University wide Staff Compensation Study

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions following the Sept. 8 email announcement

What are salary grades?
Salary grades are ranges used to establish appropriate compensation for employees based on their work. Additionally, salary grades are established to enable the institution to distinguish pay levels that acknowledge the differences between positions at the institution.

When will I find out what salary grade I’m assigned to?
Employees will find out which salary grade and job family they have been assigned to in the annual merit communication process at the end of the calendar year.

How were the 423 staff positions chosen to see salary changes first?
In an effort to bring 100 percent of our benefited staff employees to at least 85 percent of the salary grade midpoint, the University is investing $2.1 million this year. Thirty percent of staff, or 423 positions, fell below the 85 percent midpoint of their salary grade. Seventy-five percent of the 423 employees earn less than $50,000. Consistent with our One DU commitment, by correcting salaries that are most below market midpoint for their salary grade, we are moving in the right direction to creating a consistent and equitable compensation program.

Where are the funds coming from to increase salaries?
The University set aside $2.1 million during the budget development process to assist with the Staff Compensation Study. This was reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees in the annual budget development process. The University will continue to set aside funds moving forward.

Is this $2.1 million part of the merit pool budget?
No. This investment is in addition to the fiscal year 2017 merit pool.

If I receive a salary increase this year due to the Staff Compensation Study, am I still eligible for a merit increase?
Yes, if you were hired on or before July 1 and your position received a market increase and you otherwise meet the merit eligibility requirements, you will still be eligible for merit, at the new salary rate.

What about the rest of the staff? If I’m not in this first group, might I see a salary increase from this study?
Ultimately, the University’s goal is to bring salaries of benefited staff employees to the midpoint for their position. This will be accomplished in a multiyear rollout as with the Special Faculty Salary Increase Pool.

If my current salary is above the target for my salary grade, will it be reduced?
If an employee’s salary is at or above the maximum of the salary range, their annual salary will not be reduced.

**Will there be title changes as a result of this study?**
Yes. An outcome of the compensation study was to create consistent job titles, as well as titles that were reflective of job duties and responsibilities, across the University. Information provided in the PDQs assisted with the consolidation of job titles.

**When will new job titles be announced?**
Human Resources will work with each dean, vice chancellor, associate provost and division head to review any changes in job titles. We’ll approach this conversation in partnership with these leaders, and discuss how titles match the duties and level of responsibilities of a job. This will take some time. Human Resources plans to begin these conversations in late September with the goal to implement any title changes that may occur after the first of the year.

**As a staff employee of DU, how can I receive or be eligible for pay increases?**
Staff employees can receive merit increases, bonus awards or promotions. Additionally, HR has worked to establish progression opportunities where possible. Employees are encouraged to work with their supervisor to discuss professional development opportunities and career goals and aspirations. Additionally, our People Development team in Human Resources can assist in creating an individualized career path.

**How were staff salaries compared to the marketplace?**
We identified DU staff jobs that are comparable to jobs in the external labor market. These “benchmark” jobs had to be a 70-80 percent match to similar jobs outside of DU. Benchmark jobs were placed in relation to each other within DU, based on level of responsibility, complexity of the job, job requirements and scope of impact.

We also identified “non-benchmark” staff jobs, which are unique jobs that can’t accurately be matched to comparable positions. Again using level of responsibility, complexity of the job, job requirements and scope of impact, non-benchmark jobs were matched as closely as possible to benchmark jobs to determine appropriate salary ranges.

**Questions on the process for the Staff Compensation Study**

**What is the Staff Compensation Study?**
The recently completed Staff Compensation Study covered approximately 1,500 benefited staff employees. It did not include faculty or non-benefited employee positions. The study created consistent job descriptions, titles, and salary grades and ranges for our benefited staff employees across all units. This study also established the framework for how the University views all elements of employee compensation (total compensation) as well as a foundational set of approaches and tools to ensure consistent practices.

**How was the study conducted?**
The University worked with an independent consulting firm, Sibson Consulting, to conduct the study. Sibson specializes in serving higher education and brings expertise in best practices from institutions across the country. This will help ensure objectivity as we compare our staff job and salary structure to the practices of other higher education institutions as well as appropriate organizations chosen for comparison because they are a source for DU’s staff recruitment.

The first step of the study was to define the University’s “total compensation” framework, which encompasses all elements of staff employment inclusive of pay, benefits and other employee rewards and recognition. Senior leaders, as well as faculty and staff members who were asked to assist with the study, provided input that led to creation of a compensation philosophy, found on the Compensation Program webpage.

All benefited staff members were given an opportunity to complete position description questionnaires (PDQs) with input from their managers. Based on input from approximately 1,200 staff members who completed PDQs, we were able to compare job descriptions and salaries at the University with those in local, regional and national marketplaces.

We now have a new, clear and well-defined staff job structure that will bring more equity to our compensation system. In addition to establishing more internal equity, the study assessed the market competitiveness of our staff compensation program. The result is a sustainable compensation program that will be consistent for benefited staff positions across the University and position DU to retain and attract top-performing employees.

**What are the benefits of the study?**
Through PDQs, our benefited staff members had the opportunity to provide input into their job descriptions to allow recognition for everything that they do. The new structure will also help make career progression steps clearer.

The University will have updated and more consistent job descriptions and titles, clearer job roles, a process that includes application of best practices to support inclusion and diversity, and greater clarity, consistency and competitiveness of compensation.

Our managers will also benefit from better attraction and retention of quality employees, improving a key element in employee engagement with a clear and consistent compensation structure, greater consistency and efficiency of job and salary administration processes, a quicker and more efficient recruiting process, and more predictable budget planning.

**Where did the University get the data and information that led to this new staff job structure?**
Position Description Questionnaire’s (PDQs) completed by employees gave us up-to-date, clear and accurate job descriptions for every benefited staff position. Employees and their supervisors together signed off on PDQ information to ensure a consistent and complete understanding of job duties. From the PDQ data, we created clear and well-defined staff job definitions that fall within job families.

All of this information and data allowed us to compare job descriptions and salaries at the University with those in local, regional and national marketplaces.

**Why was the employee-supervisor collaboration so important when completing the PDQ?**
The employee’s direct supervisor reviewed the information provided by the employee on the PDQ, and together they ensured agreement on the information before it was submitted. This provided an excellent opportunity for supervisors to discuss any changes needed directly with their employees.

**What are job families and how were they created?**
Job families are defined as groups of positions that fall within similar type of work and duties performed. Examples of job families are marketing, information technology, and facilities, to name a few. Our new staff job structure has 19 job families. This clarifies staff jobs by function, so that like jobs fall into the same family regardless of where in the DU organization they occur. This helps with career progression and consistency in how we compensate jobs in the same family. See the Compensation Program webpage for more information.