

***This message is sent on behalf of Jeremy Haefner, Provost and  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs***

**8/5/2015**

**Colleagues:**

RIT has a long-standing commitment to provide competitive salaries for faculty and staff. To fulfill this commitment, we utilize external market data that is reported annually by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). Using the data reported by our peer schools, we compute the 50th percentile to establish RIT faculty salary benchmarks for the upcoming academic year. The list of peer schools can be found on the Human Resources website: [Benchmark Schools | Human Resources | Finance & Administration | Rochester Institute of Technology](#).

At merit review time, each dean was provided the faculty benchmarks for the college, by discipline and rank, for the 2015-16 academic year. Beginning this year, we are making this benchmark data available on the HR website:

[Compensation - Faculty Salary Benchmark Information | Human Resources | Finance & Administration | Rochester Institute of Technology](#).

My goal in providing this data is to offer greater transparency and an opportunity to increase understanding of RIT's faculty salary processes. Key points that I would like to emphasize include:

- Our goal is to pay at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on average across the university. At an individual level, a number of factors influence pay position including:
  - Performance
  - Time in Rank
  - Experience at the time of hire

- Market data may change over time. For example, as the supply and demand for various skill sets change, so does the benchmark data, either up or down; therefore the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile is a moving target.
- The 50<sup>th</sup> percentile goal does not limit faculty salaries. Individuals may be (and are) paid beyond this level across RIT.

The frequently asked questions that follow provide greater detail. This material will also be posted on the HR Website. If you have additional questions regarding the process, please contact your [HR Services Manager](#).

I would like to recognize the Academic Senate, the ADVANCE grant team, and the deans in providing feedback to my office regarding the desire for this increased level of transparency.

Thank you,

Jeremy Haefner  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

#### **Frequently Asked Questions – Faculty Salary benchmarking**

**Q. Why does RIT choose to pay, on average, at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the market?**

A. Our experience has been that RIT is successful in attracting and retaining high quality faculty using this strategy. Targeting pay at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile is a common practice in both higher education and industry. Each year we continue to move a number of individuals who are substantially below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile closer to the target. We continually review our compensation principles, including our target of the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, to ensure RIT's compensation remains market competitive.

**Q. Does this mean that we don't want to pay our faculty beyond the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of the market?**

A. No, there are no upward limits for faculty salaries. If an individual has been a strong performer and has been in the same rank for several years, that individual could certainly be paid beyond the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile for their discipline/rank.

**Q. I'm paid below my benchmark. What is RIT doing to correct this situation?**

A. On an individual level, faculty members may be paid at, above, or below the market. The position of an individual's pay is based on a number of factors including performance, time in rank, and experience at the time of hire. Our goal is move pay toward the market over time, utilizing the merit increase program and, for high performers with pay significantly below market, the market adjustment process.

**Q. What is the market adjustment process?**

A. RIT conducts an annual review of each faculty member's market position after the merit process is complete to identify those faculty members with significant gaps to the market (the same process is followed for staff employees). Historically, modest levels of additional funds have been directed towards reducing these gaps. If funding is approved, factors that will be considered when distributing these funds include time in rank/grade, performance, and size of gap. Due to limited funds and the focus on reducing the largest gaps, only a small number of individuals receive a market adjustment. The analysis for the market adjustment process begins in August; the process concludes in October of each year when salary adjustments are completed.

**Q. Why would an individual faculty member be paid below the market rate?**

A. There are several reasons why an individual may be paid below the market rate; the most common is that they are relatively new to the position/rank. The market rate is generally the target rate for individuals who are fully proficient in all responsibilities of a position. Someone new to a role is likely learning how to fulfill all of the job requirements; it is therefore reasonable that the individual would be paid less than market. Another reason why someone may not be paid at market relates to their sustained level of performance. If an individual has had less than satisfactory performance, it would indicate that they are not fully performing all of the responsibilities of the position and therefore they may not be paid at market.

**Q. Why did the benchmark for my rank and discipline shift down (up) from the previous year?**

A. Market data may shift up or down each year based on the number of universities reporting data to the survey, the sample size of incumbents, the changing demographics of incumbents, the relative value of the skill set in the labor market, and other variables. HR reviews trends in the data over time and investigates large swings in the data (e.g. plus or minus 10%) to determine if there is a sustained change in market data.

**Q. The benchmark data doesn't look right for my discipline, for example, why is there minimal difference in the data between the ranks for some disciplines and not others?**

A. The data are based on the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile of actual salaries paid to faculty in that rank and discipline for 2015-16. While the actual data may not always meet expectations for what the data "should" look like, the data represent how faculty in that rank and discipline are currently being paid. The data are subject to change from year to year – please also see the above Q&A: Why did the benchmark for my rank and discipline shift down (up) from the previous year?

**Q. My PhD is in a different field than the discipline I teach at RIT. What determines my benchmark?**

A. The benchmark data for instructional faculty are based on rank and the discipline being taught; an individual's degree field is not a factor. For example, an associate professor of economics with a PhD in statistics is benchmarked against other associate professors of economics because that is the work that they are performing. In most cases, the faculty member's department aligns to the discipline being taught.

**Q. I don't have my PhD; does that impact my benchmark?**

A. No, the market data is based on rank and the discipline being taught; it is not based on degree held. That said, the majority of faculty at RIT's peer schools likely possess a terminal degree and the market data is based on their salaries.

**Q. I don't see my department listed; how do I find out the benchmark for my rank and discipline?**

A. Across the university, there are a few instances where a department is not aligned to a specific discipline. If you don't see your department listed, you may always contact your chair or dean to confirm your benchmark information.

**Q. New graduates with my degree are receiving job offers in industry at equivalent or higher salaries than my benchmark salary; how is that possible?**

A. RIT is committed to providing market competitive salaries for the work being performed, in this case instruction, research, and service. The benchmark data is based on the salaries of people who are performing similar work, i.e. instructional faculty teaching in the same discipline and at the same rank.

**Q. Does RIT consider other sources of market data beyond the CUPA-HR data?**

A. In recent years, RIT has been moving to a more standardized approach for sourcing and analyzing market data across the university. For example, the provost has directed that discipline based market data from RIT's 22 benchmark/peer schools will be used as the basis for determining faculty benchmarks across the university.

On an exception basis, if a college wishes to introduce an alternative source of market data, the request should be directed to the assistant VP - Human Resources for review with the provost. If an alternative market data source is accepted by the provost, HR will compare this data against the CUPA-HR data on an annual basis to assess the need to continue to use the alternative data.

There is one college currently using an alternative data source. GCCIS uses the Computing Research Association's Taulbee Survey for faculty benchmark data.

Another exception is NTID which historically has used a different process, aligned to its faculty structure, to establish and evaluate faculty compensation. NTID continues to assess and make improvements to that process.