

Questions Posed by UA Contract Professionals:

- 1) Are there plans to update the salary schedule in order to be competitive with area institutions? I have found in the profession of academic advising that our starting salary is \$4k to \$5k less and no range given for experience. One of our grad students received an offer for \$8k more than what would be offered at UA for a starting adviser. Also, we require 2-4 years experience so he would not even qualify to apply here under our current requirements.

While most ranges are being adjusted this year I do not agree that we are not competitive with area institutions. Based on data collected by my office as well as the data provided by CUPA-HR we remain quite competitive. Individual jobs are analyzed each time they are filled, that analysis is reviewed by SPRC and salaries for filling jobs are set. When comparing compensation one should go beyond salary to include the cost of fringe benefits, time off with pay, and even the level of job security. Our fringe benefits and allotments of time off with pay are well above the national or regional averages and UA was one of the few state and local public entities that did not feel the pain of lay-offs and furloughs. That occurrence was the result of a determined effort by the senior administration led by Dr. Proenza.

That said we in HR are particularly concerned about the salaries of certain small groups of employees. For instance in the case of academic advisors employed by the University we intend to focus on a detailed analysis of their employment structure in the coming year.

- 2) Why don't PT Contract Professionals have the opportunity to earn vacation time at a pro-rated level? This question has been asked for years, but not addressed. PT staff has vacation benefits...why not be consistent? Thank you

Our acceptance of the rules governing P.T. classified employees is not an endorsement. We believe that part-time work is designed to provide flexibility in scheduling for both the employee and the employer and we do not believe additional time off is warranted. In the present economic climate I believe that the University will need to begin to reconsider its level of part-time and contingent employment in order to maintain the security of its full-time continuing staff. Adding to the benefit costs of part-time personnel is not something we can afford.

- 3) What impact do you know or anticipate the new health care legislation will have on health benefits for contract professionals and their dependents?

No one yet knows the answer to that question but it is likely that the cost of the University's health insurance plan will reach the level in 2014 that the health care legislation is describing as a "Cadillac plan."

- 4) Would you be at a point where you could make a prognostication as to what direction employee born health insurance costs will go this next year? Thanks

A possible move to a self-insured basis for health insurance should assist us in avoiding future costs and the completion of a dependent audit will assist us in ceasing coverage for those people who are not eligible for coverage further assisting us in avoiding some future increases in costs. How much costs will go up or will not go up cannot be determined until we finish the RFP and bidding process presently underway. We should know more by November.

- 5) Will UA consider allowing employees to donate their sick time to other employees? I see other places of employment including other universities do it. How can we make this happen?

Some state schools are utilizing the sick bank concept but none in Ohio (to my knowledge) are allowing employees to transfer their sick leave directly to another person. The Office of General Counsel has utilized research from outside counsel and from within their own office to determine that the law does not allow the University of Akron to establish a sick leave bank. HJR will continue to monitor this matter in the coming year.

- 6) I have seen other universities and places of employment advertise or alerts its employment of outside \"perks\" for UA employees. For example, I receive a 25% discount with Sprint for being a UA employee. How can I find out if there are other vendors for which I can receive discounts? Is there any consideration of a broad communication mechanism for employees to talk to each other? For example, I would like to participate in a ride share program and would like to ask other UA employees in my area if this is possible. Kent State has such a system where employees can post such messages.

We have been discussing some way to achieve this service without creating the liability of the endorsement by the University of products or services. Mike Kimble in my office will be asked to work with folks from around campus in the coming fiscal year to see what can be achieved.

- 7) If you are unable to schedule your excess vacation hours, which will forfeited by June 30, 2010, due to intense work schedule, can you be compensated for them monetarily?

The University awards vacation to its exempt employees with the expectation that they will use the benefit. We do not wish to create an incentive that would discourage our employees from living a well rounded life. That said if an employee is being precluded from taking vacation on a regular basis they should seek the assistance of HR in resolving the matter.

- 8) Any progress toward offering multi-year contracts to long-term Contract Professionals? If not, why not? Has there been any movement toward giving any sort of job security to Contract Professionals who have a number of years of service (e.g. more than 12 or 15 years or some other number)?

Contract professionals have a significant level of job security at UA especially in comparison with the private sector. Perhaps in comparison to faculty who receive tenure it might appear to some as if we need long term contracts but the numbers indicate otherwise –turnover whether voluntary or involuntary at the University is very low even when compared to national figures in higher education. It is unlikely that multi-year contracts for contract professionals will be considered in the coming year.

- 9) What is the status regarding employee's ability to transfer service and be covered by PERS rather than SERS /STRS? At least 10 of the 13 universities in Ohio non teaching employees contribute to PERS. Youngstown , Wright State, Central State, UT, Cincinnati – OPERS [waiting to hear from 8 other state universities] [Note; the April 2002 Board Actions on page 9 recommended this be changed. Why has nothing materialized? Many UA non-teaching employees came from PERS jobs and would like stay in that system

Attempts by the University to move contract professionals from SERS to PERS have not been met with success and remains blocked by forces in Columbus. However, in light of current pressures on the state's pension systems the advantages of moving to PERS from SERS may no longer be as compelling as it might have appeared in the past.

- 10) Why Sick Leave that is accumulated limited to maximum payout to thirty days. Sick Leave is a benefit that is payable if taken, however when you retire the balance if over thirty days just disappears and the money goes where? It would seem that if you have a benefit that it should be fully funded and paid just like vacation, even though the max is 44 days that can be carried.

Sick leave is a consideration to be used if an employee is ill. It is afforded in order to maintain an employee's income if they are taken ill. It is not like vacation where it is a benefit earned to be scheduled. The 30 day payout is actually fairly generous by national standards.

- 11) When will the Contract Professional Salary Schedule chart be revised? When Contract Professionals reach the maximum salary level at their grade level they cannot receive any more raises. Getting reclassified to get into another salary level is not an option for some departments.

This question contains an incorrect assumption. Merit raises are still available to an individual who is at or near the top of their salary range. The ranges are being reviewed this year and will be moved up in those areas that the labor market shows an increase and when the University can afford an increase. This year and last year very few salary categories showed consistent increases and several categories showed actual decreases in starting salaries. In the past 24 months the University chose to use its limited resources to avoid lay-offs rather than adjust ranges.

- 12) If we as employees know that we are paid well below the regional pay scale...what can we do? I understand that we are dealing with a tight budget. However, if others are getting paid anywhere from \$5-10K more than you for the identical job at our neighboring institution (with the same years of experience, similar department budget, less office hours are required there, and excellent evaluations have been earned) is there anything we can do? Thanks!

Compensation is determined by several primary factors- supply, demand, and affordability. In all cases compensation must be analyzed in its totality not just based on salary. Our benefits and job security are at the top of the regional market. Our salaries despite complaints are statistically shown to be highly competitive. UA has not seen any increase in turnover and we are not seeing any significant difficulty in acquiring new talent to work at the University and as mentioned before we have made a strategic decision in the last two years to avoid lay-offs and furloughs. As a total package UA remains a very desirable place to work. That said many of us may be able to find another organization willing to pay us more and occasionally colleagues will leave us for somewhere else. When that occurs we can temper our disappointment with the knowledge that scores of highly qualified applicants will be willing to come to work at UA to take their place.

- 13) What determines if a position or promotion needs to be posted or advertised?

Generally a request is made through the VP to HR, EEO, and SPRC to seek a search waiver or ask for an internal only search. Based on the logic presented by the department head or VP a determination is made whether the job can be successfully filled without a full blown search.

- 14) Why are part time CP\'s not afforded vacation time? Classified part time staff are. This is a terrible inconsistency in the university rules and needs to be rectified

See answer to #2

- 15) Will the issue of benefits for \"domestic partners\" be addressed? i.e. for health care, tuition, etc.

I believe with the potential of a move to a self-insured basis for health insurance in January the possibility for opening benefit coverage to “same sex” domestic partners for the remainder of the work force not presently covered may occur. No coverage for “opposite sex” domestic partners is being considered.

16) Has the University ever considered a more flexible schedule (such as working four 10 hour days) or allowing for some work-from-home opportunities?

Significant research has shown (particularly in government agencies and higher education) that such schedules while popular with employees is not appreciated by the folks we are paid to serve. Generally such schedules do not result in any increase in productivity and have been shown to often create a decrease in employee productivity or an increase in staffing. In functions like Universities where the organization must fulfill the needs of a resident population on a daily continuing basis we would basically be disappointing our students for the convenience of ourselves. Last year the State of Ohio reviewed flex time programs in other state agencies and began to dismantle them. Interestingly my personal experience is that people who want a 4 day work week often expect to have a three day weekend and find the schedule of four 10 hour days to be less desirable if the third day off comes in the middle of the week.

17) What is/are the UA policies/guidelines that apply to contract professional employees during a workforce reduction process?

University rule 3359-22-01 Contract Professional Information states the following at the end of section (D) Termination of Appointment:

The University may also terminate appointments in the case of retrenchment necessitated by financial exigency. Termination of long-term appointments because of financial exigencies, however, has been sought in the past only as a last resort, after every effort has been made to meet the need in other ways.

18) If I have to switch to paying into SERS, can I roll my STRS retirement annuity into SERS?

Will this rolled sum of money accumulate any interest?

I'm beginning to earn interest on my STRS annuity contribution; will the change to SERS cause me to lose money?

Will my contribution to SERS be matched dollar for dollar when/if I have to make the switch from STRS to SERS?

I am afraid only the pension fund can answer such a question although the benefits office will put you in touch with the appropriate agency.