

Mount Saint Vincent University Faculty Association

Administrative Bloat and Faculty Stagnation

27 February 2024

The last time MSVU Faculty went on strike, in 1989, was also the first time we went on strike. 35 years ago, there were two senior administrators for the entire university: the president and a dean. Today, there are 10 senior administrators with another one on the way: Associate Vice-President of People and Culture. Meanwhile, the number of MSVU faculty has shrunk, even though our student population has remained roughly the same. In 2024, we have fewer faculty to do more work than there were in 1989. Even worse, the senior administration has granted itself exorbitant salary raises over this time while faculty salary has not even kept up with inflation.

Take a look at the raises senior administrators have given themselves since just 2018:

University President: Average raise of 73%
Two Vice Presidents: Average raise of 19%
Three Associate Vice Presidents: Average raise of 26%
Three Deans: Average raise of 15%
University Librarian: Average raise of 19%

Meanwhile, MSVU faculty have only averaged an 8% pay raise over the same time-period. Keep in mind that The Bank of Canada has calculated inflation, from January 2018 to December 2023, at 21.3%. Professor of Economics, James Sawler, has calculated that our purchasing power (i.e., what faculty salaries are actually able to purchase) has declined by a full 12% (take a look below for the details).

It gets worse. The Board of Governors' latest offer was to increase MSVUFA salaries by 2.5% for 2023, 3% for 2024, and 2.7% for 2025, with additional salary grid steps for lab instructors and librarians, a minority of our members. When you remember that the current rate of inflation stands at 3.6%, the reality is that the Board of Governors is proposing a pay cut on top the losses we've had since 2018.

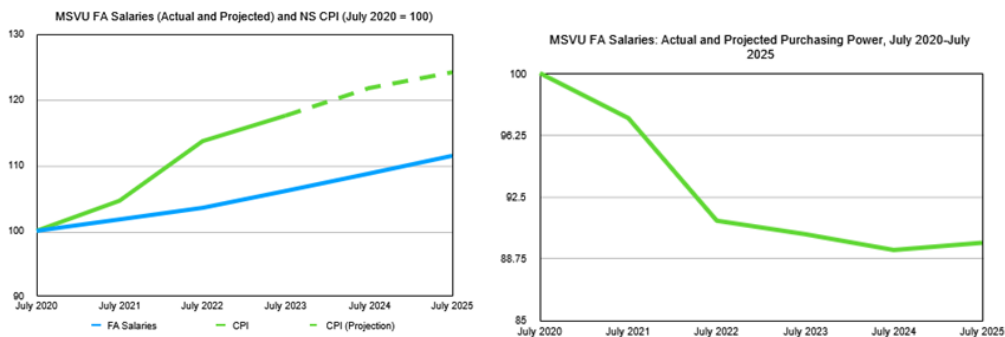
Look at it another way. The main two reasons that universities exist are to teach students and engage in scholarship. In a very important sense, universities **are** the faculty and their students. That's why you see so many signs out on the picket line that read "MSVU = Faculty + Students" or "MSVU ≠ Board of Governors." Faculty and students are the essential ingredients for teaching and research. Coordinating all of the logistics that enable teaching and research is why universities need administrators. Their job is to facilitate the university, which means their job is

to facilitate faculty and students. Keep this in mind when you take a look at how MSVU spends its money.

In 2022, MSVU spent 30.6% of its total budget on faculty salaries, which is down from 34.2% in 2000. Meanwhile, MSVU spent 32.2% of its budget on non-faculty salaries, which is up from 27.8% in 2000. In other words, MSVU now spends substantially more on the people who are supposed to facilitate faculty and students than it does on the people who *are* the university. Things have gone backwards.

Details

The two graphs below illustrate the situation. The first contrasts indices of MSVUFA salaries with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Nova Scotia. The MSVUFA salary index is calculated using the actual 1.75% increases we received in 2021 and 2022, along with the 2.5% increases offered by the BOG. The CPI is based on historic data up to July 2023 and projections of 3.6% and 2.0% inflation for the years ending in July 2024 and 2025 (3.6% is the current annual rate of inflation, and 2.0% is the Bank of Canada’s target inflation rate - the actual rate is likely to be higher). The second graph, based on the same data and assumptions, shows the real value of MSVUFA salaries.



Any way you look at the data, the real purchasing power of our salaries is much lower than it was just a few years ago. From July 2020 to July 2022, while consumer prices increased by 13.7%, our nominal salaries increased by a meager 3.5%. This translates into a 9% decline in purchasing power. The proposed BOG salaries do nothing to close this gap which, under these projections, will exceed 10%.