



## Two Years of Lost Purchasing Power

### 2011-2012 Faculty Salary Brief for Sociology and Other Social Science Disciplines

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There is concern that during the upcoming presidential elections, faculty will be pictured as “villains” in discussions about the escalating costs of higher education (Potter 2012), as state legislatures continue the pattern of decreasing tax-dollar support for higher education (Schmidt 2012). This is not the story that the faculty salary data show, however. Academic Year (AY) 2011/12 represents the continuation of a historic low period in faculty compensation. For the last two years, the average faculty members were unable to purchase the same market basket of goods that she or he had been able to purchase in AY 2008-2009. Between AY 2010/11 and AY 2011/12, faculty members lost purchasing power because average faculty salary increases were less than the rate of inflation. Purchasing power, as calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), is based on change in the Consumer Price Index, the difference in the price of a market basket of goods including food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical expenses, and other goods and services that people buy for day-to-day living. Between Academic Year (AY) 2010/11 and AY 2011/12 overall median faculty salaries climbed 1.9 percent, while inflation increased by 3.2 percent, according to findings from the National Faculty Salary Survey (NFSS), a sample survey of institutions conducted annually by the College and University Professional Association for Human

Resources, cited in Jaschick (2012). This followed the previous year of lost purchasing power. Between academic year (AY) 2009/10 and AY 2010/11, overall median faculty salaries climbed 1.1 percent while inflation increased 1.5 percent. In his article, Jaschick provides information for average salaries by rank and discipline. However, he collapses all social science disciplines into one category, in spite of the differences among them. The NFSS does include more specific data that allows for comparisons among these disciplines.

In this research brief, we will examine salary trends (from AY 2005/06 through AY 2011/12) in both current (real) dollars and 2011 constant (inflation-controlled) dollars, for all sociology, economics, political science, and anthropology faculty. We also present the differences between public and private institutions. For sociologists, we further compare changes in salaries by rank. The brief begins with a description of changes in sociology salaries and then examines the differences among the social science disciplines. It is important to note that this brief only contains information for the salaries of full-time ranked faculty. It is also important to note that, unlike the unweighted data cited in Jaschick’s (2012) article, the data presented here are weighted to control for department size.<sup>2</sup> Finally, it should be noted that this brief will use

**Table 1: Average Annual Salaries of Sociology Faculty by Rank in Current Dollars, AY 2005/2006 - AY 2011/2012**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Full Prof.</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>Assoc. Prof.</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>Assist. Prof.</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>All Faculty Ranks</i>	<i>% Chg</i>
2005/2006	\$80,506	N/A	\$59,903	N/A	\$49,519	N/A	\$63,846	N/A
2006/2007	\$83,708	4.0%	\$61,838	3.2%	\$51,337	3.7%	\$66,207	3.7%
2007/2008	\$87,938	5.1%	\$64,788	4.8%	\$53,844	4.9%	\$69,056	4.3%
2008/2009	\$89,808	2.1%	\$66,940	3.3%	\$55,348	2.8%	\$70,647	2.3%
2009/2010	\$91,406	1.8%	\$67,396	0.7%	\$55,930	1.1%	\$71,756	1.6%
2010/2011	\$91,994	0.6%	\$67,791	0.6%	\$56,572	1.1%	\$72,244	0.7%
2011/2012	\$92,436	0.5%	\$69,558	2.6%	\$57,629	1.9%	\$73,503	1.7%
<b>Overall % Chg</b>		<b>14.8%</b>		<b>16.1%</b>		<b>16.4%</b>		<b>15.1%</b>

average rather than median figures, so that we can calculate salary data across ranks. Appendix Table 1 contains a comparison of median and average salary figures. Average salary is higher across all ranks than is median salary, but the trends are the same.

## Sociology Faculty Salaries

### *In Current Dollars*

As with other disciplines, sociology faculty salaries in current dollars increased between AY 2010/11 and AY 2011/12, but failed to keep pace with inflation in the last two academic years. The average salary of \$73,503 (in current dollars) earned by all ranked faculty in AY 2011-2012 was 1.7 percent more than they earned

in the previous year (see Table 1). Similarly, average salaries at the full, associate, and assistant levels increased between 0.5 and 2.6 percent during this period, none of which were above the rate of inflation. Salaries for full professors increased by the smallest percentage (0.5 percent) on the largest base (\$91,994 in 2010/2011), while associate professor salaries increased by the largest percentage (2.6 percent), but on a substantially smaller base (\$67,791 in 2010/2011).

New assistant professors enjoyed relatively high salary growth in current dollars from AY 2005/2006 through AY 2007/2008, outpacing the salary growth of all assistant professors during this time. As a result, the salary gap between new assistant professors and those already working began to close, from \$2,225 in 2005/2006 to \$1,398 in 2007/2008. The economic recession caused lower salary increases in AY 2008/2009

**Table 2: Average Annual Salaries of Sociology Faculty by Rank in 2011 Constant Dollars, AY 2005/2006 - AY 2011/2012**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Full Prof.</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>Assoc. Prof.</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>Assist. Prof.</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>All Faculty Ranks</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>Inflation</i>
2005/2006	\$92,724	N/A	\$68,994	N/A	\$57,034	N/A	\$73,535	N/A	3.4%
2006/2007	\$93,399	0.7%	\$68,997	0.0%	\$57,280	0.4%	\$73,872	0.5%	3.2%
2007/2008	\$95,401	2.1%	\$70,287	1.9%	\$58,414	2.0%	\$74,917	1.4%	2.9%
2008/2009	\$93,827	-1.6%	\$69,936	-0.5%	\$57,825	-1.0%	\$73,809	-1.5%	3.8%
2009/2010	\$95,838	2.1%	\$70,664	1.0%	\$58,642	1.4%	\$75,235	1.9%	-0.4%
2010/2011	\$94,898	-1.0%	\$69,931	-1.0%	\$58,358	-0.5%	\$74,524	-0.9%	1.6%
2011/2012	\$92,436	-2.6%	\$69,558	-0.5%	\$57,629	-1.2%	\$73,503	-1.4%	3.2%
<b>Overall % Chg</b>		<b>-0.3%</b>		<b>0.8%</b>		<b>1.0%</b>		<b>0.0%</b>	

**Table 3: Average Annual Salaries of New Sociology Assistant Professors in Current and in 2011 Constant Dollars, AY 2005/2006 - AY 2011/2012**

Year	Current \$	% Chg	2011	
			Constant \$	% Chg
2005/2006	\$47,294	N/A	\$54,471	N/A
2006/2007	\$49,735	5.2%	\$55,493	1.9%
2007/2008	\$52,446	5.5%	\$56,897	2.5%
2008/2009	\$53,081	1.2%	\$55,457	-2.5%
2009/2010	\$54,574	2.8%	\$57,220	3.2%
2010/2011	\$55,614	1.9%	\$57,369	0.3%
2011/2012	\$55,637	0.0%	\$55,637	-3.0%
<b>Overall % Chg</b>		<b>17.6%</b>		<b>2.1%</b>

for all assistant professors. Even though new assistant professors saw greater salary increases in the following years, once again outpacing already working assistant professors, they experienced virtually no increase, on average, from AY 2010/2011 to AY 2011/2012 and the gap increased again to nearly \$2,000.

### In Constant Dollars

In spite of the average 15.1 percent increase in sociology

faculty salaries across all ranks between AY 2005/06 and AY 2011/12, purchasing power for faculty members in this discipline remained stagnant during this period. There was a 1.4 percent decline in average salaries between 2010/11 and 2011/12. Since AY 2005/06 salaries actually decreased by \$32 in constant dollars (Table 2), with salary declines in three out of seven years for all faculty ranks when aggregated. Full professors, associate professors, and assistant professors experienced average salary decreases during those years with none experiencing raises of more than one percent, on average since AY 2005/06. During this seven year period, new assistant professors did experience larger raises than other faculty ranks (3.2 percent in constant dollars), but did experience salary decreases for two out of seven years (Table 3).

## Sociology Salaries at Private and Public Institutions

Typically, median sociology faculty salaries are higher at private institutions than at public institutions, and this gap widened slightly between AY 2009/10 and AY 2010/11, as salary increases at private institutions generally outpaced those at their public counterparts (Brainard 2011; CUPA 2011). This was true for sociology as well as for other social science disciplines, as shown

**Table 4: Average Annual Salaries of Sociology Faculty at Private and Public Institutions by Rank in Current and in 2011 Constant Dollars, AY 2010/2011 - 2011/2012**

Faculty Rank	PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS					
	Current Dollars			2011 Constant Dollars		
	AY 2010/2011	AY 2011/2012	% Chg	AY 2010/2011	AY 2011/2012	% Chg
Full Professor	\$91,994	\$90,165	-2.0%	\$94,898	\$90,165	-5.0%
Assoc. Professor	\$69,668	\$71,399	2.5%	\$71,867	\$71,399	-0.7%
Assist Professor	\$57,698	\$58,395	1.2%	\$59,519	\$58,395	-1.9%
All Faculty Ranks	\$72,933	\$73,419	0.7%	\$75,235	\$73,419	-2.4%
Faculty Rank	PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS					
	Current Dollars			2011 Constant Dollars		
	AY 2010/2011	AY 2011/2012	% Chg	AY 2010/2011	AY 2011/2012	% Chg
Full Professor	\$91,995	\$93,687	1.8%	\$94,899	\$93,687	-1.3%
Assoc. Professor	\$66,818	\$68,658	2.8%	\$68,927	\$68,658	-0.4%
Assist Professor	\$55,919	\$57,168	2.2%	\$57,684	\$57,168	-0.9%
All Faculty Ranks	\$71,873	\$73,549	2.3%	\$74,142	\$73,549	-0.8%

**Table 5: Average Annual Salaries of Social Science Faculty by Discipline in Current Dollars, AY 2005/06 - AY 2011/2012**

Year	Sociology	% Chg	Anthro.	% Chg	Economics	% Chg	Polit. Science	% Chg
2005/2006	\$63,846	N/A	\$66,656	N/A	\$83,078	N/A	\$67,456	N/A
2006/2007	\$66,207	3.7%	\$70,462	5.7%	\$86,294	3.9%	\$69,749	3.4%
2007/2008	\$69,056	4.3%	\$72,410	2.8%	\$90,064	4.4%	\$73,102	4.8%
2008/2009	\$70,647	2.3%	\$73,710	1.8%	\$94,231	4.6%	\$75,215	2.9%
2009/2010	\$71,756	1.6%	\$73,944	0.3%	\$95,793	1.7%	\$75,433	0.3%
2010/2011	\$72,244	0.7%	\$74,581	0.9%	\$96,637	0.9%	\$76,133	0.9%
2011/2012	\$73,503	1.7%	\$76,795	3.0%	\$100,129	3.6%	\$77,939	2.4%
<b>Overall % Chg</b>		<b>15.1%</b>		<b>15.2%</b>		<b>20.5%</b>		<b>15.5%</b>

in a previous research brief (see *Falling Behind: Sociology and Other Social Science Faculty Salaries, AY 2010-2011* at [http://www.asanet.org/research/sociology\\_faculty\\_salaries\\_2010.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/research/sociology_faculty_salaries_2010.pdf)). The discrepancy between public and private institutions promoted concerns for public institutions' ability to recruit well-qualified candidates and for departments to retain existing faculty who might be recruited away by private institutions. When we use average rather than median salaries for AY 2011/12 we do not find this discrepancy in sociology or, as we will see, in other disciplines. When we examine salary changes in both current and constant dollars we find that salaries for faculty at public institutions appear to be outpacing those at private institutions. Overall, the average salary of faculty at all ranks in current dollars increased by 0.7 percent at private institutions, with salaries of full professors decreasing by 2 percent. In contrast, overall average salaries for all ranks of faculty at public institutions increased by 2.3 percent in current dollars, and full professor salaries increased by 1.8 percent (see Table 4).

When we turn to constant dollars, the trend is similar. Although sociology faculty at both types of institutions lost ground, the loss appears to be greater at private institutions. At private institutions, all ranks of faculty salaries decreased by 2.4 percent in constant dollars while faculty at public institutions faculty lost an average of 0.8 percent. Greater losses were experienced by all ranks of faculty, on average, at private institutions. We are not entirely sure why faculty members at public institutions appear to be doing better than faculty at private institutions (although all ranks of faculty saw average declines in salaries in constant dollars). Part of the reason may be that more outliers were part of the current year's sample than the prior year's, or

that more small private church schools found their way into the sample of private institutions or that more unionized higher salary campuses found their way into the public institution sample. We suggest that these figures should be viewed with caution.

## Social Science Faculty Salaries

### Current Dollars

Economics is typically the highest paid social science discipline, while the other three disciplines that we examine here, sociology, anthropology, and political science have similar pay scales. Therefore, not surprisingly, economics faculty member, once again, experienced the largest average salary increase of 3.6 percent between Ay 2010-2011 and AY 2011/12 in current dollars, followed by anthropology at 3.0 percent (Table 5). Over the last seven years, economists average salaries increased by 20.5 percent (in current dollars), while salaries for the other disciplines increased by about 15 percent (see Table 5). While faculty in the other three social science disciplines earned salaries in the low to mid-\$70,000 range, Economists earned an average of about \$100,000. This difference can be seen dramatically in Figure 1. It is not clear how this salary difference can be explained. It may be that a significant share of economists are employed in schools of business that traditionally have higher salaries than schools of arts and sciences, where the other disciplines are located or that a higher percentage of economists are located outside of the academy where they typically earn higher salaries, and, hence, academic departments may pay more in order to compete with non-academic jobs.

**Table 6: Average Annual Salaries for Social Science Faculty by Discipline in 2011 Constant Dollars, AY 2005/2006 - AY 2011-2012**

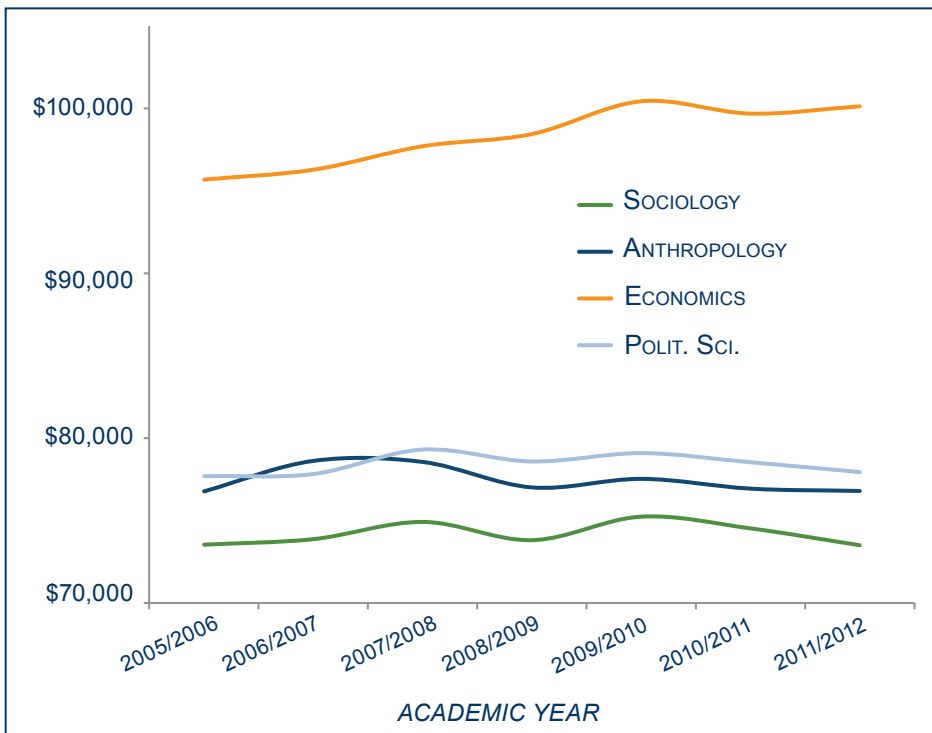
Year	Sociology	% Chg	Anthro.	% Chg	Economics	% Chg	Polit. Science	% Chg	Inflation
2005/2006	\$73,535	N/A	\$76,772	N/A	\$95,686	N/A	\$77,693	N/A	3.4%
2006/2007	\$73,872	0.5%	\$78,619	2.4%	\$96,284	0.6%	\$77,824	0.2%	3.2%
2007/2008	\$74,917	1.4%	\$78,555	-0.1%	\$97,708	1.5%	\$79,306	1.9%	2.9%
2008/2009	\$73,809	-1.5%	\$77,009	-2.0%	\$98,448	0.8%	\$78,581	-0.9%	3.8%
2009/2010	\$75,235	1.9%	\$77,529	0.7%	\$100,438	2.0%	\$79,090	0.6%	-0.4%
2010/2011	\$74,524	-0.9%	\$76,935	-0.8%	\$99,687	-0.7%	\$78,536	-0.7%	1.6%
2011/2012	\$73,503	-1.4%	\$76,795	-0.2%	\$100,129	0.4%	\$77,939	-0.8%	3.2%
<b>Overall % Chg</b>		<b>0.0%</b>		<b>0.0%</b>		<b>4.6%</b>		<b>0.3%</b>	

### Constant Dollars

Average faculty salary growth in these disciplines turned negative during the last two years, when viewed in constant dollars. The result is that faculty members had no more purchasing power in AY 2011/12 than they did in AY 2005/06 (see Table 6). Economics is the

only exception. During this period, unlike the other social science disciplines, economists experienced an average increase of 4.6 percent in constant dollars, although their average salaries were slightly lower in constant dollars than in AY 2009/10, because of a decline in the next year (Table 6). Figure 1 illustrates that purchasing power was essentially flat across social science disciplines. However, it does show the gap in purchasing power between economics, on the one hand, and sociology, anthropology, and political science on the other.

**Figure 1: Average Annual Salaries of Ranked Social Science Faculty by Discipline in 2011 Constant Dollars, AY 2005/2006 - AY 2011/2012**



### Social Science Salaries at Private and Public Institutions

We have seen that, on average, sociology faculty appears to do better (or, at least, do not do worse) at public institutions than at private institutions—a finding that appears to be contrary to overall findings for all academic disciplines. Last year, all disciplines experienced losses at both public and private institutions, and those losses tended to be greater at public institutions, except for economics (Spalter-Roth and

**Table 7: Average Annual Salaries of Social Sciences Faculty at Private and Public Institutions by Discipline in Current and in Constant Dollars, AY 2010/2011 and AY 2011/2012**

**PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS**

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Current Dollars</i>			<i>2011 Constant Dollars</i>		
	<i>AY 2010/2011</i>	<i>AY 2011/2012</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>AY 2010/2011</i>	<i>AY 2011/2012</i>	<i>% Chg</i>
Sociology	\$72,933	\$73,419	0.7%	\$75,235	\$73,419	-2.4%
Anthropology	\$79,061	\$80,833	2.2%	\$81,557	\$80,833	-0.9%
Economics	\$94,226	\$96,432	2.3%	\$97,200	\$96,432	-0.8%
Polit. Science	\$78,463	\$80,034	2.0%	\$80,940	\$80,034	-1.1%

**PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Current Dollars</i>			<i>2011 Constant Dollars</i>		
	<i>AY 2010/2011</i>	<i>AY 2011/2012</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>AY 2010/2011</i>	<i>AY 2011/2012</i>	<i>% Chg</i>
Sociology	\$71,873	\$73,549	2.3%	\$74,142	\$73,549	-0.8%
Anthropology	\$72,782	\$75,383	3.6%	\$75,079	\$75,383	0.4%
Economics	\$98,429	\$102,638	4.3%	\$101,536	\$102,638	1.1%
Polit. Science	\$74,716	\$76,722	2.7%	\$77,074	\$76,722	-0.5%

Scelza). In AY 2011/12, losses in constant dollars were greater at private institutions for all the social science disciplines. In fact, economics and anthropology faculty experienced minor salary gains (in constant dollars) at public institutions (Table 7). Neither sociology nor political science experienced gains in purchasing power at either private or public institutions. Although purchasing power tended to decrease less for social science disciplines at public institutions than at private ones, it is still the case that the average salary for faculty members tends to be higher at private institutions than at public ones. Sociology and economics are exceptions to this rule. Sociologists experience similar salaries in AY 2011/12 at both types of institutions (an average of \$73,419 at private institutions and \$73,549 at public institutions), and economists earned more, on average at public institutions (\$102,638 at public institutions and \$96,432 at private institutions).

## Conclusion

When identifying reasons for increased college tuition, faculty salaries are not the villain of the piece. Data from the CUPA-HR National Faculty Salary Survey presented in this research brief show that for the prior two years faculty salaries in the social sciences have

not kept pace with inflation and faculty members actually lost purchasing power. Losses were greatest at the full professor rank, (although their salaries are significantly higher than the next highest rank). Between AY 2005/06 and AY 2011/12 average salaries in sociology, anthropology, and political science remained flat. Average salaries in economics saw a small increase above the rate of inflation. While average salaries in sociology, anthropology, and political science are relatively similar, in the \$70,000 range, in contrast, average salaries in economics are at the \$100,000 mark. It's not clear what the reasons are for this discrepancy.

Although other researchers have found that private institutions are increasing salaries at a faster rate than public universities, we did not find this to be in case in the social sciences over the last two academic years. These figures should be read with caution. However, salaries were higher at private institutions than public ones, except for sociology where salaries were about even. Looking forward, next year's salary brief will investigate whether faculty members in sociology and the other social sciences continue to lose purchasing power or if the job market decreases bottom out as the social science continues to emerge from the abyss caused by the recession (See Spalter-Roth and Scelza (2012).

## Appendix

**Appendix Table 1: Median and Average Annual Salaries of Sociology Faculty by Rank in Current Dollars, AY 2005/2006 - 2011/2012**

Year	Full Professor				Associate Professor				Assistant Professor			
	Median \$	% Chg	Avg.	% Chg	Median \$	% Chg	Avg.	% Chg	Median \$	% Chg	Avg.	% Chg
2005/2006	77,413	N/A	80,506	N/A	57,897	N/A	59,903	N/A	48,515	N/A	49,519	N/A
2006/2007	79,756	3.0%	83,708	4.0%	60,494	4.5%	61,838	3.2%	50,340	3.8%	51,337	3.7%
2007/2008	84,427	5.9%	87,938	5.1%	63,172	4.4%	64,788	4.8%	52,104	3.5%	53,844	4.9%
2008/2009	85,973	1.8%	89,808	2.1%	65,023	2.9%	66,940	3.3%	53,736	3.1%	55,348	2.8%
2009/2010	86,863	1.0%	91,406	1.8%	65,351	0.5%	67,396	0.7%	54,500	1.4%	55,930	1.1%
2010/2011	87,428	0.7%	91,994	0.6%	65,842	0.8%	67,791	0.6%	54,925	0.8%	56,572	1.1%
2011/2012	89,594	2.5%	92,436	0.5%	67,150	2.0%	69,558	2.6%	55,920	1.8%	57,629	1.9%
<b>Overall % Chg</b>		<b>15.7%</b>		<b>14.8%</b>		<b>16.0%</b>		<b>16.1%</b>		<b>15.3%</b>		<b>16.4%</b>

<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Janene Scelza for designing this brief.

<sup>2</sup> We would like to thank Dr. Ray Sizemore, Research Director at CUPA-HR, for providing us with the weighted data that accounts for the size of each department included in the survey.

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