Faculty Pay After the Pandemic:

Modest Gains, Lasting Losses

President Trump's administration and the accompanying federal policy shifts have reshaped the operating environment for colleges and universities, framing this year's edition of NEA's Higher Education Faculty Salary Report. Although the analysis that follows focuses on trends in faculty salaries, readers must understand these trends in relation to broader policy decisions that directly affect faculty work and compensation. The federal government has increased scrutiny of academic programs, spurring intensified debates over academic freedom and changes to compliance expectations, which has contributed to an uncertain and politicized higher education landscape.[1] At the same time, disruptions and constraints in federal research funding, particularly at research-intensive institutions, have affected the external grants that some faculty rely on for salaries, summer pay, or continued employment, making long-term financial planning more difficult for both institutions and faculty.[2,3]

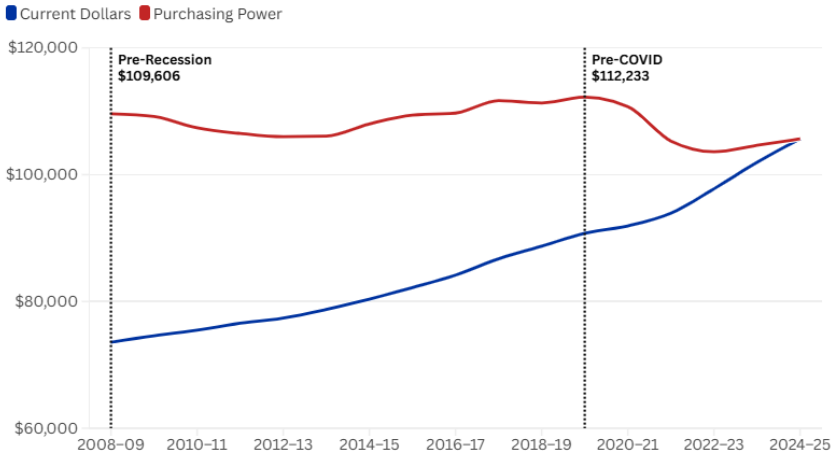
Broader policy changes have also influenced faculty hiring and affected workforce stability. Shifts away from using diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) hiring criteria coupled with stricter visa and immigration restrictions for international faculty and graduate researchers have altered recruitment pipelines and reduced research capacity.[4,5] Many institutions have been forced to impose hiring freezes, reduce tenure-track lines, or rely more heavily on contingent faculty due to financial stress driven by funding uncertainty and enrollment challenges.[6] This context is critical when interpreting current faculty salary levels and trends, underscoring that compensation is increasingly shaped by not only institutional priorities but also the evolving federal policy landscape.

This report analyzes trends in faculty salaries for the 2024–2025 academic year, examining differences by rank, gender, institution type, sector, and collective bargaining status.

Purchasing Power: Post-Pandemic Recovery Versus Long-Term Erosion

The average salary for nine- and ten-month faculty in 2024–2025 was $105,657, a 3.6 percent increase over 2023–2024. With a 2.6 percent inflation rate, this translates into a modest 1.0 percent gain in faculty purchasing power.[7] Despite this improvement, average salaries in 2024–2025 remained below prior inflation-adjusted peaks. For example, the 2024–2025 average salary remained below both the pre-pandemic purchasing-power high of $112,233 in 2019–2020 and the earlier peak of $109,606 just before the Great Recession in 2008–2009 (Figure 1). Overall, faculty purchasing power in 2024–2025 was 5.9 percent below its pre-pandemic high, and the recent gains did not fully reverse longer-term erosion.

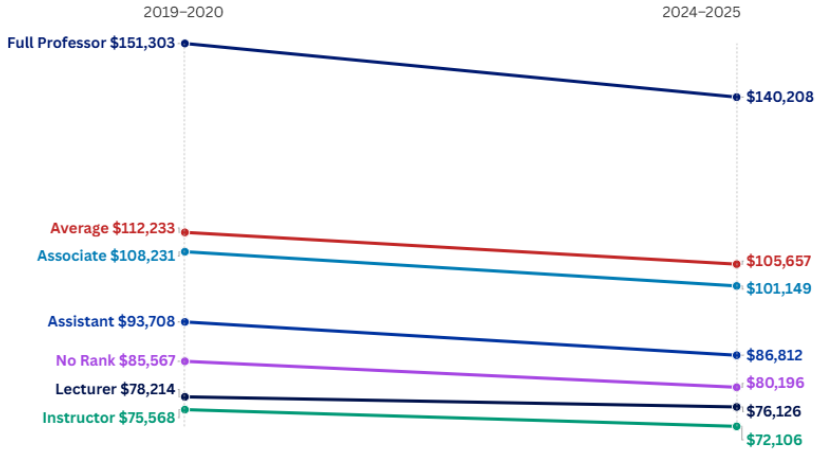
Figure 1. Purchasing power in 2024–2025 was less than both the pre-COVID and the pre-recessionary highs.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2008–2009 to 2024–2025.

No faculty rank was spared from a reduction in purchasing power due to the surge in inflation during the pandemic period. Since the most recent pre-pandemic peak, full, associate, and assistant professors experienced declines of roughly 7 percent. Faculty with no rank, instructors, and lecturers saw declines of 6 percent, 5 percent, and 3 percent, respectively (Figure 2).[8]

Figure 2. Across all ranks, faculty lost purchasing power since the pre-pandemic high.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2008–2009 to 2024–2025.

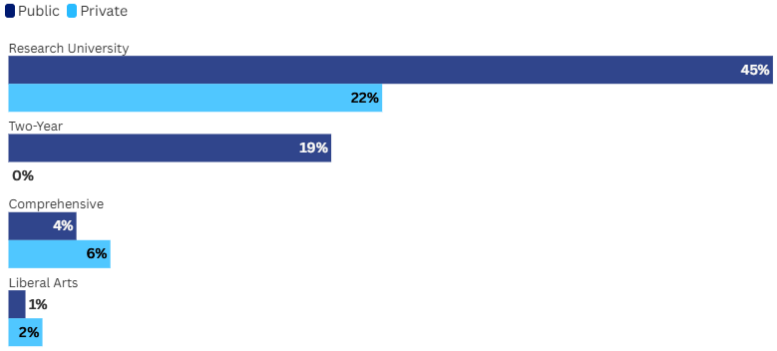
When comparing to 2023–2024, nearly all faculty ranks saw slight increases in purchasing power, with gains ranging from 0.3 percent for assistant professors to 1.6 percent for lecturers in 2024–2025. In contrast, instructors experienced a 0.7 percent decline over the same period.

Available sources indicate that one-year salary increases for all workers in 2025 ranged from 3.5 to 3.8 percent, a rate comparable to the average increase in faculty salaries.[9]

The Faculty Workforce: Rank, Employment Status, and Tenure

In 2024–2025, 604,589 full-time faculty were employed across 2,925 public and private nonprofit institutions nationwide, and student enrollment increased by about 3 percent. Since 2023–2024, full-time faculty increased by 4,491, representing a slight increase, less than 1 percent.[10]

Figure 3a. Nearly 70 percent of faculty worked at public institutions, and a majority of faculty across sectors worked at research universities.

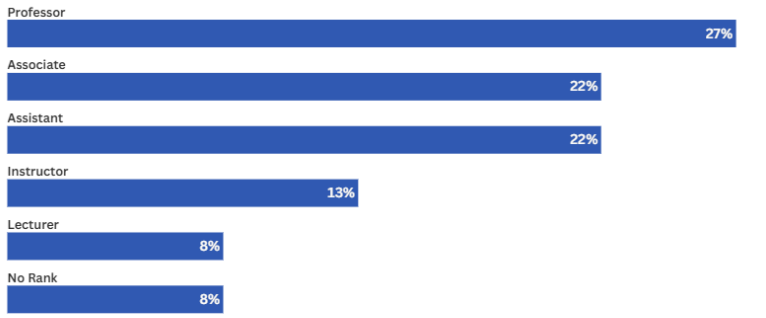


Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025.

The distribution of faculty by rank and institution type has remained steady, as it has for decades. In 2024–2025, about 7-in-10 faculty (69 percent) taught at public institutions, with nearly half (45 percent) in public research universities and almost one-fifth (19 percent) in public two-year institutions (Figure 3a); slightly more than one-fifth (22 percent) taught at private research universities. The remaining 13 percent of faculty are spread across public and private comprehensive institutions and liberal arts colleges.

By rank, 71 percent of faculty held the position of full, associate, or assistant professor—a share that has remained unchanged for nearly a decade (Figure 3b). However, in 2001–2002, 88 percent of faculty held one of these professorial ranks, representing a 17 percentage-point decline over roughly 25 years.[11] Faculty in these ranks are the most likely to be tenured or on the tenure track.

Figure 3b. Nearly 70 percent of faculty were full, associate, or assistant professors, which are all categories that most likely had tenure or were on tenure track.

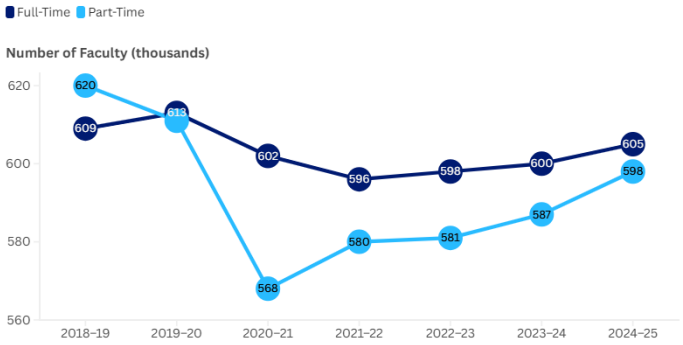


Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025.

More than one-quarter (27 percent) of faculty were full professors, while associate and assistant professors each accounted for 22 percent. Faculty with no rank and lecturers each comprised 8 percent, and instructors made up the remaining 13 percent.

Faculty were a near-even split between full-time and part-time positions, like pre-pandemic levels, with each group comprising about half of the total workforce (Figure 4). However, during the height of the pandemic, overall faculty employment declined, with part-time faculty experiencing the steepest losses. Although they remain below pre-pandemic levels, both groups have rebounded in recent years, showing similar numbers in 2024–2025.

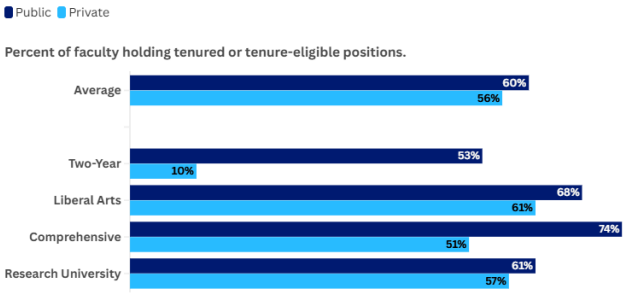
Figure 4. Full-time and part-time faculty employment (in thousands) had recovered only partially from pandemic-era declines.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Fall Staff and Salary data, 2019–2020 to 2024–2025.

On average, 60 percent of faculty teaching in public institutions and 56 percent in private institutions had tenure or were on the tenure track (Figure 5). Across all institution types, faculty at public institutions were more likely than their counterparts in the private sector to have tenure or be on a tenure track. Public comprehensive institutions had the highest share of tenure or tenure-track faculty (74 percent), while private two-year institutions had the lowest share (10 percent). At public research universities, 61 percent of faculty held tenure or were on the tenure track, slightly more than the 57 percent teaching at private research universities.

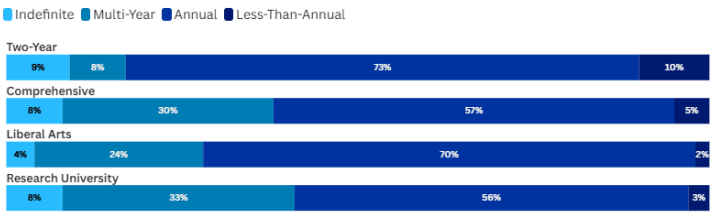
Figure 5. Faculty at public institutions were more likely to have tenure or be on track for tenure than those at private institutions for all institution types.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Staff data, 2024–2025.

Faculty working without tenure and not on the tenure track held a range of contract types, including the more desirable multi-year or indefinite contracts, annual contracts, and the least desirable less-than-annual contracts. Approximately 286,000 full-time faculty (41 percent) were non-tenured in 2024–2025. At public two-year institutions, 1-in-10 non-tenured faculty held less-than-annual contracts, while one-quarter to one-third of non-tenured faculty across all four-year institution types (comprehensive institutions, liberal arts colleges, and research universities) held multi-year contracts (Figure 6). Nearly three-quarters of non-tenured faculty at public two-year institutions had annual contracts, compared with just more than one-half at research universities.

Figure 6. Most faculty were on annual contracts.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Staff data, 2024–2025.

A Closer Look at Faculty Salaries, 2024–2025

In 2024–2025, the average salary for faculty on nine- and ten-month contracts was $105,657, which was the second year in a row that the average was above $100,000.[12] Despite this increase, the differences in salary persisted across several variables. The following analysis examines faculty salaries by rank, sector, institution type, gender, state, and discipline. Additionally, this analysis examines how unions affect faculty salary, the discrepancies between HBCUs and non-HBCUs, and the variations in graduate assistant pay.[13]

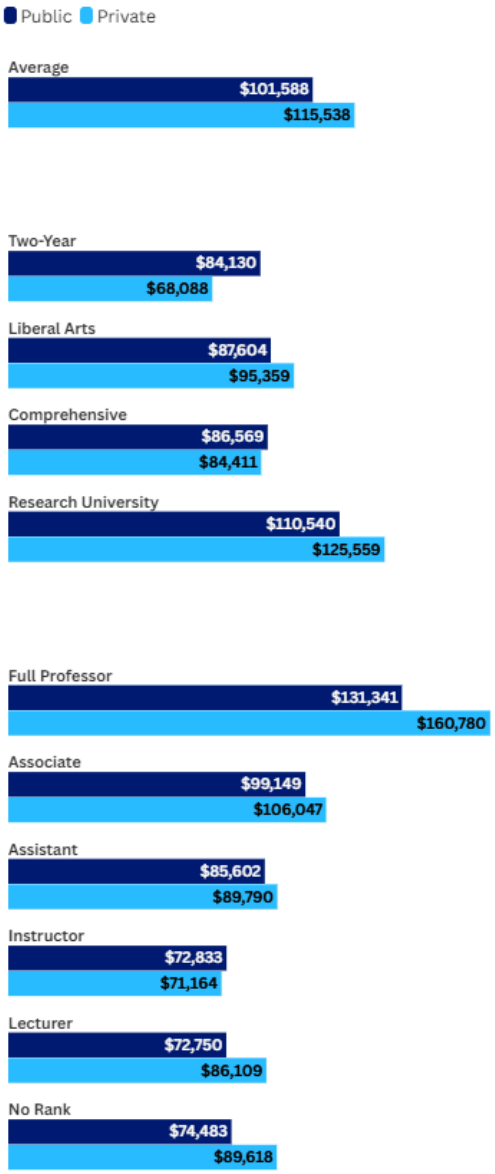
Academic Rank, Sector, and Institution Type

Salaries vary based on faculty rank, institution type, and sector, with faculty at private institutions generally earning more than their counterparts at public institutions.

Long-standing patterns existed in the salaries by faculty rank: Across public institutions, associate professors earn about 75 percent of what full professors earn; assistant professors earn about 65 percent; no-rank faculty earn 57 percent; and instructors and lecturers earn 55 percent. This trend persisted at public institutions in 2024–2025, with average salaries of $131,341 for full professors, $99,149 for associate professors, $85,602 for assistant professors, $74,483 for faculty with no rank, $72,833 for instructors, and $72,750 for lecturers (Figure 7). In the private sector, due to the extremely high salaries of full professors, the ratios were slightly smaller.

Salaries also vary by institution type. Faculty earned the most at research universities ($110,540 and $125,559 at public and private institutions, respectively), while faculty at two-year institutions earned the least ($84,130 and $68,088 at public and private institutions, respectively). Faculty at public two-year institutions earned about 76 percent of what their counterparts earned at research universities, a difference of $26,410. These relative differences have remained consistent over time.

Figure 7. Faculty rank was correlated with salary, and faculty at private institutions generally earned more than faculty at public institutions.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025.

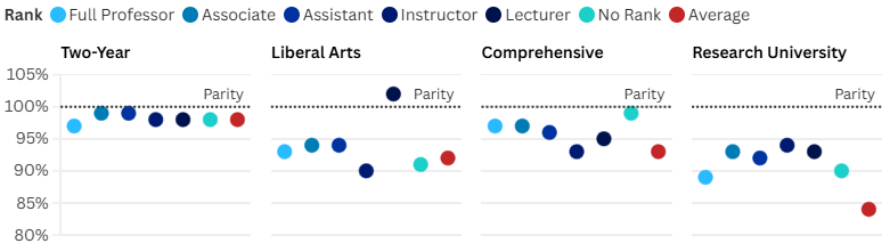
On average, faculty at private institutions earned $13,950 more than their counterparts at public institutions. The largest gap occurred among full professors, with those at private institutions earning $29,439 more than full professors at public institutions. In contrast, faculty at public two-year and comprehensive institutions earned more than their private-sector peers. This difference was especially pronounced at public two-year institutions, where faculty salaries exceeded those in the private sector by $16,042; the gap for public and private comprehensive institutions was comparatively modest, at $2,158.

Gender-Based Salary Differences

Nationally, women earned 82 percent of what men earned in 2025.[14] Women in academe earned 86 percent of what men earned, slightly higher than the national average. Not surprisingly, both institution type and faculty rank were significant factors. On average, women teaching in two-year institutions earned 98 percent of what men earned, while women at research universities earned only 84 percent (Figure 8). By rank, among the highest-paid research universities, women who were full professors earned only 89 percent of what men did. At the lower-paid lecturer and no-rank levels, salary was somewhat more equitable, with women earning 93 and 90 percent, respectively. Only women lecturers in liberal arts institutions, a sector that employs a relatively small share of faculty, earned more than their male counterparts.

Figure 8. Women earned less than men at nearly every rank and in every institution type.

Percent of men's average income earned by women

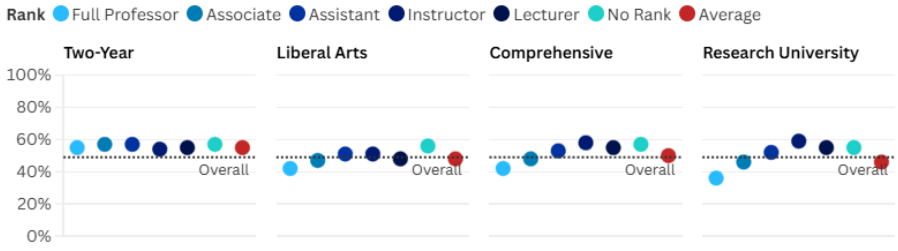


Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025.

Exacerbating the gender wage gap, women were more likely to teach at lower-paying institutions and faculty ranks. Women comprised 49 percent of all faculty but were overrepresented in two-year institutions, where they were 54 to 57 percent of faculty, depending on rank (Figure 9). Although the rate of women faculty in research universities was roughly proportional to

Figure 9. Women were more likely to work at two-year institutions and in lower-ranked positions at comprehensive and research universities.

Percent of each type of position held by women



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025. • Note: Results are for public institutions only, but private institution results were similar.

their overall representation in academe, they were underrepresented in the highest-paid professor rank, where only 36 percent of professors were women.

Salaries by State

Faculty salaries vary substantially across states due to a combination of economic, institutional, and policy factors. For instance, institutions in higher-cost states must offer higher nominal salaries to remain competitive. Public institutions in states with stronger and more stable appropriations generally had greater capacity to support higher faculty pay.[15] Labor market conditions further influenced salaries, particularly in high-demand disciplines that often compete with private industry. In addition, state laws and political environments have affected collective bargaining rights, pension and benefit structures, and the prevalence of tenure-track positions, all of which impact compensation levels. Together, these factors produced a persistent cross-state variation in faculty salaries that was not solely a reflection of institution quality or faculty productivity.

The national average salary at public four-year institutions was $107,874 in 2024–2025, marking the third consecutive year that the national average was above $100,000 (Table 1). The five states that historically have been at the top—California, New Jersey, Delaware, Hawaii, and Connecticut—remained unchanged. California has ranked first for several years, with an average salary of $143,417 in 2024–2025. A 7.5 percent increase over 2023–2024 further widened the gap between California and second-ranked New Jersey, which averaged $135,787. Notably, Nevada was the only state to increase salaries at public four-year institutions by more than 10 percent (11.7 percent) in the past year, raising its rank from 15th in 2023–2024 to 8th in 2024–2025.

Table 1. Average Salaries and Change in Salaries for Faculty on Nine-/Ten-Month Contracts, By State and Sector

	Average 2024–2025 Salary and Rank Within Sector						Percent Change in Salaries, 2023–2024 to 2024–2025		
State	Public Four-Year		Public Two-Year		Private		Public Four-Year	Public Two-Year	Private
Average	**$107,874**		**$84,065**		**$115,633**		**3.7**	**3.5**	**3.7**
Alabama	$95,008	34	$67,852	32	$71,292	38	2.9	2.2	4.9
Alaska	$91,287	39	--	--	$66,448	42	2.2	--	0.3
Arizona	$107,231	18	$86,147	14	$89,484	26	2.2	4.4	14.6
Arkansas	$77,848	51	$51,316	48	$66,344	43	2.4	2.5	3.2
California	$143,417	1	$124,488	1	$139,686	4	7.5	3.1	3.0
Colorado	$100,943	27	$72,645	22	$108,775	16	1.9	3.3	2.9
Connecticut	$123,739	5	$97,455	2	$145,380	3	3.8	4.2	5.0
Delaware	$127,037	3	$91,228	9	$117,396	11	4.1	11.4	38.6
District of Columbia	$84,981	47	--	--	$133,762	6	1.6		3.9
Florida	$111,209	12	$68,864	29	$100,563	21	3.8	3.7	5.6
Georgia	$97,435	32	$60,660	41	$97,760	24	2.4	0.4	3.7
Hawaii	$123,929	4	$91,025	10	$82,494	32	3.8	3.7	1.9
Idaho	$86,385	45	$65,639	35	$68,350	41	2.6	1.0	1.6
Illinois	$110,096	13	$93,028	5	$122,919	10	3.8	3.7	4.1
Indiana	$104,758	20	$59,336	44	$100,993	20	3.0	4.2	2.2
Iowa	$109,620	14	$69,066	28	$73,110	37	1.4	3.0	-1.3
Kansas	$91,414	38	$64,478	37	$61,019	46	1.9	4.3	2.4
Kentucky	$86,161	46	$56,967	46	$69,315	39	3.4	2.1	3.5
Louisiana	$80,816	49	$56,125	47	$99,671	23	1.6	0.3	2.8
Maine	$93,892	35	$66,879	33	$102,328	18	1.1	1.4	2.5
Maryland	$120,334	6	$87,456	13	$127,395	9	4.4	3.0	4.1
Massachusetts	$117,394	7	$78,158	17	$146,618	2	7.6	10.0	4.5
Michigan	$115,767	10	$91,877	8	$78,077	36	3.1	0.9	2.8
Minnesota	$108,503	17	$84,443	15	$87,751	29	4.0	10.2	1.8
Mississippi	$80,596	50	$57,244	45	$65,891	44	3.3	0.9	-1.1
Missouri	$92,155	37	$69,082	27	$105,867	17	3.0	2.4	3.1
Montana	$87,949	43	$60,421	42	$61,766	45	5.6	4.1	4.7
Nebraska	$98,369	29	$70,391	25	$79,892	35	2.6	3.1	2.3
Nevada	$117,188	8	$94,382	3	--		11.0	10.4	--
New Hampshire	$103,853	22	$74,240	21	$138,416	5	2.9	0.9	3.5
New Jersey	$135,787	2	$87,503	12	$149,505	1	4.9	4.0	5.5
New Mexico	$92,192	36	$67,906	31	$88,651	27	1.2	0.4	5.5
New York	$106,112	19	$92,614	7	$129,049	8	2.1	1.3	3.3
North Carolina	$101,771	26	$60,704	40	$110,363	14	3.4	3.5	3.3
North Dakota	$88,999	40	$66,128	34	$60,073	47	2.5	3.1	-2.0
Ohio	$103,567	23	$76,380	18	$84,589	31	2.6	2.7	1.2
Oklahoma	$87,987	42	$63,244	38	$81,480	34	-0.4	1.5	6.4
Oregon	$104,175	21	$94,013	4	$90,557	25	3.4	8.4	1.7
Pennsylvania	$108,951	15	$74,506	19	$114,341	12	4.3	1.8	3.1
Rhode Island	$108,626	16	$74,435	20	$131,674	7	3.2	9.9	2.7
South Carolina	$97,905	30	$61,533	39	$68,442	40	3.2	6.9	1.6
South Dakota	$87,149	44	$69,539	26	$58,297	48	3.2	5.1	-9.0
Tennessee	$95,128	33	$64,827	36	$101,038	19	3.3	2.1	3.9
Texas	$103,484	24	$72,107	23	$111,618	13	2.3	3.6	3.5
Utah	$98,950	28	$71,451	24	$108,940	15	1.7	0.9	2.3
Vermont	$88,167	41	--	--	$100,011	22	-0.3	--	1.9
Virginia	$116,939	9	$80,045	16	$87,857	28	4.4	5.1	3.8
Washington	$114,558	11	$92,753	6	$85,362	30	4.1	7.3	-5.3
West Virginia	$82,245	48	$59,628	43	$55,484	49	1.7	6.7	1.7
Wisconsin	$103,013	25	$90,625	11	$82,144	33	3.9	1.8	2.9
Wyoming	$97,663	31	$67,980	30	--	--	0.1	4.7	--

--Not applicable

Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2023–2024 and 2024–2025.

In more than half of the states (27), faculty at public four-year institutions earned salaries above $100,000. In addition, 35 states increased faculty salaries by more than the 2.3 percent inflation rate, thereby increasing purchasing power. In Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, faculty salaries continued to rank at the bottom for the sector. Although these states ranked low, it's important to note that they are among the states with the lowest living costs. As such, faculty purchasing power in these states may be relatively stronger than salaries alone suggest.[16] However, in Louisiana, salary growth lagged inflation, resulting in a purchasing power decline for faculty at public four-year institutions.

For the fourth consecutive year, California was the only state in which faculty at two-year institutions earned above $100,000 ($124,488). Connecticut was ranked second, with faculty earning an average salary of $97,455. With a 10.4 percent increase in salaries since 2023–2024, Nevada moved into third place, with an average salary of $94,382. In 2024–2025, 10 states had average faculty salaries between $90,000 and $100,000, up from only three states in 2023–2024. Faculty at two-year institutions in four states—Delaware, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Nevada—saw salary increases of more than 10 percent, well above the inflation rate, thus significantly improving faculty purchasing power.

In the private sector, New Jersey surpassed Massachusetts to claim first place in 2023–2024 and maintained the top rank in 2024–2025, with faculty salaries averaging $149,505. Massachusetts faculty did not fall far behind, with an average faculty salary of $146,618. Faculty at private institutions in Arizona and Delaware saw the largest salary increases, 15 and 39 percent, respectively. Faculty at private institutions in nearly one-half of states (22) earned salaries above $100,000. Notably, faculty salaries in Washington, D.C., ranked sixth in the private sector but 47th for public four-year institutions.

Differences Between Public Two- and Four-Year Faculty Salaries

Differences in the salary gap between faculty at public two-year institutions and public four-year institutions across states can reflect variations in funding models, labor-market pressures, and policy priorities. In many states, four-year institutions, particularly research universities, competed in national labor markets and benefited from funding structures that support higher salaries, while two-year institutions remained more tightly constrained by state appropriations and access-focused missions. Unionization patterns, faculty composition, and cost-of-living pressures further shaped these differentials. As a result, states with large research-intensive university systems and less coordinated compensation policies tended to exhibit much larger salary gaps than states with aligned funding and bargaining across sectors.

Although varying considerably across states, the average salary gap between public two-year and public four-year institutions was $23,809, ranging from a low of $10,162 in Oregon to a high of $48,284 in New Jersey. Five states—Florida, Indiana, Iowa, New Jersey, and North Carolina—had salary differentials larger than $40,000, while six states—California, Illinois, New York, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wisconsin—had salary differentials of less than $20,000. There was no

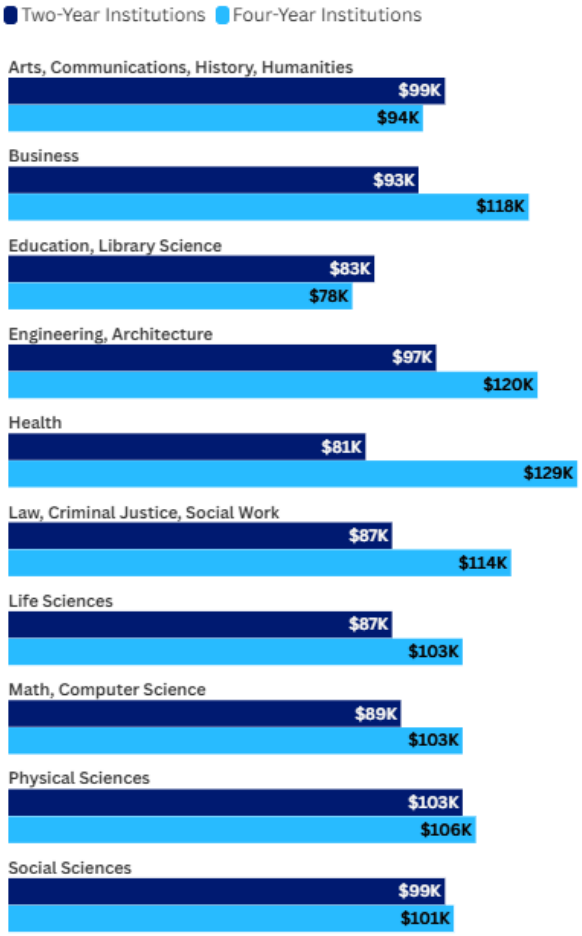
evidence of faculty at public two-year institutions ever earning more, on average, than their counterparts at four-year institutions. Yet, in some states, the two-year salary ranking was notably higher than the four-year ranking. For example, in Wisconsin, faculty salaries for public four-year institutions ranked 25th, while faculty salaries for public two-year institutions ranked 11th. In New Hampshire, faculty salaries for public four-year institutions ranked 22nd, while faculty salaries for public two-year institutions ranked 21st, despite a nearly $30,000 gap.

Faculty Salaries by Discipline

Faculty salaries vary based on discipline and institution type. Faculty salaries by discipline were much more compressed at two-year institutions than at four-year institutions. In 2024–2025, the difference between the highest- and lowest-paid disciplines was $23,000 at two-year institutions, compared with $51,000 at four-year institutions (Figure 10).

Faculty salaries for some disciplines that are at the low end at two-year institutions were at the high end at four-year institutions. For example, faculty teaching health disciplines earned the least ($81,000) at two-year institutions but the most ($129,000) at four-year institutions. On the other hand, arts, communications, history, and humanities faculty were among the highest-paid ($83,000) at two-year institutions but the second lowest ($94,000) at four-year institutions. Although the average salaries are quite different, engineering/architecture faculty ranked near the top in both institution types ($97,000 at two-year institutions and $120,000 at four-year institutions). Faculty teaching physical science disciplines commanded the highest salaries ($103,000) at two-year institutions but fell near the middle ($106,000) at four-year institutions.

Figure 10. Average faculty salaries at two-year institutions lagged behind those at four-year institutions in most disciplines.



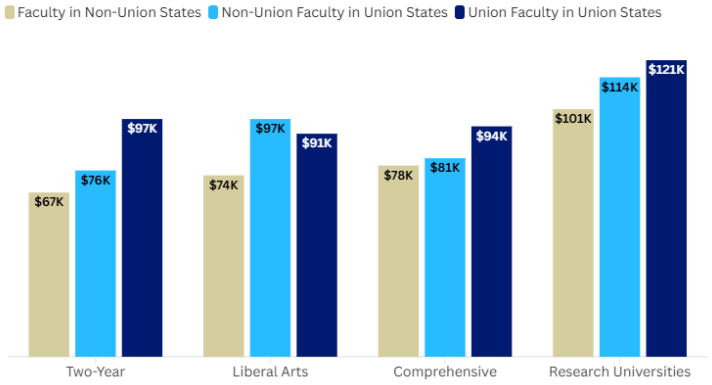
Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2024 National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates.

The Union Advantage

Research showed that unionization and collective bargaining may lead to higher average wages for public-sector workers, including faculty, because it gives workers formal negotiating power to secure enforceable wage floors, structured pay scales, and systematic raises, rather than leaving pay entirely to individual negotiations or administrative discretion. Workers in states that permit collective bargaining tended to have higher earnings than similar workers in states without such rights, suggesting that bargaining rights raise wages for covered employees.[17] A recent study of university faculty found that unionization increased average salaries by several percentage points over time and compressed salary distributions by raising wages at the lower end through contractual salary floors.[18] These mechanisms helped ensure that negotiated pay raises reflected shared interests across faculty rather than ad-hoc adjustments, which is why faculty at institutions with collective bargaining agreements often earned more than their non-union counterparts.

Faculty teaching at public institutions with collective bargaining agreements earned more than others, and the difference was considerable in some cases. Figure 11 illustrates average salaries in three categories: faculty at institutions with collective bargaining; non-unionized faculty at institutions in states that allow collective bargaining; and faculty at institutions in states where no collective bargaining agreements exist.

Figure 11. State collective bargaining laws were associated with higher salaries for both union and non-union faculty.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025.

In 2024–2025, faculty at public two-year institutions in bargaining states experienced the largest collective bargaining advantage: Faculty at institutions with CBAs earned an average of $97,000, while faculty at institutions without CBAs earned $76,000, a $19,000 difference. Faculty at public comprehensive institutions with CBAs had the next largest salary advantage—a $13,000 difference compared to faculty at institutions without CBAs in bargaining states—while faculty at research universities with CBAs had a $7,000 advantage. Only faculty at public liberal arts colleges did not receive a salary advantage from CBAs.[19]

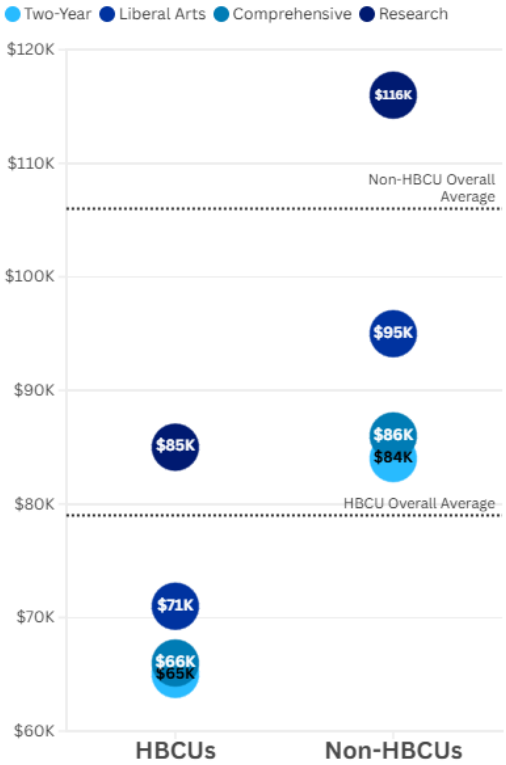
Across all sectors, faculty salaries were lowest in states without collective bargaining. This finding aligns with the notion that the presence of unions, regardless of membership, increases benefits for non-members. However, additional factors, like economic conditions, should be considered. For example, many southern states have a lower cost of living. Faculty salaries were most comparable at institutions with contracts in union states and those without contracts in the same states.

The HBCU Disadvantage

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) expand access to higher education for Black and under-resourced students and provide supportive academic and social environments. Although they enroll a small share of college students overall, HBCUs award a disproportionate share of bachelor's degrees awarded to Black individuals, particularly in STEM and professional fields, and contribute substantially to the nation's Black professional workforce. Students who begin at HBCUs are about 14–15 percentage points more likely to earn a bachelor's degree and tend to have higher household incomes than similar peers who enroll elsewhere. Research also indicates stronger faculty relationships and greater reported development of leadership and career skills among HBCU alumni. HBCUs continue to play a significant role in degree attainment and economic mobility, particularly for Black and under-resourced students who face persistent resource and completion challenges.[20]

The Trump administration's broader economic agenda may severely affect HBCUs and their students. Experts and leaders warn of significant threats from proposed broader policy changes. The dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education has presented risks that include reduced federal funding for student aid; the elimination of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) programs; and potential financial instability of the higher education system and programs.[21,22,23] Moreover, the administration already has cut billions of dollars from Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) programs.[24] Although HBCUs play a crucial role in accelerating social mobility for underserved students, they do so with fewer resources, and their faculty earn less than those at non-HBCUs.[25] On average, HBCU faculty earned 75 percent ($79,192) of what faculty at other institutions earned ($106,215) in 2024–2025. (Figure 12). The disparity was most pronounced at research universities, where HBCU faculty earned about $31,000 less than their non-HBCU counterparts. The difference was also significant at liberal arts institutions, where HBCU faculty earned about $23,000 less. At both two-year and comprehensive institutions, HBCU faculty earned about $20,000 less than their non-HBCU counterparts.

Figure 12. Faculty at HBCUs earned less, on average, than faculty at nearly every type of non-HBCU institution.



Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025.

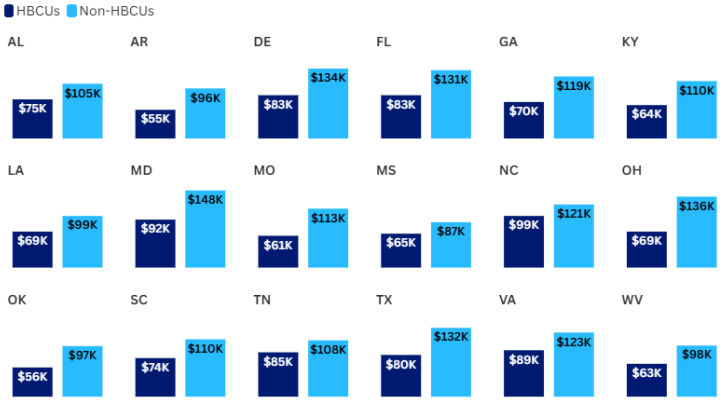
Land-Grant HBCUs ≠ Land-Grant Non-HBCUs

The First Morrill Act of 1862 granted land to states with the goal of providing broader access to education in fields like agriculture and mechanical arts, which were in demand at the time. States could either sell this land to fund the creation of new public postsecondary institutions or use it to expand existing ones. However, many African Americans were denied admission to these 1862 land-grant universities. To address this, the Second Morrill Act of 1890, shortly after the Civil War, required states to establish additional land-grant institutions for African Americans or demonstrate that race was not a factor in admissions at their existing institutions.

Today, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have an 1862 land-grant institution, which is typically the state's flagship university. Of the 102 HBCUs nationwide, 19 are 1890 land-grant institutions, most of which are in southeastern states. While the 1890 land-grant institutions were established to provide equal educational opportunities, differences in regulations have caused inequitable funding and often have left these institutions underfunded.[26]

Faculty teaching in the HBCU land-grant institutions earned a fraction of those teaching in non-HBCU land-grants (Figure 13). When comparing faculty teaching in the same state, taking different economies into account, some HBCU faculty earned only half of what their non-HBCU land-grant counterparts earned. The largest differences were seen in Ohio and Missouri, where faculty at HBCU land-grant institutions earned 51 percent and 53 percent, respectively, of what faculty at non-HBCU land-grants earned in the same state (Lincoln University and Central State University are 1890 HBCU land-grant universities; University of Missouri and Ohio State University are 1862 non-HBCU land-grants). The discrepancy was smaller in North Carolina and Tennessee, where faculty at HBCU land-grants earned 82 percent and 79 percent, respectively, of what faculty at non-HBCU land-grant institutions earned (NC Agricultural and Technical State University and Tennessee State University are 1890 HBCU land-grant universities; University of North Carolina and University of Tennessee are 1862 non-HBCU land-grants).

Figure 13. Across states, land-grant HBCU faculty earned less on average than their land-grant non-HBCU counterparts.

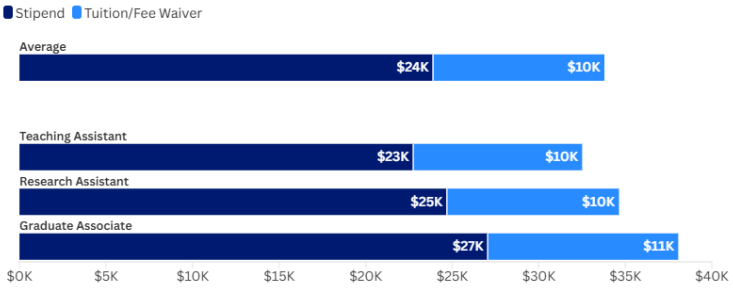


Source: ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024–2025.

Graduate Assistant Earnings

Graduate assistants typically earn a stipend for teaching, conducting research, or working in labs. In 2024–2025, graduate assistants earned an average stipend of $23,889 (Figure 14; this assumes half-time employment). Many graduate assistants received tuition and fee waivers (the average waiver was $9,904), although this was not a universal practice. Graduate associates earned the most, with an average stipend of $27,047, and received the largest waiver, $11,010. Research assistants earned $24,692, and teaching assistants, $22,746. The average tuition and fee waiver for both research and teaching assistants was nearly $10,000.

Figure 14. Graduate assistants who earned a stipend and tuition/fee waiver received, on average, $33,793.



Source: ASA Research analysis of Oklahoma State University, Graduate Assistant Stipend Survey, 2024–2025.

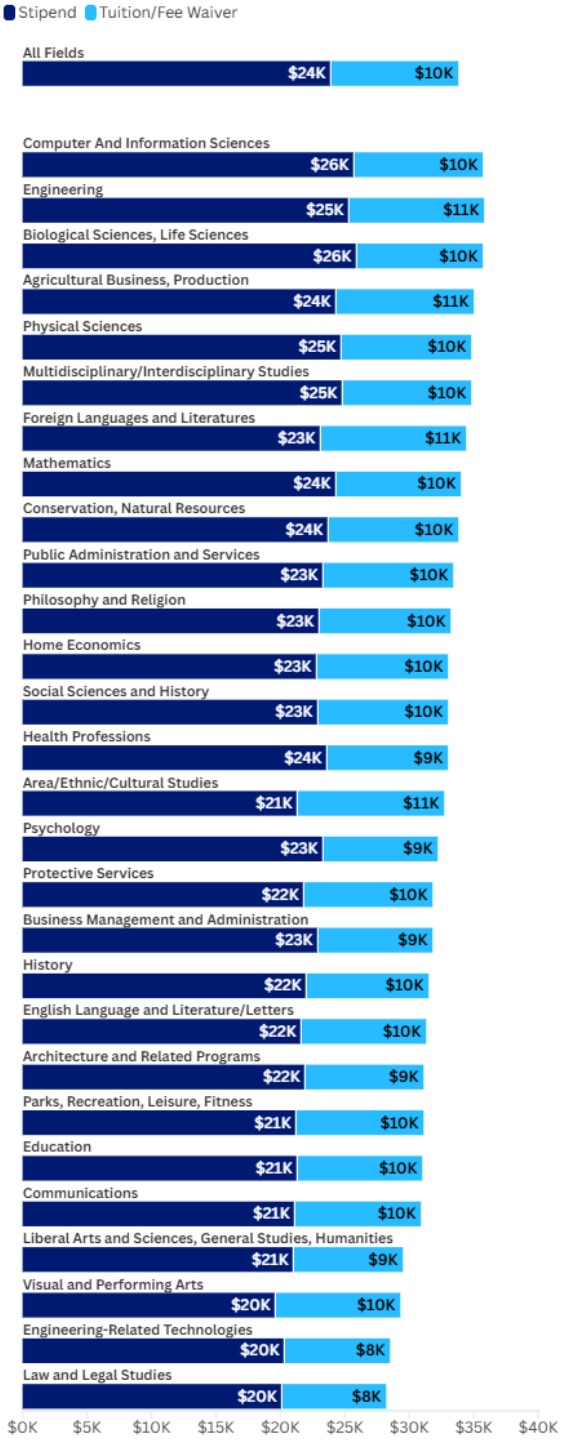
Average stipends plus tuition/fee waivers varied by discipline from a high of about $35,800 for computer and information graduate assistants to a low of about $28,200 for law and legal assistants (Figure 15). Tuition and fee waivers ranged from $8,100 to $11,400. Tuition and fee waivers were typically higher where the stipends were larger.

Modest Gains, Persistent Pressures: The Outlook for Faculty Compensation

The 2024–2025 data suggest that faculty salaries have begun to recover modestly from the sharp declines in purchasing power experienced during the pandemic. But salaries have yet to fully recover, and recovery is uneven across faculty. While nominal salary growth kept pace with inflation over the prior year, faculty purchasing power remained below historical peaks, and long-term erosion continues to shape faculty working conditions. Therefore, these limited improvements should be viewed as partial stabilization rather than full recovery.

Looking ahead, several factors warrant close attention. Federal policy decisions will continue to shape the financial context in which faculty salaries are set. Uncertainty in federal research funding—including changes to agency priorities, grant administration, and allowable costs—may constrain salary growth for faculty whose compensation, summer pay, or staffing support depend on external funding. At the same time, potential changes to federal student aid and oversight of higher education by the federal government could affect institutional revenues, particularly at access-oriented colleges and universities. Institutions may not be able to offer across-the-board raises, address salary compression, or expand tenure-track hiring, even if inflation remains moderate, due to budget pressures from enrollment volatility or reduced aid capacity

Figure 15. The average stipend and tuition/fee waiver for graduate assistants varied by field.



Source: ASA Research analysis of Oklahoma State University, Graduate Assistant Stipend Survey, 2024-25.

Federal policy shifts may also influence faculty compensation indirectly through their effects on hiring practices, workload, and employment stability. International faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and graduate assistants may reduce research and instructional capacity because of changes to immigration and visa policies, in turn, increasing workload pressures for existing faculty without commensurate pay adjustments. With shifts away from DEIA-related federal initiatives and heightened scrutiny of academic programs, institutions may need to alter hiring pipelines, faculty evaluation practices, and service expectations, with disproportionate effects on faculty at under-resourced institutions, including HBCUs and two-year institutions.

In this current environment, salary outcomes are likely to reflect institutional priorities and the broader policy landscape, which underscores the link between compensation discussions and issues of funding stability, workforce composition, and long-term institutional capacity.

Data Sources

This report relies largely on U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Human Resources data. Reflecting 2024–2025, NCES gathered data from 3,782 degree-granting colleges and universities as part of the annual IPEDS data collection for higher education institutions. This analysis is based on data from 2,925 of the total 3,782 degree-granting institutions reported in IPEDS; data from the remaining 857 institutions (seminaries, religious training institutions, and for-profit colleges) were excluded from this report. At the time of analysis, these data included the provisional release of the IPEDS data, and results may differ from data reported by NCES in the future.

This report also includes U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics wage estimates for faculty teaching at less-than-four-year and four-year institutions by discipline (May 2024). Wage estimates are computed with data collected from a statistical sample of institutions of all sizes in every state and the District of Columbia.

An analysis of the Oklahoma State University's Graduate Assistant Stipend Survey data for 2024–2025 is also included; this survey includes 55 land-grant institutions and 100,272 graduate assistants.

Note

NEA Research would like to thank ASA Research for preparing this brief.

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[7] Purchasing power is the amount of goods and services a single unit of currency can buy, representing the real, inflation-adjusted value of money. If your salary increases at the same rate as inflation, your purchasing power remains the same; if income rises faster than inflation, purchasing power improves. To determine if salary is keeping pace with inflation, compare the nominal wage (the actual salary amount) in a past year with the current year's salary, adjusted for the change in the cost of living using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The formula to compute purchasing power is: Past year salary * (Current Year CPI / Past Year CPI).

[8] It is important to note that IPEDS instructs institutions to report based on their own internal definitions of these ranks, and differences can vary by institution. IPEDS does not have a set definition of rank classifications. For more information, see: National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *IPEDS 2025-26 survey materials, FAQs*. U.S. Department of Education. https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/faq?faqid=2

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[12] The majority of full-time faculty, 83 percent, taught with 9- and10-month contracts, and the remaining share worked on 11- and 12-month contracts. As such, the following analysis reflects faculty working on 9- and10-month contracts.

[13] Based on ASA Research analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Faculty Salary data, 2024-25.

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