

# The Status of Benefits at Missouri State University 2023

## AN ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY BENEFITS

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## Executive Summary

This report is from the Faculty Senate Committee on Faculty Benefits. The committee offers the following brief executive summary:

- According to the Committee on Faculty Concerns Report, MSU faculty's satisfaction with benefits at MSU were generally acceptable. However, identified areas of concern were noted in lacking easy access to benefit information, Foster Recreation Center, and tuition reimbursement.
- MSU faculty salaries continue to be less than that offered by our peer institutions.
- MSU offers a wide variety of benefits that are mostly similar to benefits provided at other Missouri public universities and MSU's peer universities.
- Feedback from faculty indicates that faculty generally would like to see an increase in MSU's tuition reimbursement benefit, as well as options for use of the tuition waiver (such as for CE costs, banking the benefits, or sharing with other faculty). Faculty would also like to see an increase in the benefit for Foster Recreation Center. Faculty also reported concerns regarding the vaccine requirements for insurance premium coverage that were in place for this year.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Committee on Faculty Benefits is to maintain communication with personnel in the Office of Human Resources concerning current faculty benefits.

The Committee will prepare an annual report on the status of faculty benefits, to be submitted to the Faculty Senate during the Spring semester, that includes:

- A comparative review of benefits provided or available to faculty at MSU and benefits offered to faculty at other state and peer institutions.
- A review of data from the Faculty Concerns survey addressing satisfaction with faculty benefits.
- A summary of feedback solicited from the faculty about current and desired benefits.
- A list of Committee recommendations, if any.

## Faculty Salaries

Table 1 and 2 in the appendix contains the data regarding faculty salaries at MSU compared to faculty salaries at other universities, both those within the state and those who are considered peers by MSU. For a discussion of peer institutions, see the President's web site:

<http://www.missouristate.edu/President/peergroup.htm>, which identifies members of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) as a peer group. More than 50 universities are a member of CUMU, so the committee chose a subset of CUMA to gather data on outside Missouri.

Table 1 contains the most recently documented average 9 month salaries for MSU, other public institutions in Missouri, and the subset of CUMU peers that were used for comparison in previous years. Table 2 provides, as comparison, the data for 2014/2015 which has been previously reported by this committee. Finally, Table 3 presents the overall percentage changes in faculty salaries between the 2014/2015 report to 2020/2021.

The following are the main findings from this data:

- MSU tends to have lower average salaries than the four universities in the University of Missouri system and than the 13 identified peer institutions. This is true both overall and for each faculty rank.
- MSU tends to have comparable or slightly higher faculty salaries than the five other regional public universities in Missouri in the tables. Note that some of the institutions in this category have higher faculty salaries and others lower salaries compared to MSU.

- MSU’s salary increases in Table 3 were generally smaller overall compared to the University of Missouri System and our identified peer institutions, but within the range of Missouri regional institutions.

## Satisfaction with Faculty Benefits and Salary

The Faculty Concerns Committee presented their Spring 2023 report to faculty senate. Table 4 presents selected (relevant) results from the 2023 Survey. The questions included relate either to faculty salaries or to faculty benefits.

In 2023, faculty continue to score perceptions of benefits in the “neither agree or disagree” to “agree” range of acceptability. For example on the one to five scale, when responding to the statement “MSU health benefit options are acceptable,” 50% of respondents marked “agree.”

There is more dissatisfaction by faculty regarding salaries, as compared to dissatisfaction with benefits. Table 4 illustrates that faculty generally think that faculty salaries are not competitive. On the same one to five scale (1=strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree), respondents provided a mean of 2.13 (disagree) to the statement that MSU offers competitive wages (68% endorsed ‘disagree’). This sentiment is supported by the data presented in Tables 1-3. Faculty also feel that compensation is not always equitable or transparent, and varies greatly across colleges.

## Benefits Review

The remaining tables in the appendix present data regarding the charge to the committee to review the benefits “provided or available to faculty at MSU and benefits offered to faculty at other state and peer institutions.” Table 5 summarizes the types of benefits available at MSU and the comparison universities. Table 6 presents the major current benefits available at MSU, and Appendix 1 is the university provided benefits summary for 2023.

MSU offers two choices in health care/pharmacy benefits. In each case, the university has offered to contribute \$30 per month toward monthly premiums in exchange for participation in an identified health behavior. This past year, it was based upon completion of Covid and Flu vaccination. In the past, this has been based upon completion of biometric analysis and self-reflective health behavior survey. Faculty are also encouraged to utilize Magers Health Center through lower copay charges in both benefit plans (\$5 and \$10 compared to \$20 and \$40 for other in-network providers).

In recent years, improvements have been made to the dental plan, such that it now covers orthodontia and implant costs.

MSU also offers Cafeteria and flexible spending accounts which offer a tax advantage for medical and child care costs. The plan requires annual enrollment, and although debit cards are offered, the reimbursement process can be difficult, and maintaining the required documentation can be arduous.

Tuition benefits have frequently been an area of concern by faculty. Currently full time employees (for self or dependents) may waive up to 15 credit hours each academic year. In review of our peer institutions, this appears to equal to or above the amount of tuition benefit offered.

Mental health benefits include copay to specialists (psychiatry), and the university offers two Employee Assistance Programs for mental health assessments, counseling and referrals. A few other institution offer mental health care within the insurance package, though the EAP offering is more common.

In regard to retirement plans, it is common for universities to offer both a defined benefit and a defined contribution plan to faculty but those two options are a choice, which is not generally true at MSU. For example, Mosers requires new employees to be on the defined contribution plan (CURP) initially and are only able to make a change after six years of service. One of the problems there is that MSU's Human Resources has not in the past informed faculty when they are eligible to shift to the defined benefit plan (MOSERS). Since 2018, faculty enrolled in the CURP program make a mandatory 2% contribution to their plan.

## Feedback from Faculty

The Committee on Faculty Benefits maintains an open access to feedback from faculty on the Faculty Senate webpage. Feedback provided through the form is anonymous.

Fewer comments from faculty were received this year than we have in previous years, but given the many other university changes, it is likely that concern of benefits was not at the forefront for many of us. Comments were also reviewed from the concerns survey.

Faculty have noted that having access to insurance that provides greater choice in providers would be beneficial. Currently, with exception of specialists out of town, we are limited to Mercy providers, and cost at Cox would be prohibitive. However, it was also noted that it is

greatly appreciated that our insurance does provide coverage and opportunities to see specialists in St. Louis (Barnes) and other major health centers. This is seen as a significant benefit.

Our committee was contacted in regard to the use of Covid and Flu vaccination as markers for insurance premium discounts this past year. It was suggested that this was coercive and that the waiver process was arduous.

A repeating question has been posed about tuition waiver, along with suggestion that it should be higher, that it should be applicable to Greenwood (for the full 15 hours, as opposed to current 7.5 hours), applicable to the child development center, and suggestions that creative ways to use the waiver be considered, given that many employees do not have dependents.

Another repeating topic is the lack of access to a health and fitness facility on campus. Several have noted frustration with not being able to use Foster Recreation Center. Given the rules regarding faculty use of the rec center, others have suggested that alternative facilities, dedicated to faculty and staff, be offered.

Finally, in returning to salary, faculty provided numerous comments to the survey indicative of below average pay, inequality, and lack of consistency across the university. For example, feedback received stated “Assistant profs in the business school make more than full professors in other colleges.” Wage disparity between faculty and faculty in administrative roles was also identified. It was noted that “DH positions regularly make double the salary of tenured and tenure-track faculty. Deans regularly make three times the salary of associate professors.....the pay difference makes me frustrated and I feel unappreciated.”

## Committee Suggestions

At this time, the committee recommends that human resources and our administration continue to examine options in health care and seek to maintain the low-cost options that we have become accustomed to, particularly given the salary concerns. Increasing health care costs, without associated adequate cost of living raises, is effectively a pay-cut.

The committee also suggests that consideration be given to fitness facilities for faculty.