

UNITED FACULTY

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UNI’s Faculty Significantly Trailing Peer Universities in Salaries

Faculty seek to improve compensation in 2025-2027 contract

(CEDAR FALLS, Iowa) – United Faculty, UNI’s faculty labor union, announced that after years of meager or no salary increases from the Board of Regents, it significantly lags behind its peer universities and has not even kept pace with inflation of the past decade.

“We are asking the Iowa Board of Regents to provide the necessary funding for UNI faculty salaries to remain competitive with our peers, so we can recruit and retain the best faculty and keep up with inflation. It’s an investment in academic excellence at Iowa’s only regional comprehensive university,” said Dr. Christopher Martin, president of United Faculty and a professor of digital media and journalism.

UNI maintains a list of [10 peer institutions](#), including Central Connecticut State University, Western Washington University, and Indiana State University, which are selected by the university for comparison to evaluate its performance.¹

Table 1: UNI Faculty salaries compared to peer institutions

UNI Peers				% of Peer
2023-2024	Peer Avg	UNI	Diff	
AllRanks	90.9	79.4	-11.5	87.30%
Prof	111.1	93.9	-17.2	84.50%
Asc Prof	90.3	79.6	-10.7	88.20%
AsstProf	78.8	72.1	-6.7	91.50%
Instrct	65.3	60.7	-4.6	93%

* numbers in thousands

As Table 1 illustrates, UNI trails behind its peer institution salaries in every rank (instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor) and all ranks combined, according to data from the AAUP (American Association of University Professors). UNI faculty salaries at all ranks combined are only 87.3% of their peer institutions’ average.

¹ Salary data is for 2023-2024. UNI’s peer universities are Central Connecticut State University, College of Charleston, Eastern Illinois University, Indiana State University, Minnesota State University, The College of New Jersey, University of Minnesota-Duluth, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, and Western Washington University. AAUP data for Eastern Illinois University and Minnesota State University is not available. Calculations used “lecturer” instead of “instructor” category for TCNJ and UW-Whitewater, because instructor category data is not used for those two institutions. Source: <https://www.aaup.org/report/annual-report-economic-status-profession-2023-24>.

“As recently as 2016, UNI faculty salaries kept up with our peer institutions,” said Fernando Calderon, UNI history associate professor and vice president of United Faculty. “Now we have fallen behind, and it is inflicting damage on UNI faculty and the institution overall.”

UNI also trails significantly when comparing UNI faculty salaries to its peers at all 165 public Division IIA (master’s-level) universities in the U.S. (see Table 2). Across all ranks, UNI faculty earn only 89.2% of their national peers. Only at the level of instructor is UNI’s pay just narrowly above the national average for public Division IIA (master’s-level) universities in the U.S. UNI faculty salaries at every other rank trail the national average by about 10 percent or more.

Table 2: UNI Faculty salaries compared to all public Div. IIA universities

Nat'l Peers				
2023-2024	ALL IIA Publics	UNI	Diff	% of Nat'l Peer
AllRanks	89.0	79.4	-9.6	89.20%
Prof	111.1	93.9	-17.2	84.50%
Asc Prof	91.9	79.6	-12.3	86.60%
AsstProf	79.7	72.1	-7.6	90.50%
Instrct	60.3	60.7	0.4	100.70%

* numbers in thousands

Meanwhile (see Table 3), annual salaries for the top three administrative positions at UNI (president, chief academic officer/provost, and chief financial officer) all outpace their peers at the 165 public Division IIA (master’s-level) universities in the U.S. from 6% to 21% more. (This does not include deferred salaries; UNI president Mark Nook has received deferred compensation since 2018, and [will receive \\$100,000 annually](#) in deferred compensation in the upcoming two years.)

Table 3: UNI top administrator salaries compared to all public Div. IIA universities

Nat'l Peers				
2023-2024	ALL IIA Publics	UNI	Diff	% of Nat'l Peers
President	350,000	372,110	22,110	106%
CAO/Prov	241,972	290,331	48,359	120%
CFO	210,000	254,408	44,408	121%

* median salary data for IIA public institutions

In 2023, the legislature approved a \$500,000 budget increase for Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds’s office, and she subsequently gave many of her workers big salary boosts, arguing the salary increases were an “[important investment](#)” and noting that “offering salaries commensurate with experience and job responsibilities is critical to ensuring optimal performance and continuity of state government.”

“We hear Gov. Reynolds, and believe the same approach applies to faculty at the University of Northern Iowa, who have spent years obtaining advanced degrees and are expert teachers and researchers in their fields,” UF’s Martin said. “Adequate compensation for UNI faculty – making their salaries competitive with peer institutions – is critical to ensuring optimal performance and continuity for the 10,000 students at UNI.”

UNI faculty salaries have not only fallen behind their peers, but also have not even kept pace with inflation. Over the past 10 years, UNI faculty salaries have fallen dramatically behind the cost of living, as Table 4 illustrates, using a sample salary of \$50,000 as the base.

Table 4: UNI Faculty Cost-of-Living Shortfall, 2014-2024

10-year calculations

Base number

Year	CPI - U		UNI COST OF LIVING (COL)		
	YEAR %	CUMULATIVE	UNI		UNI COL %
	CHANGE	CPI CHANGE	COL %	Change	ANNUAL SURPLUS (SHORTFALL)
2014	1.0%	\$ 50,500	1.0%	\$ 50,500	0.00%
2015	0.0%	\$ 50,500	1.0%	\$ 51,005	1.00%
2016	1.8%	\$ 51,409	0.8%	\$ 51,413	-1.00%
2017	1.7%	\$ 52,283	0.8%	\$ 51,824	-0.90%
2018	1.3%	\$ 52,963	0.8%	\$ 52,239	-0.50%
2019	2.3%	\$ 54,181	0.8%	\$ 52,657	-1.50%
2020	1.1%	\$ 54,777	2.1%	\$ 53,763	1.00%
2021	2.5%	\$ 56,146	2.1%	\$ 54,892	-0.40%
2022	1.2%	\$ 56,820	1.3%	\$ 55,605	0.10%
2023	7.9%	\$ 61,309	1.3%	\$ 56,328	-6.60%
2024*	2.7%	\$ 62,964	3.0%	\$ 58,018	0.30%
					8.50%

Compounded Shortfall (Jan 2014-July 2024)
2024

Historic CPI-U for the Midwest Region, reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
https://www.bls.gov/regions/mountain-plains/news-release/consumerpriceindex_midwest.htm

* Average CPI to July 2024

UNI's compounded shortfall from 2014 to 2024 is 9.89% -- the rate at which UNI faculty salaries have not kept up with inflation (reflected in historic CPI-U Consumer Price Index for the Midwest Region, as reported by the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/regions/mountain-plains/news-release/consumerpriceindex_midwest.htm)). In other words, to merely align with inflationary trends over the past decade, faculty would need a 9.89% salary increase.

United Faculty will meet with representatives of the Board of Regents, State of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa in January to present its initial bargaining proposal for the 2025-2027 collective bargaining agreement.

After UNI makes its opening proposal, the Board of Regents and UNI make their counterproposal. Then, the parties bargain for a new two-year contract that will become effective on July 1, 2025.

The labor union, which represents about 500 faculty members on UNI's campus, calls for substantial salary increases for UNI faculty as salaries have not kept pace with inflation, and as UNI faculty compensation has lost ground with its peer institutions.

United Faculty, established in 1976, is the chief negotiating agent for the University of Northern Iowa's faculty, and is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

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