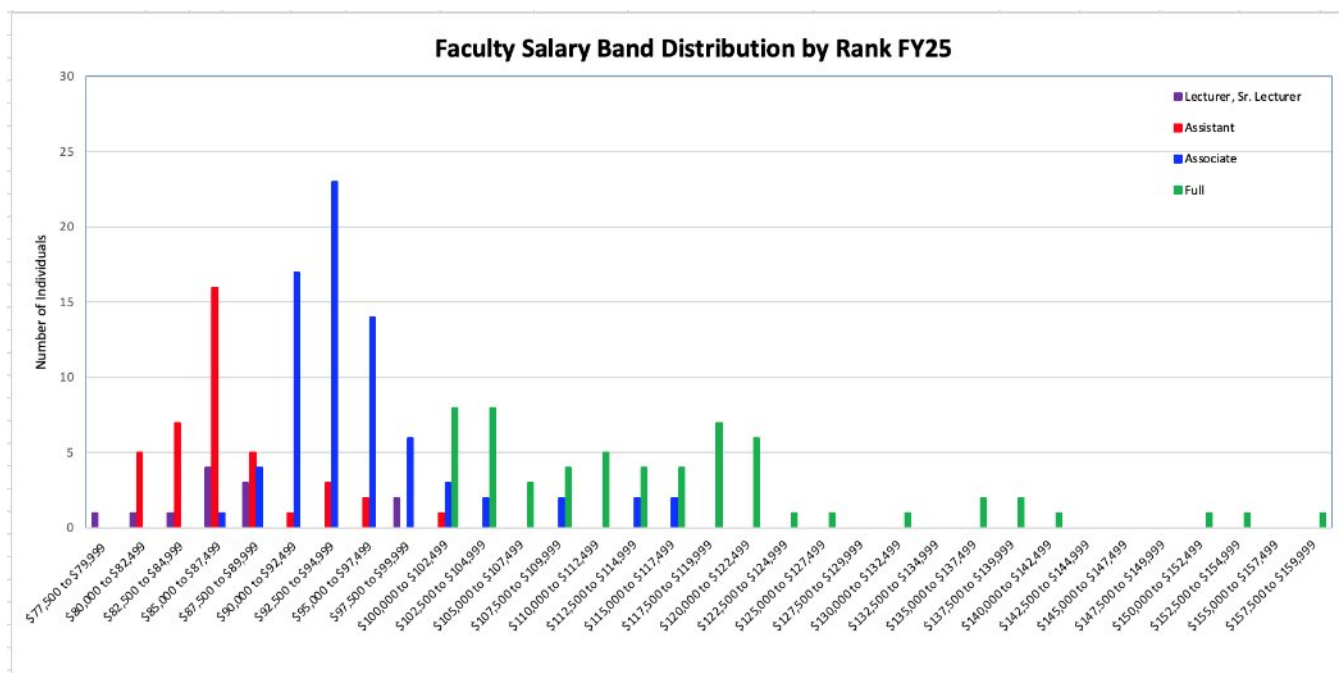
### Challenge 1. Salary stagnation

Over the last decade, faculty salaries have not kept up with rates of inflation. From FY 11 (2010-11) to FY 24 (2023-2024) the average annual rate of Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation was 2.7% while the average annual increase in the faculty salary pool during this period was 2.1%. Most recently, from FY 18 to FY24 the average annual inflation rate was 3.7% while the faculty salary pool increased, on average, 1.6% annually. The real purchasing power of Dickinson faculty salaries has eroded substantially over the past decade and that erosion has accelerated over the past six years.

Among tenured and tenure-track faculty, salaries at all three ranks have fallen further behind the long-standing goal of 90% of AAUP IIB institutions (see Figure 2 from [2023 salary study](#)). Salaries of Associate and Full Professors have remained flat for over a decade. Salaries for non-tenure-track faculty, including adjunct instructors and lecturers, have also stagnated over this period and are currently lower than those at many peer institutions in the region (see recommendations on adjunct stipends below). Less competitive salaries have made it challenging to recruit and retain a high-quality and diverse faculty and, as the task force's listening sessions confirmed, severely dampened faculty morale and belief in the institution. In listening sessions and narrative summaries salary and compensation issues were often cited as contributing to low morale.

### Challenge 2. Salary compression

Salary compression is the pattern that results when starting salaries increase more aggressively (to competitively recruit talented new colleagues) than the year-over-year increases of faculty already employed at the College. Salary compression is evident in overlapping salary bands of faculty at different ranks (see below), but other patterns contribute to this overlap as well. Unequal salary “bumps” at promotion to Associate and Full Professor create different entry salaries at Associate and Full. Also, faculty spend varied lengths of time at each rank, but differences in years spent at the rank of Associate Professor (with uniform cost-of-living increases) create significant overlap between salaries of Associate and Full Professors. Finally, over the past ten years, elevated starting salaries (of about \$5,000) in market-driven fields have contributed to Assistant Professor salaries that outpace those of Associates.



Incremental efforts have been made to alleviate salary compression. For example, in several years a small percentage of the salary pool has been targeted to specific bands of faculty, e.g. those at particular ranks or those who missed out on standard promotion raises in lean years. However, salary compression will continue to worsen as long as the salaries of Associate and Full Professors grow less aggressively than entry salaries (for Assistant Professors) increase.

### Challenge 3. A lack of performance-based rewards and incentives

Up until a few years ago, the College employed a step-based compensation system for faculty salaries. Junior faculty received annual one-step increases, as long as they continued to meet or exceed expectations during their semi-annual reviews on the tenure track. Senior faculty members in good standing could expect to receive a one-step increase every other year. These one-step raises were termed “merit” raises.

The first signs of strain in this system became evident during the Great Recession of 2008. Ensuing financial pressures triggered a pay freeze for AY 2009-2010 and for nearly a decade the step salary system remained in name only, with faculty receiving no merit raises whatsoever, until it was eventually abandoned. By this time, the past routinization of an every-other-year increase in faculty salaries based on faculty “merit” had already produced a sense that the institution did not value faculty achievement and excellence.

As highlighted in the FPC Subcommittee on Faculty Salaries [report](#), department chairs have historically had a role in evaluating faculty performance as a part of the periodic review process. Department chairs offered recommendations to FPC regarding faculty performance in the form of “X’s” (a step raise) and “O’s” (no step raise) with the

understanding that tenured faculty who are well performing should expect to receive a step raise in alternate years. The report highlights several problems with this practice including: 1) department chairs typically rotate every three years ensuring that as Chair one will be making recommendations of a colleague who will, in the future, likely be making salary recommendations for the current Chair; 2) for context, Chairs are provided with historical salary recommendations (include for themselves). In practice this level of transparency means that colleagues can deduce which individuals offered recommended for (or against) step increases establishing the potential for *quid pro quo*. The report concluded that Chairs should not be asked give recommendations for faculty compensation, and we echo that recommendation.

#### IV. Primary Recommendations to the Provost: Faculty Salaries

##### **Recommendation: Benchmarked Salaries for Tenure-Track and Tenured Faculty**

The task force recommends a robust benchmarking system that pegs faculty salaries to an external target group. Faculty salaries across all academic divisions should be benchmarked to 90% of the American Association of University Professors Category IIB (hereafter: AAUP IIB—see Appendix A). We likewise recommend a four-year implementation process and urge the College to frontload movement toward closing that gap. Specifically, we recommend that the College eliminate 50% of the current salary gap (the difference between current salaries and target salaries, according to years at rank) in the first year; and 85% in the second year. We recommend eliminating the salary gap entirely by the fourth year.

##### **Benchmarking Salaries to 90% AAUP, by Years at Rank: Assistant**

A possible benchmarking structure for Assistant Professors could look like this:

Assistant Professor \$93,900 = target salary					
Years at Rank	At hire:	2-3 years	4 years	5-6 years	7+ years
Percentage	90%	91-99%	100%	101-103%	103%
Range	of target	of target	of target	of target	of target
Salary Range	\$84,510	\$85,449 thru \$92,961	\$93,900	\$94,839 thru \$96,717	\$96,717

Conceptual Priorities Guiding Target Ranges, Assistant:

- Starting salary should be competitive enough to attract highly qualified candidates. We propose 90% of target.
- Assistant Professors should meet 100% of the target in Year 4, just over midway toward their 6-year tenure review.

- A junior colleague should level off at 103% of target by their 6th year. Beyond that time, salaries should rise as that target salary itself rises, not as an increased percent of that salary.
- A maximum target of 103% restores the College's capacity to provide an appropriate salary bump between Assistant and Associate ranks.

### **Benchmarking Salaries to 90% AAUP, by Years at Rank: Associate**

A possible benchmarking structure for Associate Professors could look like this:

<b>Associate Professor</b> <b>\$113,300 = target salary</b>				
<b>Years at Rank</b>	<u>1-6 years</u>	<u>7-10 years</u>	<u>11-14 years</u>	<u>15+ years</u>
<b>Percentage</b>	90-100%	101-104%	105-107%	108%
<b>Range</b>	<i>of target</i>	<i>of target</i>	<i>of target</i>	<i>of target</i>
<b>Salary Range</b>	<b>\$101,970</b> thru <b>\$113,300</b>	<b>\$114,433</b> thru <b>\$117,832</b>	<b>\$118,965</b> thru <b>\$121,231</b>	<b>\$122,364</b>

Conceptual Priorities Guiding Target Ranges, Associate:

- Entry salary to Associate status should begin far enough above the highest Assistant rank faculty member to maintain an appropriate bump between ranks. We propose an entry target of 90%.
- Associate Professors should reach 100% of target salary by their first post-tenure review. This 6-year point marks their eligibility to stand for promotion to Full Professor.
- Associate Professor salaries should increase steadily beyond the 6th year at rank and should plateau at 15 years. The 15-year threshold includes two post-tenure personnel reviews and offers colleagues an opportunity to earn an increasing percentage of target salary until Year 16.
- A maximum target of 108% preserves an appropriate bump in salary between ranks of Associate and Full, even for those who stay at the Associate level for 15 years. Beyond that time, salaries should rise only as the target salary itself rises, not as an increased percentage of that salary.



### Benchmarking Salaries to 90% AAUP, by Years at Rank: Full

A possible benchmarking structure for Full Professors could look like this:

<b>Full Professor</b> <b>\$148,600 = target salary</b>				
<b>Years at Rank</b>	<u>1-10 years</u>	<u>11-15 years</u>	<u>16-20 years</u>	<u>21+ years</u>
<b>Percentage</b>	85-99%	100-105%	106 -110%	111%
<b>Range</b>	<i>of target</i>	<i>of target</i>	<i>of target</i>	<i>of target</i>
<b>Salary Range</b>	<b>\$126,310</b> thru <b>\$147,114</b>	<b>\$148,600</b> thru <b>\$156,030</b>	<b>\$157,516</b> thru <b>\$163,460</b>	<b>\$164,946</b>

Conceptual Priorities Guiding Target Ranges, Full:

- This range starts below the others, because faculty should ideally spend most of their career in this final phase. We propose an entry target of 85%. This target preserves an appropriate bump between ranks.
- Full Professor salaries should reach the 100% target at 10 years at rank. This places the 100% target midway between entry and the threshold target at Year 21.
- Full Professor salaries should grow most aggressively at the start of a faculty member's years at Full and then grow less quickly. We propose increasing by 15% during first 10 years at rank and then by 10% for subsequent 10 years. This ensures that Full Professors increase their earnings potential early in their time at rank, which will benefit faculty members who take longer to get to the status of Full and spend relatively less time at this rank before retirement. This percentage of increase also recognizes that this is the highest and final promotion that a faculty member can earn at the College.
- Full Professor salaries should max out after 20 years at rank. These salaries will continue to increase as the AAUP target salaries increase, but these faculty will not earn an ever-increasing percentage of that rising salary.

### Recommendation: Benchmarked Salaries for Part-Time and Non-Tenured Full-Time Faculty

The task force recommends raising stipends for Adjunct Instructors and pegging salaries of non-tenure-track faculty to entry tenure-track salaries so that all salaries in the faculty salary structure increase together.

**Adjunct Stipends:** At \$4,600 per FTE (regardless of instruction credentials or experience), Dickinson pays adjunct colleagues at a lower rate than some nearby institutions, and at a higher rate than others. Gettysburg compensates adjuncts from \$6,000-\$6,500 depending on degree or experience; Franklin and Marshall pays \$7,000 to \$7,800 depending on experience; and Elizabethtown pays at a lower rate than \$4,600 per course. The College

should increase the adjunct stipend to \$5,500 per FTE for adjunct colleagues who have taught 1-8 semesters at the college, and \$6,000 per FTE for colleagues who have taught more than eight semesters at the College.

**VAP Salaries:** Given that over the past nine years, starting VAP salaries have ranged from 71% of starting TT salaries, to 80% of those salaries, the task force should recommend that the College set starting target salaries at 75% of tenure-track salaries. As entry tenure-track salaries increase, so will entry VAP salaries. It is reasonable that the VAP role earns 75% of the tenure-track role, given that visiting contracts do not have any expectation of advising, research, or service.

**Lecturer Salaries:** At the College, lecturers (and, when promoted: senior lecturers) teach 6 courses per year, advise students, serve on college-wide committees, and engage in service to their department. Currently, starting lecturer salaries are 87% of starting TT salaries. The task force should recommend to the College that entry lecturer salaries are pegged at 90% of entry tenure-track salaries. Because lecture roles have only two ranks, once lecturers are promoted to senior lecturers, their salaries should be benchmarked at 90% of Associate Professor salaries and remain benchmarked to that rank.

**Visiting Instructor and Visiting Lecturer Salaries:** This group of employees is much smaller than other groups—there are currently seven colleagues working in this role. These colleagues have either a Master's degree or terminal degree and teach 6 courses per year. They do not have advising, research, or College-wide service commitments, though they often participate generously in the life of their departments. This role is in some ways like a VAP (it is a non-permanent role without advising, research, or College-wide service expectations) and in some ways like a lecturer (a long-term position, teaching a 6-course load, in which a terminal degree is not required). Given that five colleagues currently in this role have been at the College for more than 10 years, the task force recommends benchmarking salaries for those colleagues to 90% of starting TT salaries. Salaries for new visiting instructors or visiting lecturers or those who have been at the College for 1 or 2 years should be benchmarked at 80% of starting TT salaries.

**Market-Driven Salaries:** At Dickinson, the College has deemed it necessary to offer higher starting salaries in order to successfully recruit tenure-track faculty in particular disciplines—Computer Science, Data Analytics, Economics, and International Business and Management. Differences between starting salaries in these “market-driven” departments has ranged from \$1,000 to \$9,000, with an average of about \$5,000. The task force recommends against offering elevated starting salaries within market-driven departments. With aggressive benchmarking practices, starting salaries across the College, even in market-driven fields should become competitive enough to recruit, hire, and retain talented faculty in these areas. We recommend further observation to see whether robust benchmarking might address differentials between market-driven entry salaries and others across the College.

## **Recommendation: Fund Term Chairs, Fellowships, and Awards to Recognize Faculty Achievement in Teaching, Research, and Service**

Faculty excellence takes many forms at Dickinson and deserves recognition in the form of a robust set of enhancements to the benchmarking system. Accordingly, the task force recommends that the College create a system of rotating term chairs and professorships, year-long fellowships, and annual awards that recognize outstanding faculty achievement in teaching, research, service, and the many forms of invisible labor that make Dickinson a world-class liberal arts college.

In recommending a benchmarking system for faculty compensation, the task force proceeds from the recognition that Dickinson faculty are committed liberal-arts educators and mentors who contribute vital service to the College and who shape their fields through research, creative projects, scholarship, and public-facing work. At the same time—and in keeping with common practice at ambitious liberal arts colleges—Dickinson should commit to creating enhancements to the benchmarking system that recognize faculty members' outstanding achievement and/or contribution to the College community. We are inspired in this recommendation by the Provost's recent initiatives for faculty fellowships, on which the College can and should build.

The system of enhancements allows Dickinson to celebrate and meaningfully to reward exceptional achievement, broadly defined. Because each form of enhancement would either rotate or be awarded annually, the system also allows more than one faculty member and more diverse kinds of achievement to be recognized year over year. Finally, each enhancement carries either a one-time cash prize or, for term chairs and professorships, a yearly stipend of at least \$5,000 for the duration of the term.

The set of term chairs/professorships, fellowships, and awards requires funding that might be raised through an Advancement initiative with intellectual specificity and intention. While these suggestions can be honed through discussions among Academic Affairs staff, the Faculty Personnel Committee, and department chairs, we suggest that the College establish:

- Rotating endowed chairs or professorships with fixed terms of three to five years—e.g., “term chairs”—that include a yearly stipend of at least \$5,000, discretionary research funds, and, where feasible, an accelerated sabbatical cycle. These term chairs or professorships can be titled broadly as “of the humanities, of the social sciences,” etc. Or, as with the recent creation of the Kalaris Chair in the History of Science, they might lift up and make more visible the inter- and cross-divisional work that Dickinson faculty do.
- Early-career fixed-term professorships for junior faculty that include a minimum \$5000 annual stipend and access to discretionary funds for research and/or creative work.

- A robust and diverse array of one-time awards for faculty. Modeled on the Distinguished Teaching Award, these awards would carry a cash prize and be designed to recognize work the College values but that we do not always make visible--e.g., an award for distinguished service, an award to recognize the many forms of invisible faculty labor on which a world-class institution relies.
- Create at least three fellowships for outstanding advising and mentoring, each to be held for a year and to afford the recipient one course reassigned time and a stipend in recognition of their developmental work with our students.
- Competitive partial sabbatical support through which three or more Assistant or Associate Professors per year receive 75% salary for a full-year sabbatical. Building on the recent change to sabbatical salary options, this enhancement would offer further pre-tenure and mid-career faculty support—and recognition for outstanding achievement—in the form of more financially accessible full-year sabbaticals.

### **A pivot away from merit-based financial compensation**

Merit-based compensation systems are popular in many economic sectors. Merit pay is a strategy employed to recruit and retain productive, talented workers. In many organizations, including some higher ed institutions, merit pay functions as both an incentive and reward.

However, the task force unanimously agreed that instituting a true merit-based pay system is not a good fit for Dickinson College. Arguments against a merit-based system include:

- Problems of measurement—Connecting research production to the College's compensation system would emphasize quantity of over quality in a way discordant with the College values.
- Cultural mismatch—Literature identifies cultures of competition or division, and of increased mistrust, associated merit-based compensation system. Informed by our readings, discussion, and listening sessions, the task force found that the risk of undermining collegiality at our liberal arts college was greater than the limited rewards of a true merit-based system. A robust benchmarking system that would prioritize lifting all boats is best suited for a faculty climate where excellence is already expected.
- Faculty Workload—The task force identified the Faculty Personnel Committee as the entity best-suited to assess faculty "merit," but FPC personnel reviews occur every six years (for tenured faculty). Increasing the frequency of these personnel reviews would come at a considerable cost of FPC's time and energies.
- Intrinsic motivation: Literature suggests—and our experience at Dickinson confirms—that most academics are intrinsically motivated. Merit pay has not been

shown to incentivize faculty in academia as powerfully as it can incentivize professionals in other economic sectors.

- Small percentage increases not compatible with merit-based system: Even when merit-based compensation systems align with institutional cultures, literature suggests that merit pay increases be large enough to motivate increased productivity or performance. With annual raises between 2-3%, funds assigned to merit pay would be small. If merit pay increases are trivial, they will not be effective.

## Appendix A: Benchmarking as a Process, AAUP IIB as a Target Group

**What is a salary benchmarking system?** As a compensation strategy, benchmarking is a practice of pegging the salary of one role or group to the target salary of another group, at a particular percentage of that target, so that as the target salary increases, so does the salary for that role or group. In higher education, faculty salaries are benchmarked by rank, and sometimes by academic department. At Dickinson, starting salaries are nearly uniform across disciplines (see discussion of market-based salaries in subsequent section). We therefore recommend benchmarking Dickinson faculty salaries by rank only, a practice that would align with our institution's values and current compensation practices.

**What is the AAUP IIB?** This is large, heterogenous group of schools (over 200). It includes smaller, liberal arts colleges and regional universities that primarily serve undergraduate students. Some of these institutions offer graduate programs, but not at a significant scale, relative to their undergraduate population. AAUP IIB colleges focus primarily on teaching, rather than research.<sup>1</sup>

**Why the AAUP IIB?** The task force is confident that this is the most appropriate group to which to benchmark Dickinson faculty salaries. Because it is a large, heterogeneous group, it has greater stability over time. Forces that impact a particular type of institution will be more muted with this set of schools than for a group with a narrower range of institutions. Furthermore, the list of schools is public, and inclusion criteria are also public. And importantly: this is the list against which College administrators have been comparing Dickinson salaries (in public forums) for decades.

**Why 90%?** This is an ambitious and robust target benchmark appropriate for faculty salaries that have for so long remained nearly stagnant and suited to an excellent liberal arts college. We recommend a four-year implementation process and urge the College to frontload movement towards closing that gap. This would involve eliminating 50% of the current salary gap (the difference between current salaries and target salaries, according to years at rank) in the first year; 85% by in the second year; and eliminating the salary gap entirely by the fourth year.

**Target salaries by year at rank:** Benchmarked to 90% AAUP IIB, faculty will earn a fixed percent of target salary, according to their years at rank, as described in the previous section.

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<sup>1</sup> From AAUP website: "Institutions characterized by their primary emphasis on general undergraduate baccalaureate-level education and not significantly engaged in postbaccalaureate education. Included in this category are institutions that are not considered specialized and in which the number of postbaccalaureate degrees granted is fewer than thirty annually or in which fewer than three post-baccalaureate-level programs are offered and that either (a) grant baccalaureate degrees in three or more program areas, or (b) offer a baccalaureate program in interdisciplinary studies.." For other category descriptions, see AAUP [website](#).