

UA to increase the wages of faculty, staff and graduate assistants

By Shaq Davis | Published 06/06/16 7:31am | Updated 06/08/16 9:59am

The UA administration recently announced a new compensation increase program that will give graduate assistants, faculty and staff a wage increase.

This announcement comes one month after graduate students gathered at Old Main to protest the lack of wages being received, where graduate students demanded better working conditions at UA and called for school President Ann Weaver Hart's departure from the school.

RELATED: [Graduate students stage walkout, demand better working conditions](#)

Former Graduate and Professional Student Council President, Sarah Netherton said that with this new program UA will stay on a high performance level.

By Sydney Richardson / The Daily Wildcat

A view of the Administration building on Sunday, June 5, which houses the offices of many university employees. The university announced a plan to invest in employee salaries and graduate student stipends for the upcoming academic and fiscal year.

"I believe one of the greatest benefits of these pay increases will be to our ability to attract and retain the best and brightest to the UA, both faculty and graduate students," Netherton said.

"While we have world-renowned programs, competitive pay plays a large role in recruitment. Increasing salaries and stipends will move us toward a competitive position among our peers."

Allison Vaillancourt, vice president of human resources and institutional effectiveness, said they're really fortunate that people love to work at UA, but the university has not kept up with increasing pay over the years, and being able to pay competitively is critical.

"Most of the funds that are going to be used to fund this raise program are going to come from colleges and departments themselves," Vaillancourt said. "So they're going to be asked to reallocate monies they might have used for something else and to really focus on investing in salaries this year."

According to UA's FY 2017 Annual Budget, they are looking to set aside \$9.5 million for faculty, staff and graduate assistant salary adjustments to show what they called a focused commitment to their employee's performance.

The UA is currently ranked last out of its fifteen peer institutions for average faculty salary.

According to the UA at Work website, beginning with the September 12 pay period, all benefits-eligible employees who are meeting performance expectations will receive a modest pay increase.

According to the website, it has been three years since an institutional-wide pay raise at the UA and faculty salaries are around 15 percent under the national average.

Zachary Brooks, current president of GPSC, said an important aspect of this new program is boosting workforce morale, which can't be understated.

"Secretaries, program coordinators, people at that level, they don't make tons of money but they love Tucson, they love UA," Brooks said. "To be recognized for a wage compensation increase makes them feel good about their decision to be a part of the UA and to do a lot of the work you and I rely on."

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Mike Jonen, senior associate vice president of health sciences at the University of Arizona Health and Sciences, said employees at the UA are a talented group and their work for the institution is important.

"We are a top tier university, ranked in a number of areas and you don't get there unless you have good people," Jonen said.

He said he has confidence this proven system will work at UA.

"Merit based pay programs have been shown to be an effective way to retain employees because you're rewarding them for their performance," Jonen said. "They feel engaged, part of the community, they represent the university well outside of the office just as much as when they're inside the office."

Vaillancourt said that the UA administration has been comparing salaries and wages with different institutions locally, regionally and nationally.

"I think everyone wants to be treated fairly, so when people feel their pay is fair compared to others doing similar work, that makes them feel good about themselves," Vaillancourt said. "It makes them feel good about their work and that translates into the classroom."

More details about the Compensation Increase Program will be made available later this month.