

**Merit Memo Part Two: Allocation of merit pool
based on annual evaluations and salary equity considerations
*For CAS Department Chairs and Program Directors***
March 22, 2024

The annual merit exercise is a two-part process that includes: 1) evaluation of professorial faculty contributions, and 2) allocation of the merit pool to professorial faculty in the form of salary increase recommendations. The first part of the process is addressed in a separate memo focusing on departmental and programmatic evaluations of faculty. This memorandum addresses the second part of the process, setting out how chairs and directors should take into account considerations of equity and market forces in making your recommendations for merit allocations. It also describes the documentation you will need to submit for the “no dollar” phase of the merit exercise, which we undertake without knowledge of the size of the merit pool available.

As described in greater detail below, merit assessments of your department’s faculty, justification statements for those assessments (including information on equity concerns), and a description of each department’s merit and equity review procedures should be submitted by e-mail to Richard Wright (rwright@bu.edu) by May 3, 2024.

Please contact Richard Wright or your appropriate divisional Associate Dean for further information or assistance.

I. Considerations

Through the merit review process, we seek to reward professorial faculty members for their contributions in teaching, research, and professional service; to advise faculty of areas needing improvement; and to take action as far as possible to correct such inequities as gender differentials, salary compression within and across ranks, and inadequately recognized prior merit.

A. Funding Pools

We do not yet know the details of this year’s merit pool. Until we know more, please assume that there will be a pool for regular merit and possibly pools held by the Dean and Provost to address “special” merit and equity issues. Please note that there are no other sources of salary increase funds aside from this annual merit increase and the pools specifically defined by it. This is the time to work on salaries.

The pools may break down as follows:

(1) A regular merit pool distributed to the College from which the Dean is likely to hold back some funding for special individual and departmental merit and/or equity cases, leaving the remainder as the department pool for the Chair to distribute according to merit.

(2) In addition to the fraction of the pool held back by the Dean, a special pool held by the Provost might be available to address exceptional equity issues that cannot be adequately addressed from the Dean and department pools. If available, guidelines for distribution of the Provost pool are reserved to address particular types of equity concerns such as gender inequity. The Provost pool should not be used to reward someone who has had an especially productive year. You may choose to concentrate the increases to adjust a few faculty members' salaries, or you may decide that you can do better by providing smaller adjustments to a larger number of faculty members in your department.

(3) The promotion pool is centrally held and automatically awarded to those whose promotion will take effect during the 2024 cycle. Those promoted from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor with tenure will receive an automatic 10% salary increase, and those promoted from Associate Professor to full Professor will receive an automatic 6% increase. These increases are calculated on the current year salary. Faculty who are in this pool must in addition be considered for a merit allocation in the usual way. The promotion bump is automatic; merit reflects accomplishments of the past year. No department should reduce the assessment of merit because it knows a faculty member will receive a promotion increase.

B. Salary Equity and the Timeframe for Analysis

The salary review process aims to recognize merit in an equitable manner. Our goal, ultimately, is to create a salary structure that reflects a fair evaluation of accomplishments and contributions, refreshed annually through the merit exercise. Relevant considerations include expectations and outcomes in terms of rank and time in rank, taking account of different expectations that can reasonably be made of the progress of very junior and more senior faculty. It is especially important not to base judgments on irrelevant factors such as gender or race, whether directly or indirectly.

Although this annual merit review emphasizes contributions from the prior calendar year, achieving equity also requires paying attention to long-term achievement and salary inequities that develop incrementally over time. Inequality in salaries that have developed because of substantial differences in accomplishment and contribution do not count as salary inequities to be rectified. Inequalities due to differences in the timing of those accomplishments and contributions should be addressed. For example, if the salaries of two faculty members who have

roughly identical records differ greatly simply because one was hired later and was paid a higher initial salary, then that disparity should be addressed over time. Be sure to assess the departmental salary structure for inequities and compression that may have developed over time and make a special effort to address such equity issues. Gaps between the salaries of men and women, especially at the more senior ranks, even accounting for time in rank, should receive close attention.

The department chair is responsible for recommending a plan for addressing equity and market pressures and obtaining Dean's office endorsement of such a plan. There is normally no means other than the annual merit exercise to correct faults in a unit's salary structure. Correcting inequities or market misalignments can sometimes take multiple years. It is therefore important to plan corrections and pay attention to prior adjustment agreements and progress every year. Please work with the Dean to plan corrections that will take multiple years. If a faculty member was promised a salary adjustment over a period of years, and that adjustment has not been completed, that should be included as part of this year's recommendation.

(1) *Collective salary issues.* Departments are welcome to discuss any collective equity and market issues, but they should not be included as part of any individual faculty member's evaluation. To make a case that all or many of your department salaries are systematically behind those of your peers inside or outside the university, indicate the specific departments or institutions you are using for comparison and provide the evidence or indicate the sources of information. You should state what you believe is the degree of differential, and who in the department is most affected. Only when the size of the merit pool funds held back by the College and Provost to deal with special cases allows can we focus on changing the structural imbalances.

(2) *Salary compression and rank considerations.* Salary compression is a situation in which the salary differential between faculty of different ranks or levels of experience is smaller than it should be, or even inverted. Please be on your guard to avoid inappropriate salary compression among junior faculty that results from starting salaries that rise faster than merit pools.

- Assistant professor issues: Allowing productive assistant professors to lag behind their more junior colleagues when starting salaries rise sends the wrong signal to them about their progress toward tenure and about Boston University's commitment to them. Moreover, allocating a less than average salary increase to assistant professors sends the message that they are not making appropriate progress toward tenure. Avoid sending that message unless it is appropriate. Merit increases are investments in the future and not only rewards for the previous year's accomplishments. For this reason, the Dean is unlikely to recommend a salary increase for faculty members who have been denied tenure and are on a terminal contract.

- Associate professor issues: Salary compression may affect associate professors as the starting salaries of new assistant professors rise, and it is important to be careful about creating inequity. On the other hand, the salaries of long-term associate professors – those who, after an unusually long time in rank, have not yet compiled a record that supports promotion to the rank of professor – are likely eventually to lag behind some salaries within their rank and will increasingly lag behind the faculty of their generation who have been promoted. In these cases, the lag in salary is due to the same cause as the delay in promotion and does not normally pose an equity problem to be addressed. It is important to pay attention to fairness and equity at all levels, but the merit exercise is not designed to reward years in rank or years of employment per se.
- Full professor issues: All faculty should receive appropriate merit increases. The Provost's Office examines the results of the merit exercise to see whether the three ranks receive roughly equivalent collective percentage increases. Merit increases are investments in the future and not only rewards for the previous year's accomplishments. For this reason, the Dean is unlikely to recommend an above-average salary increase for faculty members who are in the closing year of a retirement agreement.

II. The Process

A. Departmental Salary Review Process

The Chair of each unit conveys recommendations to the Dean, together with one-paragraph justifications of the merit and equity assessment for each faculty member (“the blurb”). The Dean will review these recommendations, adjust as appropriate, and then make final recommendations to the Provost. The Dean performs the review of Chairs, Directors, and Associate Deans serving during the merit review period.

Each department may design its own process for arriving at salary recommendations, but the process must in all cases be based on appropriate principles, and all faculty members must be informed about the review process and the criteria used in determining salary recommendations. Except in very small departments, it is generally good practice to involve a faculty committee either appointed by the Chair or elected by the faculty to assist with merit evaluation, to avoid bias and allow development of departmental norms about judging relative merit, and to provide feedback to each faculty member about their merit evaluation. Regardless of the process used at the department level, the Dean holds the Chair responsible for the final departmental recommendation. After the new salaries are announced, the Chair should invite each faculty member to discuss the merit review and salary increase in his or her case. The Chair should not

inform faculty about the specific dollar amount recommended to the Dean. That recommendation is only a recommendation.

B. Part-Time, Research, and Clinical Faculty

Recommendations should also be made at this time for part-time, research, and clinical faculty. The part-time faculty group includes both those at regular and modified professorial ranks but with less than 100% effort. Increases recommended for part-time, research, and clinical faculty, including grant-funded positions, should remain consistent with the University's general salary policy and recommended amounts may need to be adjusted to reflect the University's salary norms as stated in this year's final salary pools. For grant-funded part-time faculty, an increase in base salary should not result in a corresponding decrease in FTE.

Only under unusual circumstances will visiting and other short-term faculty (those on limited, non-renewable contracts) be considered for merit increases.

C. Your Submission

Every department should submit three things for professorial faculty by Friday, May 3, 2024: (1) ratings for each faculty member; (2) brief but specific explanations of the merit and salary equity assessment of each faculty member ("blurbs"); and (3) an explanation of the department's evaluation and merit process. ***See restrictions on blurb length below.

(1) Merit assessment rating for each faculty member:

Every faculty member must be assigned a rating of 1 through 5, corresponding to the ratings described in the separate memorandum on faculty evaluations. Generally, those ratings will correspond to salary increases as follows:

1. **Underperforming.** This individual will receive little, or no salary increase. Where an individual has a rating of 1, the chair must include a justification for recommending any salary increase.
2. **Below average.** This individual will receive somewhat below the departmental average salary increase.
3. **Average.** This individual's salary increase will be around the departmental average.
4. **Above average.** This individual's salary increase will be above the departmental average.
5. **Outstanding.** This individual's salary increase will likely need the support of the special merit pool held back by the Dean.

The numerical rating should not be adjusted to account for equity considerations but should be based solely on the faculty member's performance.

(2) "Blurbs":

The blurbs should be only a few sentences in length, but they should deliver clear summaries of the rationale for each faculty member's rating. In addition, the chair may address any equity considerations relevant to the particular case in the blurb. Chairs may consider market factors that suggest the need for an above average increase and/or whether the salary of an individual faculty member is inequitably low compared with departmental peers whose performance is at the same level. This information will form the basis for later recommendations for salary increases, once the merit pool is available. ***There is a 1,500 character-length restriction on blurbs in the system. Please keep this in mind when writing them.**

(3) Explanation of departmental merit and salary determination process

This should explain the merit and salary equity review process in your department including who is involved, what the stages of evaluation are, the process and metrics your department uses for evaluating faculty, and how evaluations are communicated to faculty.

D. Next Steps

As soon as the merit pool is available, we will provide the appropriate materials to department chairs and ask you to assign actual dollar numbers based on the analysis represented in your May 3rd submission. At that time, Richard Wright will be in contact to explain what you need to submit.

Please note that, as in previous years, this could happen with a very quick turnaround time when a department chair might be away. Every department must have a designated back-up person, such as an associate chair, who will be able to complete the merit exercise in a timely manner if the chair is away.

Salary increases will continue to be effective on September 1, even though faculty paid over 12-months will see the increase in their July 31st paycheck.

Cc: CAS Department/Program Administrators
Arianne Chernock, Associate Dean of the Faculty, Social Sciences
Alice Tseng, Associate Dean of the Faculty, Humanities
John Byers, Sr. Associate Dean of the Faculty, Mathematical and Computational Sciences

Sean Mullen, Associate Dean of the Faculty, Natural Sciences
Tereasa Brainerd, Interim Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Policies
Juliana Walsh Kaiser, Sr. Associate Dean of Finance & Administration
Paula Wasson, Executive Director, Financial Administration, Business Office
Margaret Bolter, Associate Dean of Strategic Initiatives
Vincent Stephens, Associate Dean of Diversity, and Inclusion
Richard Wright, Assistant Dean, Faculty Actions
Arthur Peterson, Assistant Director, Faculty Actions