



# UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

May 23, 2016

Dear faculty member,

The proposed faculty salary policy (FSP) is likely the most consequential change to the UW Faculty Code that we will vote on during our careers. Therefore, it is important to educate yourself and vote.

**We believe that this controversial proposal will be detrimental to many academic units and individual faculty, and we strongly urge you to vote NO.**

**Vote NO by June 10** at 5 pm at: <https://catalyst.uw.edu/webq/survey/secfac/304809>.

We are in support of the overall goal of achieving greater salary equity and reducing salary compression for senior faculty. However, the proposed policy which began with those goals has evolved into such a complex policy it will be too resource-intensive to implement and will not accomplish the goals we set out to achieve.

**Arguments against the proposal** (with supporting details below):

1. An opt-in mechanism would be preferable to the proposed opt-out. Units will have to comply with some burdensome provisions even if they "opt out."
2. The proposal will not increase salaries overall, but simply redistribute salaries within units.
3. The proposal will harm UWT, UWB, the professional schools, and others. Clinical faculty at the medical school will be affected in unpredictable ways.
4. Regular merit salary increases will cease.
5. We will create winners and losers.
6. Many academic units face risks because of activity-based budgeting.
7. UW has many differences compared to the UC system. We are not UC.
8. The proposal has great potential for divisiveness.
9. Costs are high to implement proposal, and alternatives will be simpler.
10. The 51-page proposal contains vague and contradictory language.
11. The final stages of the process have been rushed, and we need more time.
12. There was considerable opposition and controversy in the Faculty Senate.

**1. Preferability of opt-in mechanism compared to opt-out proposal.** We recognize and understand that our fellow faculty members in many of UW's academic units desire a salary policy that better addresses their short- and long-term needs. We would gladly support a policy that allows academic units to opt in. **However, the proposed FSP tosses out the existing salary policy and institutes a new system, allowing units to opt out of some, but not all, of the provisions.** Faculty in many units would be better protected within the current system rather than going through a time-consuming

and resource-intensive process to negotiate individual unit salary frameworks with the deans and the provost. There are no specified criteria to for approval of alternate frameworks.

**2. No increase in available funds for salaries.** This proposal does not increase the pool of available money for salaries. If anything, it appears that while some specific ranks may gain ground on their salaries -- it may come at the expense of others. Who will "win" and who will "lose?" We have no information that this salary policy has been modeled to show what happens to those less in power/stature/rank. This includes long-serving faculty (such as those in the lecturer track), who make important contributions to the University but are not always recognized for their work due to various circumstances. This new policy may actually widen the gap between classes of faculty in the long run. Further, the deans retain discretion for "financial hardship" as a rationale not to award tier advancements in a given year. We believe this creates too much vulnerability and keeps the power to award raises with deans rather than with faculty as originally intended by the new policy.

**3. Harm to UWT, UWB, the professional schools, and others. We believe that faculty in many academic units, including UWT, UWB, the professional schools, and others will be hurt by the proposed FSP.** The policy may benefit some schools and campuses more than others. Discussions in the Faculty Senate have made it clear that the proposed FSP suits faculty members in some schools, but the UW has a diverse range of schools, colleges, and campuses. **Unpredictable effect on medical school clinical faculty:** It is unclear how the proposed FSP will affect the UW Physicians component of the salary for clinical faculty in the medical school, and we have not been able to obtain an answer. With funding for salaries, and overall oversight for raises and promotions managed by at least two entities (clinical and academic), the proposed FSP creates complexities and potentially barriers when negotiating with the hospitals. Critically, a unit's ability to reduce raises will diminish its leverage when negotiating with funders, such as hospitals.

**4. Loss of regular merit increases.** The policy removes the 2% annual raise for regular merit. Faculty who don't receive tier advancements will be entitled only to a market-adjustment raise, capped at 4%. Since 2006, CPI has ranged from -.4 to 3.8. The policy arguably supersedes any individual right to a legislative general salary increase that exceeds the market-adjustment raise.

**5. Winners and losers.** The UW will no longer have one salary policy: some units will customize raise formulas or opt out of tiers. This hodgepodge will undermine faculty unity and the power of numbers to advocate for competitive compensation. We believe that the winners under the activity-based budgeting system (ABB) will go sailing on to a bright future while many other entities slowly sink. Prosperous units will not advocate for poor cousins. That may be what has to happen to preserve excellence in some units, but we would have preferred to approach the subject directly rather than through what

we see as a backdoor of salary policy. Non-STEM fields might be most severely affected.

**6. Risks to many academic units.** With activity-based budgeting (ABB), many units are at risk of not being able to support this policy financially – such as those with high growth mandates, those subject to variations in student enrollment/demand based on market/economic/competition, and those with very few retiring (supposedly "high earning") faculty. If inflation exceeds 2%, or many faculty accelerate tier advancements, some units will face hard choices. Without an ample supply of retirees, increasing tuition, or other funding, an academic unit can prevent salary compression only with cuts, including hiring and retentions. These units may not be able to honor the salary increases promised in the model as there is not an adequate pool of funds gained through salary recovery. Without customization, the policy ignores compression for faculty who exhaust tiers or whose salaries pass the 8% cap for tier raises (based on the average UW-base, 12-month-prorated, TT and WOT full-professors' salaries – now about \$175,000).

**7. Differences with UC.** The FSP is modeled on the University of California system, but historically UC has had stronger state support than the UW, and UC faculty are employees of the UC system, which has discretion to set tuition. We are employees of the State of Washington, and the UW does not have tuition authority, leaving us even more vulnerable to state funding decisions. Tier-advancement and market-adjustment raises will be no more guaranteed than regular and additional merit raises are now. The proponents argue the UC system's step raises have been inviolable. They ignore another explanation – California's historical big investment in its universities. (Even so, UC has recently experienced drastic budget cuts, salary freezes, and/or unpaid furloughs.) Our core problem has been, and remains, funding. The proposal permits tier-raise deferrals for "severe financial stress" in an academic unit (not just the whole UW). When the stress ends, the raise is not retroactive. So, a faculty member could work four years for a tier-advancement and then wait several more years for an 8% non-retroactive raise.

**8. Divisiveness.** You are asked to vote now without knowing what policy your unit may adopt. That depends on what a majority of your faculty, your dean or chair, and the provost, approve. You may spend several years negotiating your unit's custom policy. The policy that has not even been voted into the code, but many units are already writing their "opt out" proposals. The "opt out" options are unclear, have unknown potential for "gaming" within and across units, and frankly, has the potential to create tensions across units. This may further divide the University rather than help build a strong University for our future.

**9. Increased costs with little benefit.** The proposal imposes costs for minimal benefit. Estimated central costs are \$2 million initially and \$.5 million ongoing. The mandatory raises (market adjustments plus tier advancements) approximate the current 4% annual

raise only if inflation reaches 2%. There are other potential salary mechanisms that can be put in place that are much more simple in design – with less work to execute. We must be allowed to consider these.

**10. Vague, contradictory language.** The 51-page FSP proposal is dense, complex, and the language is often imprecise or contradictory. There is concern that adjudications would increase and be difficult to support or defend, which may lead to disputes that will burn up time, money and morale. Criteria for tier advancements are vague and inconsistent. (See, for example, sections 24-35H and 24-61D). They hover between requiring “continuing high achievement” versus performance “typical” of a faculty member at that career stage in that field – whatever that means! Tier advancements can be sped up, delayed, or denied, raising questions about how a review committee will assess whether a faculty member is ahead, somewhat behind, or far behind some amorphous and variable standard. The ambiguous language obfuscates the key issue of whether tier advancements reward only high performance, especially post-tenure, or whether they are a quasi-entitlement for everyone performing satisfactorily. This ambiguity invites manipulation, unequal treatment, disputes, and financial uncertainty

**11. More time needed to consider the proposal.** We believe that faculty members supporting the FSP have good intentions, yet we disagree on the best means to the end. We feel that the most recent version of the proposal has been rushed: just 45 minutes in the Faculty Senate to consider a 51-page document. Because of the short-circuited process, there are likely unintended consequences that have not been considered. We must be afforded the necessary time to get this policy right. We are concerned, especially given so many last minute changes, about not giving the faculty enough time to learn the details and allow them to determine the repercussions of this policy at their unit. Something of this scope and magnitude takes time. In most other democratic voting arenas people are given the details, allowed to look at a bill in its final form for a reasonable amount of time, and evaluate it carefully prior to voting. The general faculty are being rushed to vote – at the end of the quarter, no less – and to vote on something they may have not time to have carefully read and considered. **Proponents have been advocating for versions of this proposal for years, but the counter-arguments have not been aired until this month’s Senate meeting.**

**12. Considerable opposition and controversy.** Although you wouldn’t know it from the comments of the FSP supporters, the most recent vote in the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) was close (initially 7-6-1, not an affirmative majority), and the vote had to be called a second time in the SEC for it to gain a narrow majority. The Faculty Senate vote (47 Yes, 29 No, 4 Abstentions – out of 139 voting members) clearly indicates that there are still major concerns over the FSP proposal. After three years of debates, revisions, and re-votes, many informed individuals stand against the proposal. A number of SEC members and other Senate members indicated that they oppose the proposed FSP policy but support sending it to the faculty for a vote. If this salary policy was truly designed for the future benefit of ALL faculty, why are so many opposed?

In sum, we ask you to become informed about this proposal and consider your vote. It is important that ALL faculty vote on this proposal if possible, and **we encourage you to vote NO.**

We prefer a simpler approach to accomplish the important goals this policy set out to achieve.

Sincerely,

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