

Bargaining in Context: Salary negotiations in 2020

The last time that UMFA and the UM Administration had serious salary negotiations was in 2016, when the Administration tabled a proposal for a general salary increase of 7% over four years (1% in the first year, then 2%, 2%, and 2%) with additional salary adjustments to Members who are in ranks below Professor, Senior Instructor and Librarian and whose salaries are below the threshold in their rank (about one-third of Members meet these criteria). Both sides agreed that one of UM's priorities was to improve UMFA salaries in relation to the U15 Group of Universities.

At the direction of the recently elected Pallister government, however, the Administration withdrew their offer and limited the life of the Agreement to one-year. UMFA Members ultimately received general salary increases of 0, 0, 0.75% and 1% over four years, in accord with what would later become the (still un-proclaimed) Public Services Sustainability Act (PSSA).

This four-year period will end on March 31 of this year, opening up the first opportunity for meaningful negotiations on salary since 2016.

A lot has happened since 2016:

- The Labour Board ruled that the administration acted unfairly when it failed to disclose the government's directives in 2016, resulting in \$2.4 million in fines;
- While the PSSA has never been proclaimed into law employers have treated it as if it has, and UMFA joined a coalition of labour unions that filed a legal challenge seeking to have the act declared unconstitutional. Final arguments are being heard at the Court of Queen's bench in February, 2020;
- Provincial government grants to Universities have been decreased, but tuition increased, which has intensified the financial burden placed on students but left the UM budget relatively healthy; and
- The government has given responsibility over Manitoba's universities to the minister of Economic Development and Training, and announced that it will be imposing performance metrics on the university sector. The ministry is currently developing a "Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy" that will, given the questions asked in a recent government survey, likely direct Universities' to do more to increase partnerships with private industry and tailor their activities to private industry's perceived labour-market needs.

It's clear that provincial governments take cues from one another, which is no comfort when looking at the university sector: Manitoba's PSSA took its name and much of its content from legislation in Nova Scotia, and the 2019 report produced by Alberta government's "Blue Ribbon Panel" approvingly cites Manitoba's PSSA as an example of how to approach collective bargaining in the public sector. Alberta subsequently announced what some estimate to be 30% in cuts to funding in the sector between 2019 and 2022, and is taking steps to impose restrictions on funding based on how each institution performs in relation to a series of metrics. Those might include skills required on the labour market, commercialization of research and technology, and a series of economic measures. This is no doubt in part inspired by metrics proposed in Ontario, which seek to tie each institution's funding to graduation rates, graduate earnings, proportions of graduates employed in a related field, research funding from private sources, and various measures of economic impact. Ontario also passed a wage restraint bill that is being challenged by labour unions in the province.

All is not gloom, however: it's important to remember that the administration agrees that salary levels need to be improved, and a new University President joins us this summer. Given his past positions on Austerity (he's against it) there's reason to be cautiously optimistic that agreement will persist. A recent report on the UM's economic impact recently penned by a private accounting firm suggests that the UM generates \$1.6 in provincial output for every dollar spent, and the legal decision on the constitutionality of the PSSA will likely come in the summer, potentially increasing our leverage at the bargaining table.

And Ontario is already showing signs of pushing back – one need look no further than the province-wide strikes against Doug Ford's proposed cuts to education. We, too, can push back, and have shown in the past that we can. Stay tuned – a constituency meeting is being scheduled for your unit.

Bargaining Surveys – coming soon!

In preparation for the salary negotiations the Collective Agreement Committee (CAC) met for the first time in December, 2019. The committee has since set to work looking at salary developments locally and across the country. See below for an initial report on what Statistics Canada has to say about salaries in the Professor ranks.

The CAC also needs to know where you think your salary should be, and in early February you'll receive an email notice that the bargaining survey has gone live. This one will be shorter than in the past, and should take 15 minutes or less to complete. Please fill it out! In addition to all the other info we gather (from UMFA staff, through committee research, at constituency meetings and in individual discussions), your quantitative and qualitative responses will shape negotiations.

This round of negotiations there will actually be two surveys, available about a month or two apart. The first will be about salary and benefits, and the other about your work life more generally: workload, governance, safety and health, and more.

Members often ask why the survey results aren't made public after they're collected. There are many reasons, but most import among them is that the surveys on their own don't give the full picture. It's only in tandem with discussions with staff and all of you that the CAC gets a sense of Members' perspectives. Once proposals are crafted and brought to a General Meeting for discussion and vote, you'll learn the reasoning that went into their creation (and have a chance to challenge it).

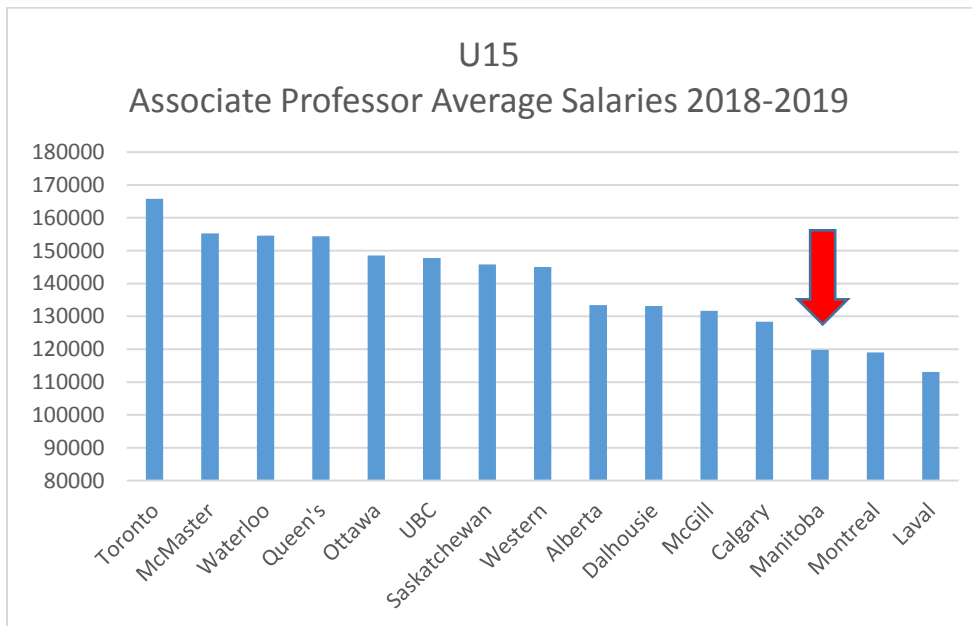
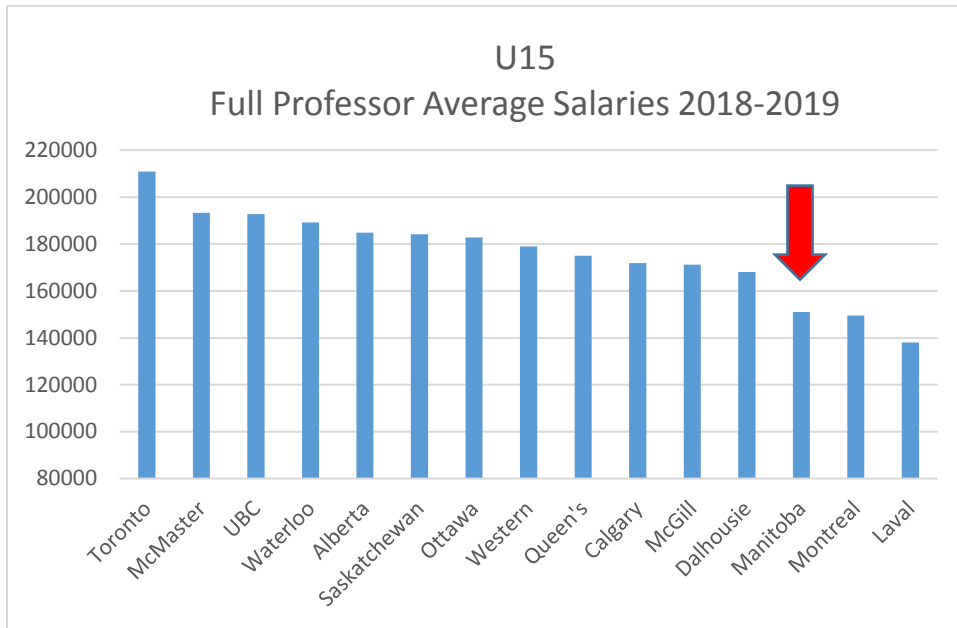
To that end, the Executive Council and Bargaining Team will soon be at Constituency meetings in individual departments and faculties. Check your in-box and the website for announcements, or ask your UMFA Board Rep to organize one. You can also contact the UMFA office directly if you don't currently have a rep. You might also find the President, Vice-President, or Chief Bargainer knocking at your office door, just to check in.

UMFA Salaries Analysis – UM vs U15

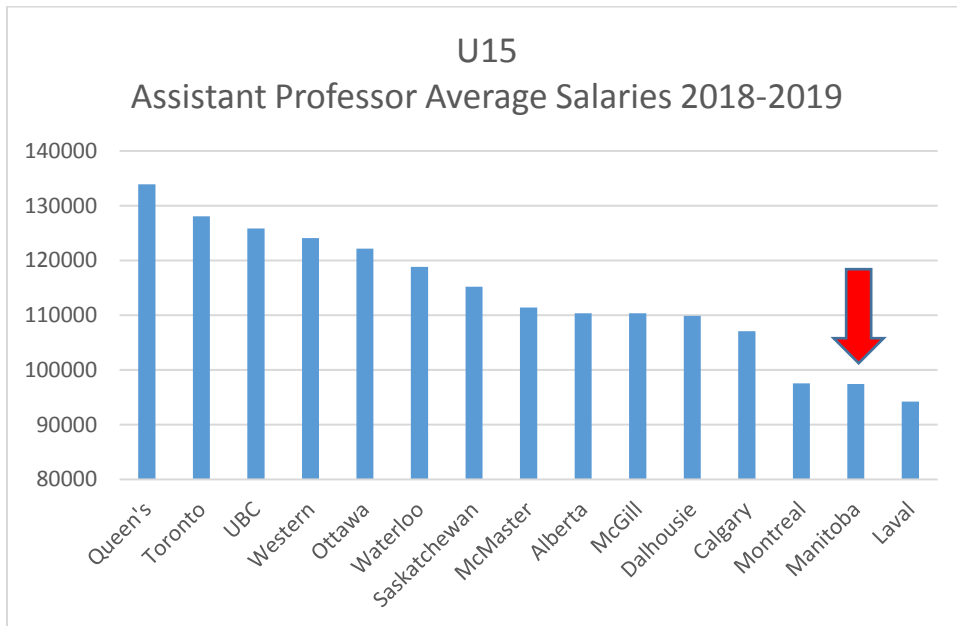
This salary analysis is based on a comparison of professors' salaries at the UM with those of its peer group. The UM Administration has argued that its appropriate peer group is the U15, which professes to be "a collective of some of Canada's most research-intensive universities" (<http://u15.ca/about-us>). The University of Manitoba has been a member of this group since 2011.

Professor salary data is compiled by Statistics Canada, which unfortunately doesn't collect separate data for librarians, archivists, and instructor ranks. However, in previous bargaining rounds the Administration and UMFA have agreed that the salary results for the professor ranks are likely to be similar to those for librarians and instructors. The charts below indicate the UM's 2018-2019 average salaries compared to

those of the U15 universities for each of Full, Associate and Assistant Professors.¹ These results exclude medical and dental staff, and full and associate professors with senior administrative duties.



¹ Salary data for the three professor ranks are available for all universities for which Statistics Canada has data. There is no comparable data in Statistics Canada for librarians or instructors.



For full and associate professors, UM ranks 13th among the U15. UM assistant professors rank 14th.

UMFA's 2016 salary analysis specifically compared average 2013-2014 UMFA salaries with the U15's 11th-ranked university within each category of professor. The table below reproduces that analysis and demonstrates how the UM professors' positions have changed in the last five years.

Difference between average annual U15 11th-ranked salary vs UM salary		
	<u>2018-2019</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>
Professor	\$21,675	\$4,625
Associate Professor	\$11,975	\$7,800
Assistant Professor	\$15,675	\$11,675
Difference as % of average UM salary		
	<u>2018-2019</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>
Professor	14%	3%
Associate Professor	10%	7%
Assistant Professor	16%	13%

UM salaries have lost substantial ground relative to the U15 at all ranks, and especially at the Professor level where the gap between UM full professors and number 11 in the U15 has increased by more than 460% since 2014.