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**SHOULD MEN BEARING THE SAME TITLE IN ANY INSTITUTION RECEIVE  
THE SAME PAY?**

**PAPER PRESENTED ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN BY  
PROFESSOR H. B. HUTCHINS**

I doubt if I have anything to contribute to this subject that will be of special interest. Practically the whole field has been covered by the paper read to us by President Jordan. However, as we approach the question from different points of view, it is possible that there may be excuse for a second paper.

I shall assume in my consideration of the question that it has reference to institutions of the college or university rank. I shall assume also that those proposing the question had in mind the discussion of the subject of a general discrimination in salaries upon the basis of merit.

I suppose that there is at the present time in most universities discrimination to a limited extent between men holding the same title. In some cases it is based upon length of service; in others, it is made in favor of men who perform extra duties. Sometimes, moreover, special endowments lead to discriminations. And occasionally the salary of a man is fixed above that of his associates in order to retain his services when he has been called at an increased salary by another university. Sometimes, also, special and exceptional circumstances put a man in a different class from that of his associates, although he may have the same title, and his exceptional position is recognized by a difference in salary. This happens not infrequently in professional schools, where a man in accepting a professorship, makes a pecuniary sacrifice, or where his standing is such as to make the securing of his services particularly desirable. Or it may happen that there is a discrimination because some of the men are engaged in outside professional work. In each of the cases mentioned, there is a definite reason for the discrimination which serves as a basis for the fixing of compensation. Although causing undoubtedly some friction and criticism, discriminations like those indicated are not subject to the objections that may be urged against a general policy of discrimination, and their wisdom and propriety are, I think, generally recognized. If we eliminate the cases to which reference has been made, it may be said, I think, to be the general custom in American universities to pay the same salary to men bearing the same title. Should the custom be continued, with the exceptions mentioned, or should there be a general policy of discrimination based upon merit? Or, to put the question differently, should the money value of the services of the university professor be fixed by the arbitrary standard of rank, or should it rather be determined by the same standards by which the value of services of like grade in other fields is determined?

If we were to consider the question in the abstract simply and without any reference to its practical side as connected with the business of administration and its ethical side

as connected with the attitude and aims of those who follow the academic life, we should have little difficulty, I apprehend, in concluding that the arbitrary standard of rank has little either in reason or equity to justify its existence, or continuance. The argument usually made appeals to one at once as logical and sound. It is to the following effect: In the outside world professional recognition can be gained and professional advancement secured only by individual effort. Here the income of the professional man is not fixed by an arbitrary standard but depends upon his ability to accomplish results. He realizes that the pecuniary rewards of his calling will be measured by his efficiency; that if he can do only ordinary things, he will receive only ordinary returns, but that if he proves himself equal to unusual and difficult situations, he will go to the front in reputation, and win the pecuniary rewards that the profession yields to the successful. He has before him as incentives the honor of professional distinction and the substantial compensation that such distinction brings. In the field of business and commerce, where the large enterprises of the day are attracting some of the best intellect of the times, the rewards are for the man who can bring results. Wherever initiative is required, wherever constructive ability is necessary, in a word, wherever the grade of the service is above that of the purely mechanical or routine, arbitrary standards of compensation are practically unknown. The great corporation, for example, whose business interests require many representatives of the same rank whose duties are of the constructive sort, compensates such representatives not, as a rule, according to rank, but according to the ability of the representative to produce results in the particular field to which he is assigned. It is the man and what he is to the business or his particular part of it that are the determining factors in the fixing of compensation. But illustrations are unnecessary, for it goes without saying that in the activities of the world, the worker in the higher grades of service, except in the public service, receives, as a rule, such returns for his labor as his ability and attainments can command. Here no arbitrary scale of compensation either bolsters incapacity and indifference or handicaps ability and industry. Every man is taken at what he proves himself to be worth. It is apparent, moreover, however much we may deplore the fact, that the opportunity for increasing pecuniary returns constitutes the chief stimulus to the individual worker, whether in the professional or business field.

That the conditions suggested exist in practically every department of intellectual work, and that they are at the present time generally recognized as natural and proper, cannot admit of doubt. No one would for a moment advocate that the pecuniary returns for such work should, upon principle, be controlled and limited by arbitrary standards. It would be objected at once that such a policy would be an unjust interference with the rights of the citizen, that it would stifle individual effort and encourage mediocrity. And such objections would not be without a basis in reason. If it be justice and equity, then, that, in the activities of the world, the intellectual worker be left free to reap such pecuniary rewards as his ability and acquirements can command, why, it is argued, should not the same privilege be accorded to the teacher? The calling of the teacher is obviously intel-

lectual. It must be ranked as a learned profession. To prepare for it under present conditions is quite as expensive and quite as burdensome as is the preparation for any of the other professions. It goes without saying that among teachers of the same academic rank there is nothing like a dead level of ability, industry, and attainment, and it necessarily follows that there must be differences in the quality of the service rendered. It is in the nature of things that this should be so. The leveling influence of rank is in name rather than in fact. It can never equalize efficiency. It follows, therefore, that among men of the same rank, some are contributing vastly more to the life and influence of the university than are others. Why, it is argued, should not this difference in efficiency be recognized by a difference in compensation? Why, for example, should not the profound scientist whose fame in the field of research has brought to the university its chief distinction, receive compensation in some degree commensurate with the value of his services? Or, to put the case differently, why should his income be controlled and limited by the fact that his moderately endowed and easy-going associate in the same field happens to have the same academic rank?

It must be conceded, I think, that the *a priori* argument pure and simple leads inevitably to the conclusion that in the university as in the world the measure of value for services should be ability to accomplish results, rather than the arbitrary standard of rank.

It is frequently urged, moreover, and the claim is not without some basis in fact, that the present system favors mediocrity and encourages indifference. Undoubtedly the academic life under prevailing conditions offers opportunities to small men. It is probably true that the faculty of every American university has upon it men who could never meet successfully in the world the test of keen intellectual competition. Some of these have been attracted to the life by the mistaken notion of special fitness, but others unfortunately by the knowledge that academic recognition in the form of a professorship means a reasonably secure position, generally recognized as honorable, with a fixed and certain income. Why, it is argued, should the university man be sustained in his weakness or indifference by a support that is so largely factitious? Why should he not be compelled, like the professional man in other fields, to stand upon his merits?

It is sometimes claimed, too, though, as I believe, without substantial reason, that if there were a free field for competition in the matter of salary, many desirable men who now enter other professions or callings would be attracted to university life.

While from the theoretical point of view the university teacher is probably entitled to the same opportunities to compete for increased compensation that are enjoyed by men in other intellectual pursuits, and while it must be conceded that the present system has a tendency to attract weak men to the calling, and to encourage indifference, yet that a radical change in policy, even if it were feasible, would be wise, I cannot bring myself to believe. First let us consider the practicability of a general change to what may be called the merit system, under which the pay of the instructor would be determined by the character and results of his work. Would such a system applied generally be a workable

one? Would it secure an equitable adjustment of salaries? It goes without saying, of course, that some plan would have to be devised for ascertaining the money value of each instructor to the university, and that authority to decide the question would have to be given to some officer or board. In the professional and business fields the problem is not a difficult one. Here it is purely a matter of contract with conditions present by which a satisfactory adjustment of compensation can always be made. The service being essentially private and being definite in its character, extent and results, its value is easily ascertained. Each case furnishes the necessary data for an agreement. The pay of the lawyer, for example, is fixed by contract, either express or implied, between himself and the client. The amount depends upon the character of the service rendered, the time consumed thereby, and upon the recognized professional standing of the party employed. Here we have something definite and tangible as a basis for compensation. So as between physician and patient, there is definite service, rendered for a particular purpose, the value of which is easily ascertained by recognized standards. The corporation, through its board of directors, fixes the compensation of its officers and representatives upon the basis of certain and definite service to be performed. It is apparent that the conditions necessarily incident to private service rendered for a particular and definite purpose must always furnish a basis for the fixing of the value of such service. But do similar conditions characterize the service of the university instructor? I am very sure that they do not. He is engaged, of course, to teach a certain subject or certain subjects. The relation between him and the university, so far as form is concerned, is certainly one of contract, but excepting in form it has about it very few of the conditions that characterize the ordinary contract relation. The relation has about it elements that in reality take it out of the ordinary field of contract. But considering it simply as one of contract, what would be the problem of administration under a general merit system? It is apparent, as suggested, that the money value to the university of every man upon the teaching staff would have to be determined. But how would it be determined? What data could be used as a basis for fixing this value? Could the number of students instructed by each professor be taken as a basis? Obviously not. Such a course would be unreasonable and would lead to inequitable results. Some subjects are fundamental and are necessarily taken by large numbers; others are special and are only taken by the few whose interests lie within the narrow field of the specialty. It certainly would not do to conclude that the man teaching the fundamental subject that students generally must have, should be paid a larger salary than his associate of the same rank who teaches a limited number in a specialty, for we would thereby, if the men concerned were in all other respects of equal value to the university, be making the subject and its necessity or attractiveness to the student the test of value rather than the merits of the instructor. If it be claimed that under the elective system this conclusion would not follow, it may be replied that even here the personality and capacity of the teacher are not the only forces that influence attendance. Quite as important in that regard are the nature of the subject, its necessity as a basis for future work and the time and effort that the course demands. From the point

of view of the university, the teaching of the specialty with its limited number of students may be quite as necessary as the teaching of the general subject with its larger number.

Nor could the general academic standing of the teacher be safely taken as a basis for compensation. Of course this is a factor and an important one when an instructor is to be selected, and has much to do with the determination of his rank, but at best it is uncertain and intangible, so much so that alone it could never serve as an equitable standard for discrimination. It not infrequently rests upon no more substantial basis than the ability of the man to keep himself before the public, and yet this fact might not be apparent to those having the authority to discriminate. With such a standard, merit, proverbially modest, would surely suffer.

Equally unsatisfactory, as a basis for fixing salaries, would be the results of the teacher's work. Who can say what they are or what they mean to the university, except in a most general way? Who can place a money value upon them as related to the university? One man gives his life, so to speak, to his students; he labors solely for their benefit; his interests and his energies are centered in the art of instruction. Original investigations to such a man are important only as they contribute to his efficiency as a teacher. The immediate field of his influence is the classroom, but there is a broader field in the lives and work of those who profit by his efforts. Another devotes his predominant energies to research. Through his discoveries he is known to the world; he stands for something among scholars and investigators. But he lacks the teaching power, and with him the work of instruction is a disagreeable necessity. Each of these men has his place; each by the results of his work contributes to the strength and influence of the university, but who can say in what degree? Who is wise enough to determine from such a basis the respective money value of these men to the university?

As already suggested, the truth of the matter is that while the formal relation between the instructor and the university is one of contract, yet in reality, for practical purposes, it is very largely a different relation. As we have seen, it lacks the definite elements that form a basis for the fixing of compensation in the ordinary contract of service. It, moreover, implies duties in addition to those expressly stipulated that in themselves can never be measured by the money standard—duties that have to do with the shaping of the character and life of those with whom the instructor comes in contact, duties in regard to the policy and general interests of the university, duties connected with scholarship in the instructor's specialty, and with the advancement of the cause of sound learning generally. I need not say to those before me that while scholarship counts for much in a university man, that while academic results, pure and simple, count for much, other things are also essential. The composite that would represent the ideal university professor would undoubtedly combine with good scholarship and all that it signifies, the qualities that go to make up the distinct and commanding personality of the safe type. We would find in it not only scholarship, but manliness, good sense, ability to take a large and comprehensive view of things, wisdom, particularly as to utterances before the public, and those qualities

of heart that underlie and prompt self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. But such qualities, like scholarship and its results, are not of the definite and tangible nature that will admit of their use as a basis for determining the money value to his university of the man who possesses them. All things considered, we must conclude, I think, that the relation of the instructor to the university is essentially a public one and that the duties and responsibilities are essentially public. To measure the efficiency with which they are performed and to reach a result in each particular case, in any except the most general way, would obviously be impracticable. Who would be wise enough to fix differential rates of compensation upon so uncertain and indefinite a basis as the one described? What board of trustees or what college president would attempt it? If there be a more certain and definite basis I have failed to discover it. From the point of view of administration, then, it must be apparent, I think, that a general change to the merit system would be impracticable if not impossible.

Light may be thrown upon the question by reference to situations that are analogous. We will all agree, I think, that the college professor is essentially a public servant. His field is certainly a public one. If the system of compensation in other fields of public service is the same as in the academic field, it would seem to follow logically that there must be very good reasons for its existence. If radically wrong in principle and unjust and inequitable in results, attendant conditions being considered, it is not to be supposed that it would be generally used. Let us take, for example, the field of the judiciary. As a rule judges of the same rank receive the same compensation. The presiding judge of an appellate bench sometimes, to be sure, receives additional compensation, but it is because of additional duties; and occasionally for reasons that are purely local, having to do generally with the fact that one judge is necessarily put to greater expense than another, there may be a discrimination in the case of trial judges. But the general rule is that rank is the measure of compensation. It will be conceded, I am sure, that the difference in judicial ability and effectiveness is quite as great and quite as apparent as is the difference in academic ability and effectiveness. May we not properly conclude that if this difference is not a cause for discrimination in the one case, it should not be in the other? There is a general feeling, particularly in the profession, that our judges are underpaid and that more effective service would be secured if judicial salaries were commensurate with the dignity of the position and the labor involved, just as there is a general feeling, particularly among educators, that college professors are underpaid and that more adequate compensation would insure a greater degree of effectiveness; but I have yet to learn of any judge, or lawyer, or legislator who advocates a policy of discrimination in judicial salaries, as a remedy. Judicial service, like every other kind of public service, should not be rendered primarily for compensation. It should be free from the temptations that naturally arise when the element of money competition is involved. Such service is for the public good, and not for the special benefit of the individual citizen, excepting as he is a part of the public. Like the service of the teacher, it utterly lacks the characteristics that are essential for the fixing

of differential rates of compensation, and this because the service is general and public. The practical man realizes the situation, and he has never, so far as I have discovered, advocated a change of method. Furthermore, the attitude of the public mind in regard to the general principle involved is seen in the decided tendency of late to abolish the system of fees in certain lower grades of public service and substitute therefor the salary system.

Carrying the argument from analogy further, we may refer to the case of legislators, either state or national. Discrimination as to salaries in this field, as we all understand, is unknown, and I am very sure that it has never been advocated. The men who make up our public assemblies are of all grades of ability and usefulness. Some are leaders of the constructive type; others are incapable of independent thought and judgment. To serve the public in this capacity, is to some a pecuniary sacrifice, while to others it is a pecuniary advantage. All are paid alike, and the impracticability of an adjustment of compensation that would be equitable in each case is at once apparent. Indeed, if such an adjustment were practicable, its wisdom would be open to serious question. It undoubtedly may be said that the case is not strictly analogous, inasmuch as the service is incidental in the sense that it is not contemplated that it should be followed as a means of livelihood, but the same objection cannot be urged in the case of officers in the military or naval service where the pay is fixed by rank. If it be suggested that in the public service special merit is recognized by promotion, it may be said in reply that a similar recognition is to be found in academic service.

But returning to the situation immediately involved in this discussion, I beg to suggest that if there were no objection from the practical point of view to a general scheme of discrimination, there would still be, in my judgment, grave objections to it from the point of view of university policy.

The effectiveness of work in a university, it will be conceded at once, depends in no small degree upon the attitude of the members of the faculty toward one another and toward the governing authorities. If the university life is disturbed by feelings of jealousy and discontent, normal results cannot be expected. It is only when the faculty works as a unit that it develops its full strength. The wise administrator will keep out of the life of the university, to the extent of his ability, discordant elements. It is common knowledge that a general feeling that the governing authorities of the university are trying to do the fair thing, that they have no disposition to discriminate unjustly, makes for harmony; that such a feeling tends to secure unity of purpose, and to bring about concert of action in all that pertains to the life and interest of the university; that it fosters loyalty to the university. It is also common knowledge that a feeling that the authorities are making use of their power without due regard to the just rights of some and in the unwarranted advancement of others, tends to destroy the harmony and unity that the other feeling promotes. There may be no just or proper foundation for criticism, but the fact that there is criticism furnishes a basis for controversy and for the building up of factions.



It would seem to be a wise policy so to administer affairs as to reduce as far as possible the opportunities for criticism and discontent. It is needless for me to suggest, I think, that the introduction generally of a scheme of discrimination in salaries, would result in increasing such opportunities.

But if university trustees and university presidents were resourceful enough to devise schemes of discrimination that would be equitable, and were skilful enough to do so and preserve the peace, would the general adoption of the principle of discrimination be a wise exercise of authority? Some things it certainly would not accomplish. It would not, I am very sure, secure for university service any considerable number of strong men who would not be attracted under the present system. If a man has in view the making of money as his principal object, he would rarely if ever, even though his tastes were scholarly, select a university career, whatever might be the conditions as to salary. He would conclude at once, and he would be right, that no university under any salary system could offer pecuniary inducements at all comparable with those to be found in other fields. It would not improve, in my judgment, the general situation as to salaries. Every man is entitled to a reasonable compensation for his legitimate labor. Even though his calling be not followed primarily for gain, a man is the better worker when he feels that his efforts are receiving adequate pecuniary recognition. It is generally conceded that such recognition is not accorded the college professor. All will agree that his salary should be generous enough to enable him to live in a manner befitting his rank, to meet his obligations to family and to society without embarrassment, and to lay aside something for the future; and we all know that under present conditions this cannot usually be done. Any plan that promises to secure the needed change should, of course, receive our hearty support, providing it does not involve a sacrifice of professional standing or the adoption of a principle that would be out of harmony with the spirit that should prompt the labors of the teacher. I may be wrong, but I cannot bring myself to believe that the general adoption of the principle of discrimination would solve the problem to any appreciable extent. It would advance some salaries, but it would reduce others. It certainly would not give the universities the additional funds that they must have before any improvement in the situation can be expected. But by way of direct answer to the question, I beg to say that the general adoption of a scheme of discrimination if practicable, would not, in my judgment, be a wise exercise of authority, as it would encourage a wrong attitude in the teacher toward his work. There are ethical considerations that should not be disregarded. It ought not to be made possible for a university career to attract simply because of pecuniary opportunities. I cannot think that it would be a wise policy to put university service upon a competitive money basis, as it would tend to do away with the high motives of duty and devotion to the cause that should characterize the life and work of the teacher and scholar and to put in their places the ambition for gain that has so largely commercialized at least one of the learned professions.