

# **Research Position Base Salaries**

## **Preamble**

Montana Tech is committed to encouraging and supporting high quality research and to enhancing and incentivizing externally funded research and scholarly activities. It is the policy of Montana Tech that the base salary for externally funded research should be competitive with peer academic researchers. This policy describes the procedure for establishing base salary rates for research positions occupied by faculty members. The goal is to provide an incentive to increase research productivity at Montana Tech and to reward and retain the highest performing faculty, who are extraordinarily effective and committed instructors and also achieve a level of research funding and productivity comparable to their peers at leading institutions.

To achieve these goals in compliance with sponsor requirements, Montana Tech has a system where each individual faculty researcher has a separate position for his or her externally funded research responsibilities. These individual positions will be reviewed and approved by all administrative levels up to the Chancellor, and they have clear expectations for sponsored research and scholarly activity and productivity. A faculty member with external funding will receive a separate, annually renewable research contract. The sum of the percentage effort in the academic contract and the research contract will equal the faculty member's total appointment percentage. Whenever the faculty member has grant or contract funding for summer work, the faculty member's summer contract for this work will be based on the salary for the research position. Renewal of the base salary associated with the research contract is subject to evaluation of the faculty member's performance as a researcher and market conditions.

## **Purpose**

The fundamental purpose of separate research-focused contracts is to ensure nationally competitive salaries for the performance of externally funded research done by faculty members at Montana Tech. The standard for establishing competitive salaries is CUPA, which publishes salaries by rank and discipline annually based on a survey of participating universities. Montana Tech's comparison group is all Universities in the CUPA survey. Exceptionally research-active and productive faculty members may make the case for comparison with another group, such as Public Research Universities with High Research Activity or a salary level above the average for the applicable CUPA category.

## **Base Salary Standard for Research Positions**

The basic salary comparison standard is the average national salary for rank and discipline as defined by CUPA. Montana Tech establishes a research position for each faculty member, and the salary for this position is tied to the average national salary for the rank and discipline as defined by CUPA. In most cases at Montana Tech, the appropriate base salary for the research position is higher than the academic base salary, thus incentivizing research and grant seeking.

For highly productive faculty members, a higher CUPA comparison group and/or a salary up to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for the rank and discipline may be proposed and justified by the faculty member. The faculty member proposing this alternative peer reference must provide evidence of high research productivity, in the form of grant volume, publication record, citation record, national/international recognition, and graduate student thesis/dissertation supervision. It is likely that at most a few faculty members will be approved for this higher standard. Such individuals will be those who are competing successfully at the highest level nationally and even internationally.

### **Institutional Procedures for Establishing Base Salaries for Research Positions**

1. Each August, at the start of the academic year, Montana Tech sets the salary for the research position for each faculty member at the average salary reported by CUPA for the faculty member's discipline and rank.
2. Faculty members who at least "meet expectations" in all duties, consistently demonstrate proper fiscal and administrative management of all grants for which they are or were principal investigator, and consistently follow Montana Tech's proposal and grant-management processes are eligible to request a higher research base salary than the CUPA average.
3. Any faculty member with high research productivity, who believes he or she should have a base salary for his/her research position set in comparison with a different peer group may request a higher research base salary in the following manner. The request must be submitted no later than July 15, to be considered as the base research salary for the upcoming academic year.
  - a) The faculty member assembles evidence of his/her research productivity (grant volume, publications, citations, dissertation/thesis supervision, and national/international recognition) and compares it with the research productivity of faculty (average annual research grants and publication records) for highly ranked departments in the discipline (see, for example, the latest National Research Council doctoral program "rankings").
  - b) The faculty member reviews CUPA salary ranges (minimum, average, maximum) (available from the Budget office), and proposes the appropriate reference peer group.
  - c) The faculty member completes the Application for Research Position Salary Adjustment form (attached), with the salary documentation and evidence of high research productivity attached, and submits it to the Dean.
  - d) The Dean evaluates the request, consults with the chair, and if supportive adds justification/comments (especially for those claiming highly productive research performance) to the form and forwards all materials to the Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR).
  - e) The VCR reviews, adds justification/comments, and if supportive, forwards the request to the Chancellor.
  - f) The Chancellor reviews, and if supportive approves the request and sends the signed documents back to the VCR not later than the first day of classes.
  - g) The VCR records the Chancellor's approval of the request, and forwards the original documentation to the Provost's Office. The Provost reviews and rechecks CUPA salary information for the particular peer group, finalizes the base research salary for the faculty

- member, notifies the faculty member and dean, and incorporates this amount into the request submitted to the Commissioner's Office (OCHE) not later than early September.
4. Annually, the Provost forwards all requests for base salaries for research positions to the Commissioner's Office (OCHE) for approval. This request includes the salaries based on the CUPA averages along with the Chancellor-approved research salaries requested and justified by faculty who are highly productive researchers.
  5. Once OCHE has approved the requested base salaries for research positions and notified the Provost, the Provost notifies the VCR, OSP, and HR. The Provost also notifies each faculty member and dean/director of approved salaries for research positions affecting them or their organizations.
  6. A base research salary higher than the CUPA average must be requested and reviewed annually, and it will be approved only with evidence of continuing high research productivity.

**NOTE: When approved, an individual's research position base salary must be used for all organized sponsored projects, regardless of sponsor.**

### **Appeal process**

If the request for a research base salary is denied at any level within Montana Tech, the faculty member may write a formal appeal to the VCR.

- Upon receipt of the formal appeal, the VCR will convene a meeting and include the Provost, the Dean, two professional colleagues (chosen from three suggested by the faculty member), and the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance.
- The six individuals on this appeals committee will meet to review and make a final determination.
- If the final determination is supportive, the Provost will include the recommended research base salary in the request to OCHE.
- If the final determination is to deny the appeal, there is no further appeal and the decision stands. The faculty member may apply the following year for consideration, based on the updated research and scholarly productivity record at that time.