

UFF-FIU 3-Year Salary Proposal Explainer & Highlights

The top-line numbers of UFF-FIU’s salary proposal would represent the largest increase to faculty salaries in our history; however, it is important to remember the historical context our faculty and FIU are in together. This includes the intersection of several important factors including, but not limited to, the rising cost of living, record setting performance by faculty along both research and teaching metrics, and finally FIU’s new-found preeminent status.

Rising Cost of Living and Diminishing Buying-Power

Since 2015, faculty at FIU have seen significant compression on their buying power in South Florida as well as nationally. Table 1 shows faculty salaries have increased ~12% since AY2015-2016, while Florida’s per capita income has increased ~52% and we have seen compounded inflation of ~37% and ~29%, respectively, in South Florida and Nationally. A ~17% raise over the next three years, therefore, would barely close the existing gap between the buying power of faculty in 2023 compared with their peers in 2015.

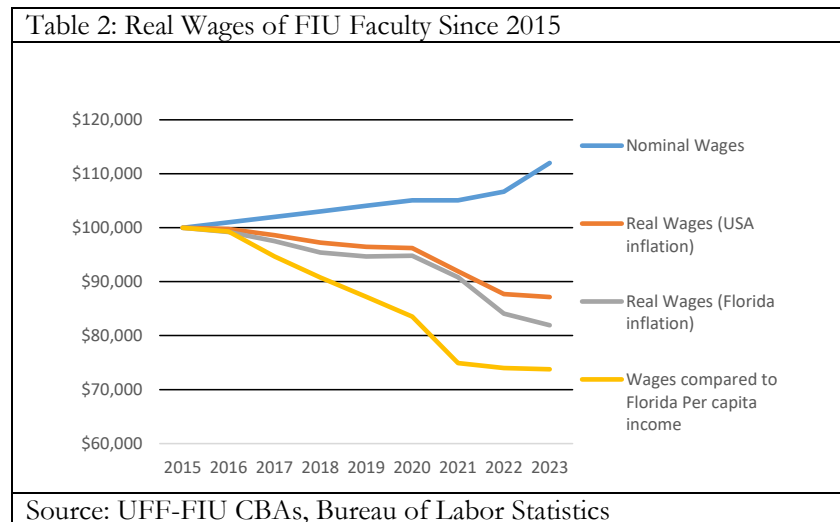
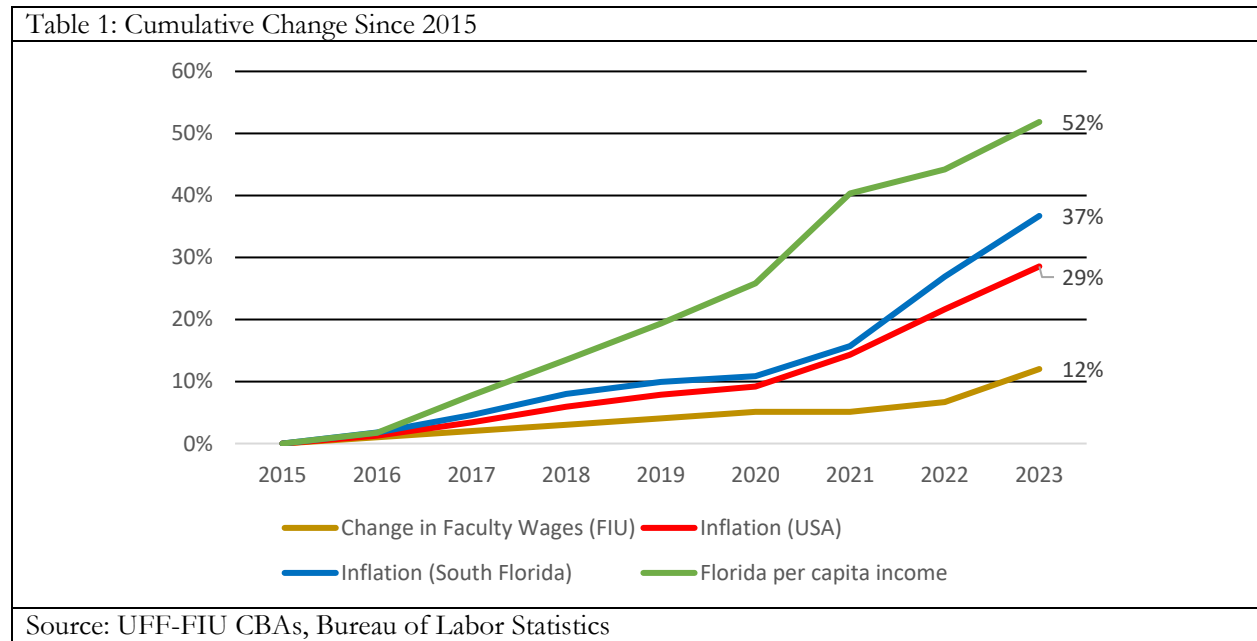
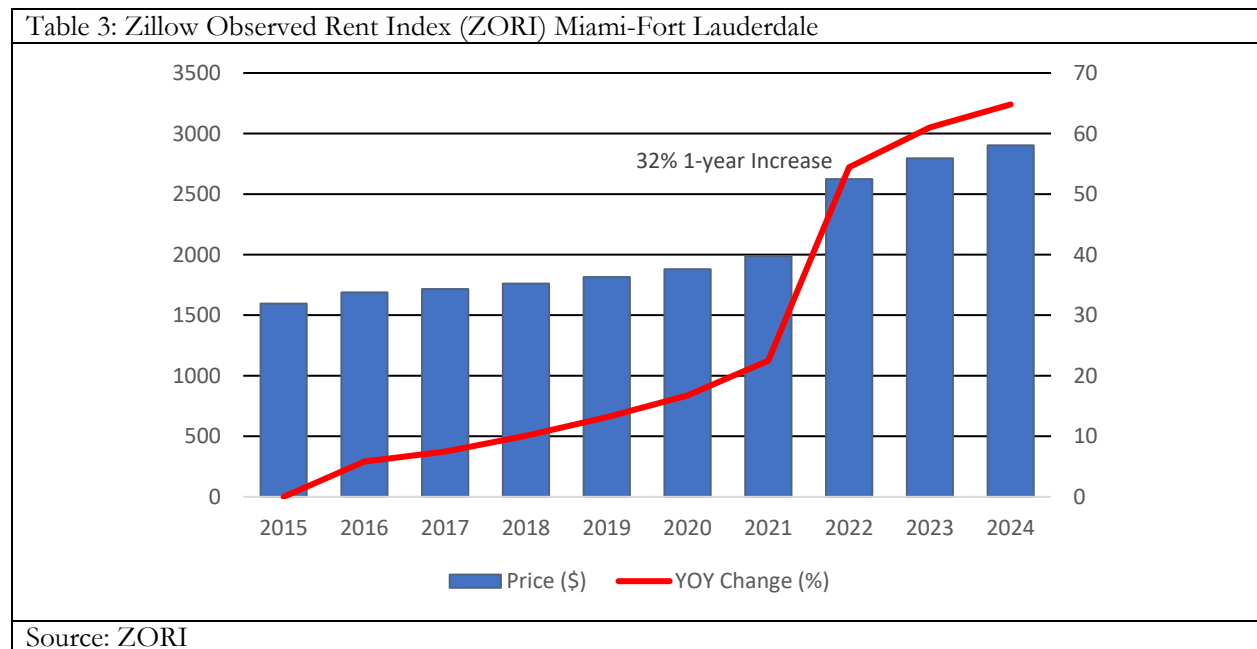


Table 2 further illustrates the real wages of faculty overtime at FIU. If we were to imagine a faculty member earning a \$100,000 salary in 2015, in 2023-2024 this faculty member would have experienced seven (7) raises totaling roughly 12%: bringing their nominal take home pay to \$112,011.40.

Unfortunately, the real wages for this faculty member have fared significantly worse. With this faculty member now making \$87,129.74 when adjusted against national inflation levels, and

\$81,940.25 when adjusted against inflation in South Florida: a ~13% and ~19% decrease in real wages, respectively.

Relatedly, during this same period we have also seen an unprecedented uptick in the rental market in the Miami—Fort Lauderdale area. Indeed, Table 3 shows that, after seeing steady growth of ~3.7% year-over-year between 2015 and 2021, in 2022 this rate jumped to 32% in a single year. This was followed by an increase of ~6.7% in 2023, and a 3.8% increase in 2024. According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), one is considered “rent burdened” if more than 30% of your income is devoted to housing costs. Further, HUD defines one as being “severely rent burdened” if more than 50% of your income is devoted to housing costs. If we take the ZORI index in 2024 of \$2902.30 as representative of the average dwelling available for rent in the region, the average 12-month cost for housing would be approximately \$35,000. This would require an annual household income of at least ~\$70,000 to not be considered “severely rent burdened” by HUD, and ~\$115,000 to not be considered ‘rent burdened.’



Of course, the cost of housing is factored into many of the metrics used in Table 1 and 2 to measure the real wages of faculty at FIU overtime. Nevertheless, we believe the rising cost of housing in Miami, and South Florida more generally, is illustrative of the increased financial pressures being placed on faculty—particularly those on the lower end of the pay-scale who are increasingly likely be classified as ‘rent-burdened’ or ‘severely rent-burdened’ by HUD.

Faculty Performance

Notably, during this same time period we have seen the performance of FIU faculty reach unprecedented levels along the metrics of both teaching and research. This can be seen at the macro level in FIU’s meteoric rise in national rankings (from 500-600 in the WSJ 2016 rankings compared with 29th in 2024), as well as FIU’s new-found status as a preeminent institution in Florida’s State University System. Although achieving pre-eminent status includes hitting many benchmarks, Table 4 and Table 5 represent considerable achievement by faculty across the lines of both research and teaching. For instance, Table 4 demonstrates the considerable success faculty have had bringing in new research dollars into the university: increasing from ~\$170m in 2016 to ~\$316m in 2023 (a ~85% increase). Similarly, Table 5 demonstrates the considerable success faculty have had in the classroom: moving our FTIC 4-Year Graduation Rate from ~38.9% for the 2014-18 cohort to ~59.8% for the 2018-2022 cohort.

Table 4: Research Expenditures (\$000)	Table 5: FTIC 4-Year Graduation Rate (%)																														
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Source: FIU Accountability, NSF HERD	Source: FIU 2023 Accountability Plan																														

We recognize that the university has many needs, and that our successes as an institution over the past few years represent the cumulative efforts of the entire community. However, we believe that recognizing the invaluable work of faculty in achieving these successes includes ensuring their wages are reflecting their efforts.

Salary Proposal Highlights

Retention & Merit Raises

In terms of top-line numbers, our three (3) year salary proposal includes 9-month adjusted retention increases of seven percent (7%) or seven thousand dollars (whichever is greater) in 2024-2025, three percent (3%) or three-thousand dollars (whichever is greater) in 2025-2026, and two percent (2%) or two-thousand dollars in 2026-2027 for eligible faculty. This represents a ~12% raise for faculty over the next three years, which is still 5% under the existing gap between the real wages of faculty in 2023 compared with their 2016 peers.

In addition, we have proposed merit-based raises of two percent (2%) of the total bargaining unit salary pool in 2025-2026, and three percent (3%) of the total bargaining unit salary pool in 2026-2027. We believe structuring merit raises in this way serves a number important functions, including: (1) it provides the University with time to fully implement department/unit bylaws, including merit policies that are clearly articulated for faculty, (2) it provides the University time to more accurately articulate expected effort in annual assignments and evaluations, and (3) it allows these merit increases to act as incentives for faculty.

Equity

An unfortunate reality of most workplaces is that inequities exist across a number of intersecting lines. Notably, when our team initiated some discussion of the desire to commit to identifying instances of salary compression (when there is little difference between salary of faculty regardless of rank or experience) and salary inversion (when newer faculty are paid more than more experienced faculty), the administration’s team responded that they were already taking steps to address this. Equity, of course, is a notoriously elusive concept. As such, in addition to our equity proposal committing dollars to address instances of compression and inversion across the university, we have requested an ongoing commitment to have discussions with the administration about the methodology used to (1) identify salary inequities; and (2) distribute these funds.

Minimum Salaries

In line with our previous contracts, the salary proposal also seeks to increase the minimum 9-month equivalent salaries for eligible faculty in-line with the raises negotiated in the past three years. For the 2024-2025 academic year, this includes adjusting the minimum base 9-month equivalent salary for eligible employees holding a master’s degree or equivalent to \$68,500.00 and \$73,500.00 for eligible employees holding a doctoral degree (increasing from \$55,000 and \$60,000, respectively). Our proposal would also eliminate the difference in minimum salary for “visiting” faculty, reflecting the incredible work and valuable contributions visiting faculty members make to research, our students, the University, and community.

Research Enhancement Awards

Finally, the last part of our salary proposal expands the scope of “faculty summer research awards” previously established under Article 11.3 “Convocation Awards.” The purpose of expanding the scope of these awards is to (1) better reflect FIU’s commitment to research as an R1 institution, and (2) better support faculty research (whether they are non-tenure track, tenure track, or tenured) in all forms and stages of development.

Authored by:

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