PRESS RELEASE

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Wide Range of Higher Ed Positions Affected by Changes to the Overtime Rule

Recently released data from CUPA-HR’s Professionals in Higher Education Salary Survey reveal institutions nationwide made significant changes to compensation and employment status in several positions to prepare for the proposed changes to the overtime rule.

The Department of Labor issued its final rule on overtime eligibility in May 2016, raising the minimum salary threshold from $23,660 to $47,476, and set a compliance date of December 1, 2016. Many in human resources spent a majority of the last half of last year preparing for the change — undertaking classification and compensation studies, meeting with stakeholders, creating communications plans — before a Texas judge issued a preliminary injunction on November 22 postponing the effective date of the new rule.

Last December, CUPA-HR conducted a survey of its members to assess how many were implementing changes to salary levels and/or exempt status despite the injunction. The data showed that nearly two thirds of higher ed institutions were moving ahead with some or all of their changes.

Here’s what this year’s Professionals in Higher Education Salary Survey found:

Changes in Exempt Status

- Nearly all (92 percent) police/public safety professionals are currently nonexempt employees.
- Only one fifth (19 percent) of staff nurses are exempt.
- More than half of social sciences research assistants, IT helpdesk specialists and head cashiers are nonexempt.
- Other positions in which more than one-third are exempt include academic evaluators, financial aid counselors, graduate admissions counselors and some low-level librarians.
Changes in Salary

The median salaries for several positions in this year’s survey increased to levels at or just slightly above the proposed overtime threshold, suggesting that their salaries were increased to make them exempt from overtime had the injunction not occurred. These positions include office/clerical manager, student housing/residence life officer, student career counselor, disability services advisor, certain HR professionals and assistant coaches.

Other Findings From the Survey

• Professionals in health services make the highest salaries; those in student affairs make the lowest.

• Staff physicians make the highest salaries of all higher ed professionals at a median of $154,000. Social sciences research scholars saw the greatest salary increase (7.3 percent) of all professionals since last year.

• The median tenure for all professionals combined is three years. Managers, deputy heads and heads have incrementally longer tenures than do non-management professionals.

• A gender pay gap exists for higher education professionals. This pay gap is greatest for older women professionals, who earn about $10,000 less than older men. Women receive equitable pay only in the areas of information technology and student affairs.

• Minorities are paid equitably and are well-represented in most professional areas, suggesting that gaps in minority representation in higher-level administrative positions can be filled by looking to this accessible pipeline.

This year’s survey collected salary data for 193,544 higher education professionals at 1,011 institutions. In addition to the salaries collected for each full-time professional, data were collected on gender, race/ethnicity, year the professional entered the current position and birth year. An overview of results from the Professionals in Higher Education Salary Report are available on CUPA-HR’s website.

CUPA-HR is the recognized authority on compensation surveys for higher education, with its salary surveys designed by higher ed HR professionals for higher ed HR professionals and other campus leaders. Learn more about CUPA-HR research.