

The Gap in Faculty Pay between Private and Public Institutions: Smaller in Sociology than in Other Social Sciences

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FACULTY SALARIES IN RECENT YEARS

Overall salary growth has slowed for everyone in recent years, but faculty at public institutions typically received smaller annual raises than at private institutions, according to findings from the National Faculty Salary Survey (NFSS) conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR). This growing gap may result from greater losses in revenue from state higher education budgets than from the decline of gifts and income investment at private institutions (American Association of University Professors). NFSS reports that the salary gap between public and private institutions is most pronounced at doctoral-granting institutions, but reversed at baccalaureate-only institutions. However, salary increases were dismal for faculty at both public and private institutions in AY 2009-2010, with a 0.0% and 0.1% increase, respectively, since the AY 2008-2009. According to some commentators, the gap in faculty earnings at public and private institutions raises concern over the ability for public universities to effectively compete with private institutions in recruiting and retaining well-qualified candidates (Byrne 2008). Using NFSS data, which is collected by discipline, we ask, does this gap in salaries exist in sociology and other social sciences, and if so, to what extent? We compare AY 2002-2003 with AY 2009-2010, the years for which we have data.

THE PAY GAP IN SOCIOLOGY

Table 1 shows the spread of average annual faculty salaries by rank and type of institution between AY 2002-2003 and AY 2009-2010. Sociology departments are not immune to the gap in salaries at public and private institutions; average annual faculty salaries were higher for full professors and assistant professors at private institutions during this eight-year period. This gap, however, is a relatively small one compared to other social science disciplines. In AY 2002-2003, full-time faculty (not including instructors) earned an average of \$58,406 (in current dollars) at private institutions and \$58,242 at public institutions. Sociology faculty at private institutions also received larger pay raises (24.1% compared to 22.1% at public institutions) between AY 2002-2003 and AY 2009-2010, widening this gap to \$1,376 (see Table 1).

There were differences in the size of the pay gap among faculty ranks. In AY 2002-2003, public institutions

Table 1. Average Annual Sociology Faculty Salaries by Rank and Type of Institution, AY 2002-2003 and AY 2009-2010.

Academic Year	Type of Institution	Faculty Rank			Overall Average
		Professor	Associate	Assistant	
AY 02-03	All Institutions	\$74,027	\$55,296	\$45,565	\$58,296
	Private	\$74,182	\$55,188	\$45,848	\$58,406
	Public	\$73,953	\$55,354	\$45,418	\$58,242
AY 09-10	All Institutions	\$94,166	\$68,971	\$57,225	\$73,454
	Private	\$92,251	\$68,564	\$56,697	\$72,504
	Public	\$91,063	\$66,705	\$55,617	\$71,128

Source: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. 2010. "2009-10 National Faculty Salary Survey by Discipline and Rank in Four-Year College and Universities." Knoxville, TN: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. Calculations based on weighted data.

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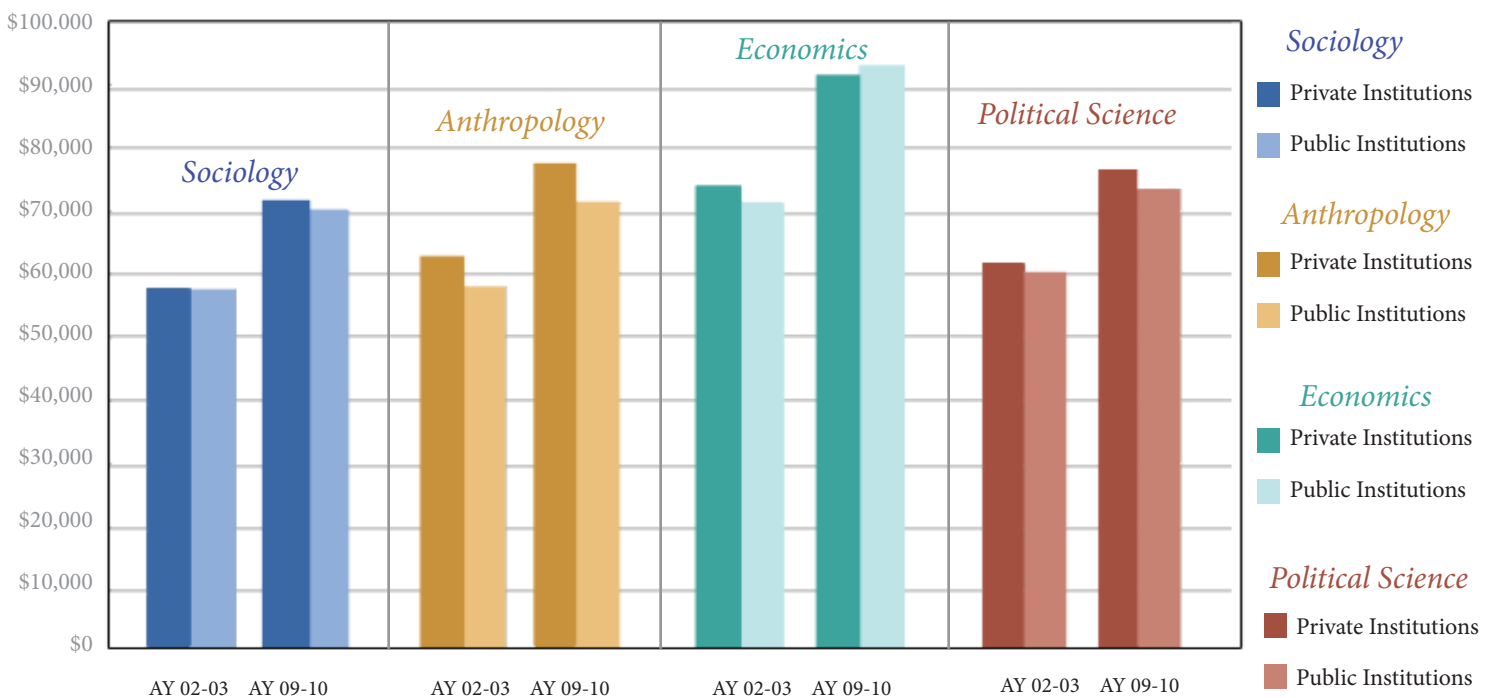
paid associate professors slightly higher average salaries (\$55,354 compared to \$55,188 at private institutions), unlike the other ranks. But, as pay increases at private institutions outpaced those at public institutions (24.2% versus 20.5%, respectively), associate professors were earning an average of \$1,859 more at private institutions in AY 2009-2010.

In contrast, full professors and assistant professors faced a smaller change in the pay gap between AY 2002-2003 and AY 2009-2010. Although private institutions consistently paid higher salaries during this period, salary increases in sociology departments at these institutions only outpaced those at public institutions by 1.2% and 1.3%, respectively.

COMPARING OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES

The size of the gap in average annual sociology faculty salaries between public and private schools in AY 2002-2003 and in 2009-2010 appears fairly modest when compared to political science, anthropology, and economics (see Figure 1). Average political science faculty salaries were consistently higher at private institutions during this period. In AY 2002-2003, faculty earned an average of \$62,157 at these institutions compared to \$60,286 at public institutions for a difference of \$1,871. By AY 2009-2010, this gap nearly doubled. The gap is greater for full professors who earned \$6,359 more at private institutions in AY 2009-2010, while associate and assistant political science professors earned about \$2,000 more.

Figure 1. Average Annual Social Science Faculty by Discipline, AY 2002-2003 and AY 2009-2010.



Source: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. 2010. “2009-10 National Faculty Salary Survey by Discipline and Rank in Four-Year College and Universities.” Knoxville, TN: College and University Professional Association for Human Resources.

Calculations based on weighted data.

“All Institutions” is calculated by taking the average of Full-, Associate-, and Assistant-level salaries.

The pay gap was more extreme in anthropology departments. When sociology faculty were earning, on average, only a few hundred dollars more at private institutions in AY 2002-2003, anthropology faculty were already earning about \$4,000 more at private institutions. By AY 2009-2010, anthropology faculty salaries had increased by 23.0% at private institutions compared to 21.10% at public institutions, pushing this gap to \$6,100. There were greater increases in the gap at the associate level where salaries increased 25.2% at private institutions compared to only 17.7% at public institutions.

Economics is an anomaly in contrast to other social science disciplines. While average economics faculty salaries were higher than those at private institutions in AY 2002-2003, public institution salaries were higher in AY

2009-2010 as a result of larger salary increases during this period (29.8% compared to 23.9% at private institutions). Full professors teaching at public institutions between AY 2002-2003 received the largest pay increases (30.8% compared to 17.0% at private institutions), for the largest gap in pay.

CONCLUSION

Private institutions almost consistently paid higher sociology faculty salaries in AY 2002-2003 and AY 2009-2010. This gap, however, may not be significant enough to impact faculty recruitment at public institutions when compared to political science and anthropology. For additional research on AY 2009-2010 sociology faculty salaries, see [Sociology Faculty See Smaller Raises but Still Outpace Inflation in AY 2009-2010](#).

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