Big Picture of the MCCS Salary Structure and How the Proposed Salary Grid is an Improvement Upon the Classification Study

Below is a narrative presenting some history and salary fundamentals that served as the basis for many of the features in the proposed new salary grid. On May 5, 2017, the new salary grid was unanimously approved by the MCCC Board of Directors to be sent out to the MCCC Day Unit membership for ratification. The analysis below looks at both professional staff and faculty but focuses first on faculty salaries to establish context and to highlight a specific point of parity between faculty and professional staff, which is a central feature in the new salary grid.

Table of Contents

General Concepts – Nationwide Salaries at 2-year Higher Ed Institutions
Background on basis for MCCS salaries.
MCCC System — Faculty
DMG-Maximus and the Classification Study
Basic history of how the Commonwealth came to put money behind faculty rank change and other measures that bolstered salaries for new faculty in the first 5-10 years of their career in the MCCS.
The Numbers in Play over a 10-year period.
Analysis of how faculty salaries were impacted by classification points in comparison to flat across-the-board increases.
The 1 percent
Analysis of what paid for the Classification points.
The End of Classification
Brief summary of the monetary effect of flat across-the-board increases.
Looking Ahead
A look at how salaries going forward will be impacted by the proposed new salary grids.
MCCC System — Professional Staff
DMG-Maximus and the Classification Study
Impact of Classification on salaries of professional staff in the first 5-10 years of a member's career in the MCCS.
Looking Ahead — The New Salary Grid
What the new salary grid does to resolve several of the basic inequities that had persisted between faculty and professional staff since the implementation of classification.

General Concepts – Nationwide Salaries at 2-year Higher Ed Institutions

In order to determine whether salaries at any given institution are where they should be, it is the norm to compare them to those at comparable institutions. At two-year colleges, faculty salaries are divided into three categories to ensure that apples are being compared to apples and oranges to oranges. The three categories are the following: (1) *private* two-year colleges, (2) *public* two-year colleges *without* faculty rank, and (3) *public* two-year colleges *with* faculty rank. The salaries at public two year instructions are on average higher than those at private ones. This has to do primarily with the public accountability standards for credentialing and the force of collective bargaining agreements behind pay structures.

On average, the salaries at the two-year *public* institutions *with* faculty rank are about 25 percent higher than two-year *public* institutions *without* faculty rank. The primary reason for this has to do with the extra pay given to faculty in the first 5-10 years of their careers as they achieve changes in rank (Instructor to Assistant Professor, Assistant Professor to Associate, etc.) These salary raises for rank change, along with across-the-board percentage raises, help to build a base salary so that, when the across-the-board percentage-raises-only go into effect, it is compounding a salary that is large enough to grow significantly.

MCCC System — Faculty

DMG-Maximus and the Classification Study

In the Massachusetts Community College System (MCCS), prior to 1999, although there was faculty rank, there were no pay increases for faculty rank changes. There was a pseudo-step system in place at some colleges, but it was unevenly implemented. Generally speaking, salaries were increased by flat across-the-board percentage raises only. By the 1990s, MCCS salaries were so low, and so many inequities had emerged, resulting in numerous grievances, that outside consultants (DMG-Maximus) were brought in to study the issue. Because DMG-Maximus compared the MCCS to those two-year institutions which pay for rank changes, they concluded, in their Classification Study, that MCCS faculty salaries (when compared to two-year public institutions *with rank* in 10 comparison states) were *at least* 25% lower than where they should be.

Based on the findings of DMG-Maximus, the commonwealth approved a one-time across-the-board adjustment to bring all salaries up to where they should be. The salary inequities were very uneven, so the adjustments were varied and wide ranging. Depending on factors such as how long one had been in the system, what percentage increase happened when measured against inflation that year, the beginning salary, whether one got steps, etc. some salaries were severely depressed and others less so. Some salaries were already where they should be, while others were way below that.

To prevent this situation of depressed salaries and inequities from happening again in the future, modifications were made to the compensation structure to ensure that salaries in the first 5-10 years of a faculty member's career would have opportunities to build up. One such modification was to put money behind rank change; faculty got 20 points for every rank change. Another was to add a flat dollar amount, which, as a percentage of income, benefits lower salaries more. The roughly $800 added annually on base to all faculty salaries, in the form of a seniority-experience adjustment, contributed 2% to a $40,000 salary base and 1% to an $80,000 one.

The Numbers in Play over a 10-Year period

Every contract cycle from 2003 to 2012 has been 9% (3% each year). Generally speaking, the 3% raises were distributed in the form of 2% across-the-board raises, with 1% used to pay for the Classification points. In this way, in each 3-year contract cycle, the $40,000 salary got 2% every year for an across-the-board raise, 2% every year for the seniority-experience adjustment, and 2.25% for one rank change. For the $40,000 salary, this amounted to a 14% raise over a 3-year contract cycle. This 14% raise would take place for two to four contract cycles, depending on how many rank changes an instructor would get, before salaries flattened to a basic across-the-board percentage raise bolstered slightly by the yearly seniority-experience raise, (which now, with the higher salary, would be closer to 1.5% rather than 2%) and the 0.5% percent post-tenure review raise that took place once every three years.

The 1 percent

As a side note, there had often been the complaint that paying the classification points resulted in senior faculty not getting their full 3% annual raise. In the three contract cycles from 2003-2012, this was largely not true. The $80,000 salary also got the flat $800 (1%) seniority-experience raise as well as a 0.5% post tenure review raise in a contract cycle. Therefore, the senior faculty making $80,000 got their full 3% raise plus a half percent bonus for a successful post-tenure review. So where did the 1% come from to pay for the classification points? Based on the information request made by the MCCC during the 2006-2009 contract cycle, it would appear that about 0.75 of the 1% came from the colleges, and 0.25 came from the relatively small number of unit salaries over $90,000.

The End of Classification

This whole system of 14% raises for the $40,000 salary to the 9.5% raises for the $80,000 salary over a contract cycle came to a screeching halt in 2013. The 2013-2015 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) threw out the entire compensation system established by the DMG-Maximus classification study and accepted flat across-the-board raises for everyone. What this meant, in monetary terms, was that the $40,000 salary in the 2013-2015 contract cycle got 9% instead of the 14% it had enjoyed under the classification system, and the $80,000 salary got a flat 9% instead of 9.5% (a much smaller loss, but a loss nonetheless). In short, the 2013-2015 CBA pushed us back to the salary structure before classification.

Looking Ahead

The current 2015-2017 CBA has been able to undo a small amount of the losses inflicted by the 2013-2015 CBA. However, should the new salary contract grid not be put in place, and the MCCS is forced to experience another contract cycle of flat across-the-board raises, the harm to the salaries of those faculty hired since 2012 will be irreparable, losses compounding to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars over the lifetime of their careers. On the other hand, the new proposed salary grid, should it be implemented, has the potential to undo most of the damage caused by the 2013-2015 CBA, while providing transparency and new opportunities for salary increases that had not been available in the classification points system.

MCCC System — Professional Staff

DMG-Maximus and the Classification Study

In looking at the salaries of professional staff in MCCS, DMG-Maximus concluded that professional staff salaries were, with some exceptions, largely where they should be. There were instances of equity adjustments for professional staff unit members, which was provided for in the 1999-2002 CBA. But the dramatic salary adjustments for some faculty did not happen for professional staff. The study recognized that the MCCC professional staff designation includes positions which differ in value (day care instructor versus librarian, for example) and this led to seven salary schedules for professional staff, depending on job classification.

A joint committee between management and professional staff was established to study this further in 2002-2003. However, recommendations made by the professional staff unit members on this committee were not implemented, and the committee dissolved without any further actions.

The salary items put in place by the classification study to shore up faculty salaries in the first 5-10 years were largely absent in the professional staff salary structure. Except for the value of seniority-experience points added annually to professional staff salaries, nothing else was in place. Moreover, the value of the points for professional staff was much lower than that for faculty. For example, the point value for a grade 6 professional staff was $25.31 compared to $44.88 for faculty.

It is not clear how much damage professional staff salaries have sustained as a result of the lack of opportunities to build their salaries in the first 5-10 years. In a joint study committee meeting in 2008 one of the presidents was heard to opine that the salaries of professional staff have kept up with market rates because of a higher rate of turnover among professional staff when compared to faculty. In any case, turnover is certainly not the preferred way to build MCCS salary.

Looking Ahead — The New Salary Grid

The proposed grid, in doing away with classification points, has done away with that particular class of inequity between professional staff and faculty. Additionally, the monetary gains offered to faculty in the form of rank change and tenure have been put in place in the professional staff grids. For the first time since professional staff became part of the MCCS system, there is a real chance to build up salaries in the first 5-10 years of a professional staff unit member's career. Should the new salary grid be implemented, "turnover" will cease to be the only way professional staff salaries can be built up.

The narrative is a summary of remarks made by Margaret Wong (QCC), member of the Contract Grid Committee, to the MCCC BOD on 5-5-2017. Feel free to email her with questions or comments regarding the contents of this document: mwong420@yahoo.com