Fact-Checking the SEIU Faculty Forward Salary Report Version of December 13, 2015

On November 30, 2015 many of us received an email from Associate Professor Gina Neff on behalf of "UW Faculty Forward, a project of SEIU Local 925." The note included a faculty salary study prepared by SEIU Faculty Forward comparing salary increases at the UW to those at three of Washington's four four-year institutions (Central, Eastern, and Western Washington Universities) during and after the recent recession. Here UW Excellence clarifies and corrects a number of errors and misrepresentations in the SEIU Faculty Forward study and presents new and different conclusions. In particular we find that:

- Significant errors and misrepresentations were found in the tabulated data that we checked in the SEIU Faculty Forward salary study.
- Raises at the four-year schools are overstated; raises at the UW are understated.
- The conclusion that "Unionized Faculty Emerged More Quickly From the Recession" is not supported.
- The unionized schools devoted all (or in one case most) raise funds toward raising salary floors and across-the-board raises, with none (or a small fraction) devoted to rewarding merit the opposite of UW.

We additionally describe reasons to question the relevance of comparison of salary systems that support the relatively high faculty salaries at a large research-intensive institution such as the UW to the much lower salaries at these smaller, instruction-focused regional institutions, and of comparisons over such small time periods.

Supporters and opponents of unionization of the faculty at the UW agree that the UW faculty salary system has not functioned optimally. Prior to the recession, the UW system was supporting market-competitive salaries for Assistant and Associate Professors. But the salaries of long-serving, meritorious Full Professors who did not access the "retention pool" did not grow appropriately. This fact is well recognized. The proposed faculty salary system recently approved by the Faculty Senate is intended to address this problem. If that proposal fails when voted upon by the full faculty, there is strong support within the administration and Faculty Senate to propose some alternative. UW Excellence believes we do not need a union to address this problem; the faculty can solve it through the existing shared governance structure.

The Regional Four-Year Schools are Not Our Peers. For comparison purposes, peers have been agreed upon for UW and the Washington four-year regional institutions (CWU, EWU, WWU, and the Evergreen State College). The four-year regional institutions do not include UW as a peer, and vice-versa, because differences in scale and mission limit the value of such comparisons. Because salaries at the four-year regional institution are much lower than at UW, a one percent raise at the four-year institutions costs just a fraction of a one percent raise at the UW on a per faculty member basis. UW Excellence does not endorse such a comparison – but nonetheless feels it is important to fact-check the claims made by SEIU Faculty Forward.

Comparing Salary Systems Over Short Time Scales is Not Meaningful. The SEIU Faculty Forward salary study compares raises at UW and three of the four four-year regional institutions (Evergreen was excluded without explanation) during the recession and in selected years since.

Inter-institutional comparison of faculty salary systems over a small number of years will certainly reveal "winners" and "losers" during these time periods. However, the financial circumstances of individual institutions wax and wane on short (year-to-year) time scales, and not necessarily in phase with one another. For long-serving faculty members, what thus matters most is not the performance in any single or small number of years but rather the performance of the salary system on the multiyear time scale of faculty employment. UW Excellence does not believe a long-term decision such as whether or not to unionize should be based upon comparisons on the short time scales covered by the SEIU Faculty Forward study.

The SEIU Faculty Forward Salary Study is Inaccurate; the Conclusion is not Supported. UW Excellence fact-checked the second of the three tables in the SEIU Faculty Forward report, "The Best Post-Recession Base Rate and Merit-Based Faculty Raises at the UW vs. Unionized WA 4-Year Schools." Half of the twelve entries in that table (highlighted in yellow below) were inconsistent with either the contract commitments in the indicated year or the actual raises at the UW. The original UNCORRECTED table from SEIU Faculty Forward is reproduced below, followed by a CORRECTED table from UW Excellence.

UNCORRECTED SEIU FACULTY FORWARD TABLE:

		Base Rate		
School	Year Given	Increase	Merit Increase	Compression/Equity
WWU	2012-13	5.25%	3% at tenure review	.75%-1% per year, over contract
cwu	2013-14	5%	3-5%	Based on committee, large pool
			Potentially up to	Market adjustment, to 90% of CUF
EWU	2013-14	2%	\$10,000	mean
				None, although merit increase oft
UW	2013-14	2%	2%	used

CORRECTED UW EXCELLENCE TABLE:

CORRECTED Faculty Salary Raises UW vs. Selected Unionized WA 4-Year Schools, Selected Years							
School	Year Given	Base Rate Increase	Merit Increase	Compression/Equity			
wwu	2012-13	5.25%	0.5%	1.0%			
cwu	2013-14	5.0%	0.0%	0%			
EWU	2013-14	<2.0%	0.0%	>0% (unknown amount)			
uw	2013-14	2.0%	2.0%	1.0%			

• WWU: 3% Merit, but for Less than One-Fifth of the Tenured Faculty. At Western Washington University, the "3% at tenure review" raise was not a merit pool, but rather was a 3% raise for the one-fifth of all Associate and Full Professors who underwent post-tenure

review the previous year (which occurs on a 5 year cycle), and who "exceeded expectations" in at least one review category. Human Resources at Western reported to us that 85% of reviewed faculty members exceeded expectations and each received a 3% raise. This corresponds to a ca. 0.5% merit increase (3% X 1/5 X 85%) averaged across all tenured faculty. The latter is the only way to make a fair comparison to the "merit pool" at the UW, which is a percentage of the total salary base available to all meritorious faculty. https://wp.wwu.edu/hr/files/2015/09/UFWW_CBA2012-15-1w0y1fv.pdf

- **CWU:** No Merit, No Compression/Equity. At Central Washington University, the merit increase for that year was not "3-5%" it was 0%! (A contract provision to provide a 3% or 5% raise to some full professors who excelled in a post-tenure review became effective in a subsequent year.) The compression/equity pool was not "large," it was 0%! A contract for an earlier year did include such a pool, about 1% total, distributed in 2011. Both of these facts were confirmed by the Faculty and Labor Relations Office at CWU. https://www.cwu.edu/hr/sites/cts.cwu.edu.hr/files/documents/CWU-UFC_Agreement_9-1-13-8-31-17.pdf
- **EWU: Base rate increase <2%; No Merit.** At Eastern Washington University, the entry "Potentially up to \$10,000" under merit increase has no basis we could find in the contract. The entry apparently should be 0%. The year before, there were one-time cash awards for several tens of highly meritorious faculty members, mostly \$1500 or \$2500. This was confirmed by the Human Resources Office at Eastern, which was unable to explain the reference to "\$10,000." The full 2% base rate adjustment was available only to faculty earning less than 110% of the 2011-12 CUPA mean. Those earning 110 to 115% of the CUPA mean received 1%, and any earning above 115% of the CUPA mean received 0%. Assuming even one faculty member at EWU entered with a salary above 110% of the CUPA mean, the base rate adjustment was less than 2% averaged over all faculty. The latter is a mechanism that increases salary compression by restricting growth of larger salaries, the opposite of what SEIU Faculty Forward says is a goal for UW. We were unable to learn from EWU what investment was required to bring the salary floor to 90% of the 2011-12 CUPA mean, and thus don't have a value for the size of the compression/equity pool and cannot calculate a value for this cell for EWU. It is possible these were large raises (if the lowest EWU faculty salaries in 2013 were far below the CUPA mean from 2011), but we cannot know, and have entered ">0%" in this cell.

https://access.ewu.edu/Documents/HRRR/Labor%20Relations/EWU-UFE_Agreement_2013-2016.pdf

• UW: Raises are Understated. The SEIU Faculty Forward report failed to report significant unit adjustments at the UW in 2013-14. These funds were distributed with merit taken into account as opposed to across-the-board or lifting of a salary floor. That year, unit adjustment funds were distributed at the UW to most units in Arts & Sciences, and one or more units in the Dental School, the College of the Environment, the Evans School, and the School of Pharmacy. The Arts & Sciences allocation alone averaged about 3.5% to 28 of the 35 units in the college; the sizes of the other unit adjustment amounts are unknown. The Arts & Sciences raise amount alone is the equivalent of a ca. 1.0% raise averaged across the ca. 2500 instructional faculty at all three UW campuses (tenure track and full-time instructional faculty, the best comparison group to the faculty at the four-year regional schools). We list

this in the "compression/equity category." Furthermore, it would be expected that, at a highly competitive institution like the UW, more funds would need to be invested each year in retention raises, which are not accounted for in the SEIU Faculty Forward analysis, in which case this analysis would understate the UW raise, but we lack data to support that speculation.

Unionized Faculty at Evergreen State College Fared Modestly Post-Recession. The SEIU Faculty Forward salary report omitted without explanation consideration of the salary situation at the remaining four-year regional institution, the Evergreen State College (TESC), at which the faculty is also unionized. The analysis is simple, because their salary system is strictly seniority based with no merit-based raises. There are no promotion raises, because there are no ranks at TESC; there are no post-tenure review raises. For the post-recession period September 2011 through September 2016 (five annual raise cycles), the years of service salary grid at Evergreen was/will be incremented upward a total of 11.92% (one 5.5%, two 3%, and two 0% raises), or 2.28%/year. Individuals receive in addition to this a 1.33%/year of service salary premium. This works out to a 3.64%/year total annual raise for individuals during this five raise cycle period. At the UW this rate of increase is below the historical level required (4%) just to keep pace with newly hired assistant professors, because the entry point salary for new junior hires at UW has historically risen 4%/year (pre-recession). In other words, at the UW 3.64%/year would in the long term lead not just to compression, but to inversion (a salary/years of service slope that is negative). This is clearly not a model for the UW. http://evergreen.edu/provost/docs/UFE-TESC 2015-17.pdf

Decide for Yourself Whether "Unionized Faculty Emerged More Quickly." In light of the corrected data and additional information concerning raises at UW and TESC, we invite you to decide for yourself whether to accept the conclusion by SEIU Faculty Forward that "Unionized Faculty Emerged More Quickly From the Recession." The one school that clearly did somewhat better than UW in their "best year" was Western Washington University, where their President justified this raise by noting that at WWU the average salaries of both assistant and associate professors (\$55,300 and \$65,355 on average, respectively) were lower than the average salary of a high school teacher in the state's Bellingham School district. EWU may also have done better than UW, if their lowest salaries in fall 2013 were far below 90% of the CUPA mean from 2011, but we cannot know.

UW Excellence believes that the SEIU Faculty Forward conclusion is based on incorrect data and is insufficiently supported.

The Unionized Faculty at Washington's Regional Institutions Receive Floor-Lifting and Across-the-Board Raises, and Little or No Merit Raises. UW Excellence finds one statement by SEIU Faculty Forward with which we can wholeheartedly agree: "Recruiting and retaining the best and brightest faculty at the UW is crucial for sustaining and expanding conditions for faculty and student excellence."

Studies indicate that unions have little impact on the *size* of faculty salaries at four-year institutions

(http://offcampus.lib.washington.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=59835543&site=ehost-live), but they may impact the *distribution* of salaries.

The corrected table clearly shows that the unionized faculties in our state distribute a much smaller fraction of their salary increases (at least in this one year) on the basis of merit than does the UW. At UW, 60% of the raise (3.0% out of 5.0% total) that year was distributed on the basis of merit. Three unionized schools (CWU, EWU, and Evergreen) had *no funds distributed on the basis of merit* (the EWU compression/equity allocation was used to lift floors so is not counted as merit). If we assume that distribution of Western's "Compression/Equity" pool included merit considerations, then that institution distributed about one quarter (1.5% out of 6.75% total) of its raise on the basis of merit.

It seems unlikely that a system that distributes all or the vast majority of salary raise funds to lift salary floors and provide across-the-board rather than merit-based raises will be competitive in recruiting and retaining the best and brightest faculty. This is not a model for the UW.

Promotion Raises and Post-Tenure Review Raises. The SEIU Faculty Forward report correctly states that three of the four unionized regional institutions currently have at least one promotion in rank raise (10%) that exceeds that at the UW (7.5%). But it is noteworthy that without a union, UW faculty are on the cusp of moving to a 12% promotion raise, and additionally a post-tenure review raise (called tier advancement in new salary system) of 8%, compared to the 3% or 5% raises at the Washington four-year regional institutions. And at UW the tier advancement raises would be on a more favorable average 4-year rather than the 5-year cycle at the regional schools. The Faculty Senate recently voted to forward this new salary system to the full faculty for a vote. This was achieved through our existing shared governance system.

If after careful consideration you have concluded that you are opposed to unionization of the UW faculty under SEIU, we ask you to sign the <u>UW</u> Excellence Statement of Opposition.