



## Staff Compensation - Frequently Asked Questions

### **Where do the UUA Compensation Standards come from? Are they aspirational or reflective of the congregation's actual salaries?**

The Unitarian Universalist Association's Compensation Standards are developed through a comparative wage analysis using data obtained from a variety of national sources for church and nonprofit wages.

### **How are the UUA Compensation Standards made? Do they account for geographical areas? How does Madison's cost of living get factored into the standards?**

UUA Compensation Standards are adjusted annually to reflect prevailing wage rates in communities where UU congregations are located. Economic Research Institute data is used to assign a Geo Index to each congregation. Geo Indices range from Geo Index 1 to 7, with Geo Index 3 representing congregations in communities where the average wage paid falls close to the U.S. average. Madison is currently listed as a Geo Index 3.

### **Are the compensation standards adjusted due to cost of living or cost of wages?**

In keeping with compensation philosophy and best practices, the UUA Compensation Standards are based on the *cost of wages* and do not explicitly incorporate the *cost of living* into compensation recommendations. However, on the Geo Index Listing, the UUA does include each location's cost of living, as reported by the Economic Research Institute, for the congregation's consideration.

### **Do the UUA Compensation Standards take into account historically marginalized or underpaid communities?**

No, unfortunately, the recommendations don't address inequities that exist in the national wage structure. We recognize that jobs traditionally held by women, people of color, and other marginalized folk have been historically underpaid, and those wage norms are reflected in the UUA Compensation Standards. The UUA is aware of this and discerning how to address this complex issue.

### **How does the size of our congregation factor into the salary recommendations?**

The UUA Compensation Standards are categorized into six unique congregation sizes. We fall under the "Large II" category, the largest of the six, which is relevant for congregations with 750+ members. As of February 15, 2021, we have 1038 members and 111 affiliates, according to our bylaw's definitions of these categories. These numbers are on the heels of the membership discernment outreach rolled out in fall 2020 and was the first review to be completed since 2016.

### **To what extent do FUS positions align with the positions outlined in the UUA Compensation Standards? How do we apply those guidelines when they don't have a good fit with our positions?**

The compensation recommendations are applied to 24 unique job descriptions that the UUA has identified and referred to as "capsules." About three-quarters of our positions are straightforward to determine, aligning closely with a capsule description. However, in some cases, the UUA capsule descriptions do not correspond to the FUS staff member's actual position title. In these cases, we found that the FUS staff position is best described as a blend of two of the capsule descriptions and does require careful discernment. We intend to share our capsule analysis with MidAmerica region staff for feedback once completed.

**Where can I find information on the UUA capsules and their associated dollar amount?**

Click here: <https://www.uua.org/leadership/congregations-as-employeers/compensation-benefits> to find out more about the UUA's compensation standards and research.

**How do the UUA Compensation Standards plan for annual increases? And what is the role of merit and competence in staff compensation?**

Each capsule description has a compensation range associated with it, structured within a minimum (min) recommendation, midpoint (mid), and maximum (max) recommendation. The midpoint represents the market value for a proficient employee in that job as determined by the UUA's comparative wage analysis. When a staff member is hired, their starting salary is somewhere between the minimum and halfway to the midpoint, depending on professional and life experience. Each year they move one step closer to the midpoint of the salary recommendations. After that, increases are associated with annual increases the UUA makes to the compensation range and merit-based increases for seasoned staff members who consistently add value to the organization above and beyond the expected responsibilities and skill set. At this point in FUS's journey toward equitable pay, we are contemplating bringing each staff member to the recommended minimum for their role.

**Why should we use the UUA's guidelines instead of creating our own?**

FUS could spend a lot of volunteer and/or staff time getting all of the information that the UUA has kindly collected for us. Most industries find ways to outsource this research work. Services like this are one of the many reasons FUS belongs to the UUA and supports the UUA financially.

**Where are FUS's staff salaries currently compared to the UUA guidelines?**

Of our 17 staff members, the Leadership Team has assessed that eight of them are paid below the UUA minimum recommendations for their capsule, two will soon be at the minimum, and seven are above the minimum. It would require approximately \$63,000 annually to bring all staff to the minimum, including increases for payroll taxes and pension. Taking into account tenure, 12 of 17 staff members are paid below their recommended compensation amount, one will soon be at their recommended level, and four are above the recommendations. It would require approximately \$114,000 annually to bring all staff to their recommended level.

**Do all staff receive \$15/hour?**

No. Though all our full-time and salaried staff earn more than \$15 an hour, some of our part-time staff do not.

**Are we looking at full-time or part-time staff when talking about those paid below recommendations?**

Not including our teen childcare workers, seven of our 17 staff members are part-time. Of those seven, five are above the minimum UUA recommendations and two are very modestly below. Of our 10 full-time staff members, 6 are below the minimum, two are above, and two are at the minimum.

**How are other congregations doing in comparison to the UUA guidelines (especially of comparable size)?**

Like FUS, the UUA has limited resources and must discern carefully how to use their time and energy. This is not data that has been gathered to date but may be available in the coming years.

**How do our salaries compare to other faith communities in Madison, especially from an equity perspective?**

We do not currently have this information. A task force researched this question several years ago and found that generally FUS was behind other large faith communities in the Madison-area.

**What benefits do we offer, and are they above the UUA recommendations?**

FUS pays a somewhat larger share of family medical insurance for employees who opt for a family plan than the UUA recommends, and minimally more for individuals than the minimum UUA requirement. The net amount of this is more than offset by below-UUA guidelines for professional expenses allocations. FUS pays the UUA-recommended standard share of the family plan cost for ministers who are compensated at the UUA guidelines minimum or higher.

**When and how was the decision made to move to a co-ministry model?**

The question of which ministry model to use going forward was explored extensively through the work of the Ministerial Research Task Force, the February 2020 Parish Meeting, conversations with the Ministerial Search Committee, and feedback from the congregation in the ministerial search survey and cottage meetings held in the fall of 2020. The exploration has also included reaching out to other large UU congregations to learn from their experiences, consulting with denominational resources, and reflecting on the working relationships of our ministers during the interim period. In survey responses, cottage meetings, and open question discussions, the majority of FUS members and friends who provided feedback find value in, and are most comfortable with, a more collaborative, less hierarchical style of ministry. Guided by this sense, the Board of Trustees (BOT) decided that the new minister and the Rev. Kelly Crocker will be ministers of equal standing with the same level of responsibility and authority. For more information on this decision, see BOT President Terri Pepper's article in the December 2020 Search Update (<https://fusmadison.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Search-update-review.pdf>.) The BOT invited conversation about this decision at the December 2020 Parish Meeting and at two open listening sessions in January 2021.

**Why are the co-ministers going to be paid comparably? How does this impact the 2021-22 budget?**

The BOT accepted the Ministerial Search Committee's and Negotiating Team's recommendation that the compensation-level for the new ministry position needs to be no lower than the UUA minimum level for our congregation's size and Geo Index in order to attract the best pool of candidates. Many, perhaps most UU ministers, will not even consider congregations offering below the minimum level. The BOT also decided that offering significantly less compensation to one of the co-ministers—specifically, to the minister who has been at FUS for twenty years—would sabotage the idea of equal responsibility and authority from the outset. All of this means that Rev. Kelly's compensation needs to be brought up to the same compensation and benefit level as the new minister's package. Despite some progress in recent years, Rev. Kelly's compensation up to now has been below UUA guidelines.

**Is Rev. Kelly's compensation increase looked at as a separate issue from compensation for other staff?**

Ministerial compensation is not separate from the staff compensation analysis. Had Rev. Kelly been compensated as Associate Minister in accordance with UUA guidelines, including length of service, no increase would have been necessary to get her to the minimum for senior ministers. Since this isn't the case, the decision to pay the co-ministers comparably pushes getting Rev. Kelly up to the UUA guidelines to the top of the list for compensation increases.

**Have we experienced a drop in membership? And if so, should that have an impact on how many staff members we have?**

FUS has experienced a decline in membership over the past eight years. An audit of our membership number—the first one since 2016—confirmed this decrease. It's not unusual for there to be a decline in membership during a ministerial transition. We are hopeful that the direction will be reversed in the next few years as a new called ministry team gets started. Membership numbers can have an impact on financial resources that can impact staff size and compensation. Higher-per-member generosity—as FUS has experienced in the past few years—can offset some or all of the membership number impact. For more on the membership number, see the December 2020 Search Update: <https://fusmadison.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Search-update-review.pdf>.

**What is the BOT doing to create a purposeful plan around membership growth?**

The BOT anticipates leading the congregation in exploring FUS's mission. This process will be developed with the new ministry team of Rev. Kelly and the new minister, and it would be reasonable and timely to explore how growing our membership numbers fits into our mission and our sustainability as an organization.

**Why does \$100k seem out of reach for us? Why is increasing revenue so challenging for us? What can we do to affect that? Why aren't more people giving the way I do?**

Pledging units have gone down and have impacted this situation. Average pledges have gone up, but that hasn't offset the decline in pledging units. We believe that creating an updated and compelling mission for the congregation along with a settled ministry team will have a positive impact on both membership and generosity.

**Are there guidelines for how much people should be giving, and if so, where can you find them?**

Yes, you can find the fair giving resource from the UUA on our website here: <https://fusmadison.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/UUA-Fair-Share-Guide.png> This is a reference guide providing a range of giving, and we understand each individual and family must decide what level of commitment is best for their situation.

**Are there other ways to permanently increase revenue besides stewardship? Could we increase revenue to resolve this issue?**

There are other ways, but the congregation needs to make sure these ways don't inordinately sabotage its mission and goals. Since member and affiliate support typically accounts for approximately 70% of FUS's income, it is unlikely that enough additional revenue could be found without at least some significant increases in donor giving.

**Are you looking at other options to raise salaries without cutting staff, like cutting benefits or job sharing?**

Cutting benefits is contrary to the UUA compensation guidelines. The guidelines assume that congregations are paying a standard array of benefits as outlined in the guidelines. Job sharing is always a possibility, but job sharing does not have a financial impact if the position is compensated in accordance with UUA recommendations; job-sharing simply would split the compensation into two parts.

**Does the BOT feel there is intrinsic value in working for FUS, in this space, that can justify or outweigh low or unjust compensation?** No. There have been times in the history of the congregation that staff, including ministers, have sacrificed salary increases and even taken salary cuts, in order to meet the budget. The BOT considers this to be not only untenable but unethical. As an organization, we have grown in size, infrastructure, complexity, and accountability, and we must focus on attracting and maintaining staff who can do this increasingly complex work.

**What are the staff's thoughts on this issue?** "On the one hand, staff appreciate that the Board of Trustees is challenging the congregation to adopt a concrete plan to move toward fair compensation. On the other, staff do not believe that there is an adequate understanding and appreciation for the importance and value of their work. Even in normal times, their work often takes place outside the public eye. The level of commitment, resilience, and responsiveness of the staff have been especially tested over the last year. Staff appreciate the acknowledgment of their work and look forward to the time that they can see volunteers once again engaged in the ongoing work of the church. At the same time, their compensation should be brought into line with the skills and complexity of their work, and with the value of having staff whose compensation allows them to support themselves and their families."

**What is the BOT's discernment around the question posed at the Listening Sessions? *Absent sufficient additional revenue, should FUS have a smaller staff that is compensated at levels reflected in the UUA Compensation Standards or a larger staff that is not compensated to meet the Standards?***  
The BOT hasn't completed its discernment about this important question.

**Has the BOT created, or will the BOT, create policies that solidify the adoption of the UUA compensation guidelines?**

This is a question the BOT is currently contemplating. Congregational input from the March 14 Listening Session is a significant source of information for the BOT as it explores this question.

**Has the BOT, or will the BOT, create policies that clarify an appropriate level of transparency around compensation? How much does the parish, staff, personnel committee, BOT, and executive team each need to know and how often?**

The BOT does not have clear policies about this and is working this spring on creating such policies.

**What if we get the money this year, but don't another year? Will the BOT keep funding the positions?**

This is always a possibility. There are currently some undesignated cash reserves that can help FUS get through a shorter-term dip in revenue. The reserve is not a bottomless pot of money. Revenue ups and downs that are longer-term likely require continued examination of staff size.

**Is there a concretely defined time period to get to these goals?**

We intend to solidify and present an aspirational multi-year plan early in the 2021-2022 church year for bringing all staff to the recommended UUA Compensation levels after synthesizing the recommendations created collaboratively by Rev. Kelly, Monica, Rev. Roger, Rev. Doug, and the new minister. It's essential we include the new minister in solidifying this plan.

**If we had less staff...**

**Would staff workloads remain the same if we decreased the size of the staff?**

The workload for individual staff would likely remain the same, but the BOT is committed to avoiding adding the portfolios of staff positions that were reduced or eliminated to the remaining staff members. Doing so would be a recipe for staff burnout and frustrated members.

**If we were to decrease the size of staff, would programs and services also be reduced?**

Decisions about which programs, services, and staff positions to reduce or eliminate would center on FUS's mission: the programs, services, and staff positions which most powerfully help FUS achieve its mission would be prioritized.

**What programs might be cut?**

At this point, no plans for reductions have been explored. If reductions need to be made, the Leadership Team will follow BOT directives on priorities as it creates a draft budget for the BOT and then the congregation to consider.

**If we had less staff, could we rely on more members/volunteers to do things? What are the pros and cons of a long-term volunteer program that aims to build and recruit volunteers?**

We may at some point in the future be able to structure a highly functioning volunteer-led volunteer program, but the BOT does not see this as a pathway for the foreseeable future. It is simply not a viable solution to cut staff and believe that volunteers will take up the work. Two factors go into our reasoning:

- Successful volunteer programs are not without cost because staff time is required in order to have an effective volunteer program that functions consistently with the mission and vision adopted by the congregation. Most staff currently oversee volunteers who work on teams and task groups under their direction, and the commitment, longevity, and understanding of the volunteer's work all take ongoing support by staff. In 2018, we reduced one full-time staff position that included responsibilities for recruiting and overseeing volunteers and we haven't replaced that position.

- The idea of relying more on volunteers doesn't take into consideration gender and generational realities of volunteer work. This is not to diminish the work of men who volunteer, but as in other organizations, the role of active volunteer work at FUS is most often filled by women. Further, older members are more likely to fill stable longer-term positions, with one-time or episodic volunteering more likely to be done by younger members. If the distant and recent past contain a lesson, increased reliance on volunteers would likely fall disproportionately on the women of the congregation.

**How do we ensure that our staff positions align with our vision and mission?**

We do not currently have a congregational mission statement that is guiding us in our work. We rely heavily on our Vision of Ministry and annual strategic priorities to guide staff and ministry teams. This is another reason why the BOT and our ministers will be engaging the congregation in an intentional discernment process around the mission of FUS in the coming years.

**What if I have more questions?**

If you have further questions, they can be addressed to the FUS Personnel Committee or the Board of Trustees.