

The Value of Faculty Unions (Literally)

Putting aside all the work that faculty unions are doing in 2022 to keep students safe during a pandemic, to preserve academic freedom and tenure and protect educators from partisan attacks, and to ensure the best possible college education for all students, of all races, in all places—faculty unions also are doing this: Fighting for fair pay.

And the data is clear. In 2021, as in all the years before, full-time faculty in unions are paid more than non-union faculty *in the same states*. In other words, when faculty sit down at the bargaining table, in unity, they have a powerful voice.

Across the board, faculty in unions earn about \$5,000 more than non-unionized faculty in the same states. They earn \$17,000 more than faculty in states without faculty unions.

Figure 1, shown here, uses full-time faculty salary data, collected and published by the federal government,¹ to show average faculty salaries for public institutions in the U.S. in 2020-2021: first, with faculty collective bargaining agreements; second, without faculty collective bargaining agreements, but located in the same states as institutions with faculty unions; and third, in states without any faculty collective bargaining agreements.

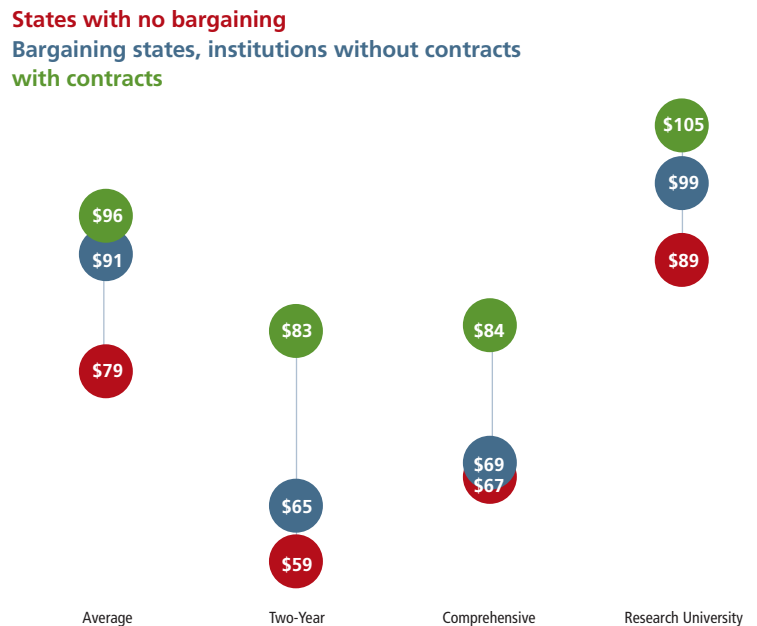
What is apparent is: At public institutions where faculty collectively bargain, faculty earn more money.

The biggest difference is at community colleges and other 2-year institutions, where union faculty earn an additional \$18,000, or 27 percent more, than their peers in the same states. The difference is smallest, but still significant, at research universities where union members earn \$6,000 more than faculty in the same states.

And that's not all—the presence of unions also is related to the closure of gender gaps. For example, unionized institutions are more likely to have women in the most highly paid ranks of full professors.² Unions also mean workers, in general, are more likely to have health insurance, pensions, and paid time off. Recently, during the pandemic, faculty unions ensured safety measures, like access to protective equipment, and negotiated for paid medical leave and furloughs.

FIGURE 1. THE PRESENCE OF A FACULTY CONTRACT IS CORRELATED WITH HIGHER SALARIES.

Salaries for faculty in public institutions (in thousands), 2020-21.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary Data, 2020-21.

¹ ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary Data, 2020-2021.

² May, A.M., Moorhouse, E.A., & Bossard, J.A. (2010). Representation of women faculty at public research universities: do unions matter? *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 63(4): July 2010. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/ilrreview/vol63/iss4/8>.