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### Florida professors earn below national average, data show

#### Gov. Rick Scott sparks debate after releasing salary information as he considers higher-education overhaul

By [Denise-Marie Balona](#), Orlando Sentinel

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Are university professors paid too much in Florida? The salaries that Gov. Rick Scott posted online days ago have spurred debates across the state about whether these educators are worth what they make.

But faculty leaders stress that professors in Florida's public universities earn less than their peers in many other states. Universities must offer competitive salaries, they insist, if the state is to attract talented faculty needed to educate tomorrow's work force.

The average salaries of full-time professors at public universities in Florida offering bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees fall about \$6,000 below the national average, said John W. Curtis, director of research and public policy with the American Association of University Professors.

This past school year, the average salary nationwide for these professors and instructors was \$86,653, Curtis said. The association's calculation doesn't include medical-school faculty or professors who also hold administrative posts, such as deans.

In Florida, the average was \$80,879.

That average stood at about \$74,000 at University of Central Florida — the state's largest university, according to a report the association published earlier this year.

At the University of Florida in Gainesville, the overall average was about \$89,000. It was less than \$81,000 at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

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Scott's office said he posted the information simply to make already-public information easier to find by creating a database that lists the names and annual salaries of the university system's 50,000-plus employees.

But faculty leaders think he had other motives.

They say he posted the data to make it appear that universities are wasteful as he prepares to push for dramatic higher-education changes during the legislative session that begins in January.

Already, Scott has begun asking universities for information to help him prepare his plan, including a detailed accounting of what the 50 highest-paid employees at each university do.

The highest-paid professor in Florida, Neil Fenske from University of South Florida, makes \$1.2 million. About 20 professors in the state earn more than \$500,000.

But critics cite Fenske's salary, as well as others in the database, to point out its flaws.

For instance, the database lists Fenske only as a professor. It fails to mention his other job duties: chairman of the department of dermatology and cutaneous surgery at USF Health and medical director of the USF Health Cosmetic and Laser Center.

UCF's Deborah German is identified as a professor who earns almost \$446,000. Her actual title goes far beyond her role as a professor: dean of the College of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs.

Faculty leaders worry Scott will cut or limit university funding as he explores changes that seek to reduce costs and boost professors' productivity, partly by tying their pay to how many students they teach and how satisfied students are with their instruction.

The governor, citing work-force demands, has been open about his plan to press for more graduates in science, math, technology and engineering.

Last week, he sent letters to the universities asking them to provide a host of data showing, for example, how they measure costs per program and what studies they've done to ensure graduates are meeting employer needs.

Sandra Lewis, president of FSU's Faculty Senate, said professor wages need to be improved. The state already struggles to hold on to some of its most talented educators because universities in other states — private institutions in particular — offer higher pay.

It's a trend that will cost Florida money in the long run, she said, because students will leave the state to attend colleges with stronger programs.

"When we've got someone who wants to study mathematics and we've weakened our math department because all of our best people have gone to Georgia to teach because they make way more, these students will go to Georgia, and then they will live in Georgia, and they will pay Georgia taxes and not Florida taxes," Lewis said.

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