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• [Polling](#)

**Our Latest Poll**

The Polling Center: First Take on the February 2010 Results | 2/12/10

The University of Texas / Texas Tribune poll, conducted from February 1-7, shows Gov. Rick Perry holding a 24-point lead over U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison in the Republican gubernatorial primary contest, with Debra Medina posing a surprisingly strong challenge to Hutchison for second place. Perry garnered 45% of the vote, Hutchison 21%, Debra Medina 19%, with 16% undecided. The sample of 366 Republican primary voters has a margin of error of +/- 5.12 percentage points.

In the Democratic primary, former Houston Mayor Bill White has a 48%-14% advantage over businessman Farouk Shami. Thirty-eight percent of the Democratic sampled ...

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**Other People's Polls**

**February 2010**

- [White 51, Shami 19](#)
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## Data App: More University Pay

by [Reeve Hamilton](#), [Matt Stiles](#) and Kosaku Narioka

May 17, 2010 | [6](#)

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[Enlarge](#) photo by: *Caleb Bryant Miller*

The [top professors](#) and [administrators](#) at Texas universities routinely earn between \$250,000 and \$500,000, while [presidents](#) and [chancellors](#) make up to about \$900,000 and top coaches haul in [far more](#), according to salary data for more than a dozen universities and university systems added today to The Texas Tribune's [public employee salary](#) database.

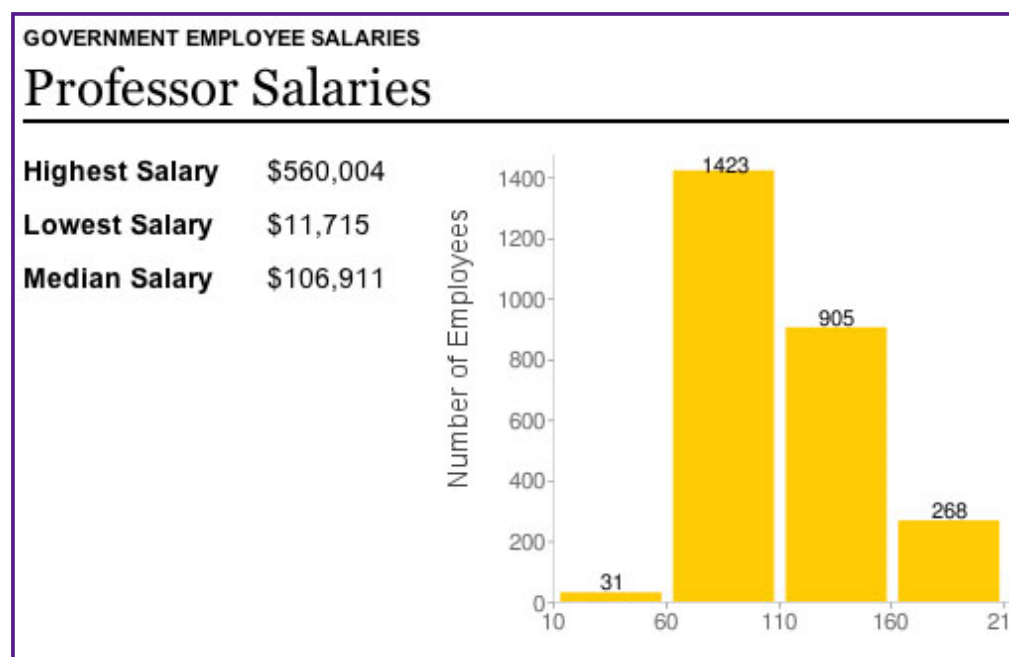
The top administrator paycheck belongs to [Scott Ransom](#), the president of the [University of North Texas Health Sciences Center](#), who earns \$904,562 — 20 percent more than the \$750,000 salary of [University of Texas System](#) Chancellor [Francisco Cigarroa](#). The top professor paycheck also goes to an employee of the UNT Health Sciences Center: Martin Weiss, an [assistant professor](#) who is a highly respected medical doctor. He earns \$675,000.

Overall, a Tribune analysis of university pay shows salaries for professors and academic administrators range widely, from [middle-class level](#) to the truly rich. But public university salaries at all levels have been on a steep upward trend line in Texas and nationally — the average salary has nearly doubled since 1994 — and that coincides, not surprisingly, with a sharp increase in tuition. The historical figures, as [reported](#) by the state's [Higher Education Coordinating Board](#), show that the average annual salary for a professor in Texas has ballooned from \$60,695 in 1994 to \$111,944 in 2010. At the same time, the average salary in the 10 most populous states has grown from \$64,220 to \$113,763, according to an annual faculty survey by the American Association of University Professors. (New Jersey's professor pay is the highest this year, with an average of more than \$130,000.)

“It’s the marketplace,” says Don Hale, spokesman for the [University of Texas](#). “If you want a top-tier research university — and that’s what this is, which is an economic benefit to the entire state of Texas — you either play in the game or you don’t play in the game. We’re not recruiting in Austin; we’re competing with the top research universities across the country, public and private.”

The game has gotten increasingly expensive for students, who are carrying an [ever-growing portion](#) of the cost of higher education in Texas as the state’s share of financing has failed to keep pace with college cost growth. Since the Legislature deregulated tuition in 2003, allowing [university boards to set their own prices](#), the cost per semester to students has jumped by an average of 63 percent, from \$1,934 to \$3,150, according to state figures from 2008. At some schools, tuition and fees have nearly doubled. Some fear the state share of college costs will sink again next session, with the Legislature staring down a [budget shortfall that could hit \\$18 billion](#) and universities simultaneously lamenting [their own budget woes](#).

As part of our ongoing effort to give public access to [government employees’ salaries](#), the Tribune has added the employee pay of more than a dozen universities and university systems to our [searchable database](#). In addition to [UT-Austin](#), [Texas A&M University](#) and the [UT](#) and [A&M](#) systems, the database now includes [Texas Tech University](#), [the University of Houston](#), [the University of North Texas](#), [the University of Texas at Arlington](#), [the University of Texas at San Antonio](#), [Texas State University](#), [the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center](#), [the University of North Texas Health Science Center](#), the [University of North Texas System](#) and the [Texas Tech University System](#). (We’ve added some large school districts and other government agencies, too.) As always, the database allows searching by name, agency, department and title; see our related [blog post](#).



Interact with the [salary database](#).

Not surprisingly, medical doctors in teaching roles make by far the [most money among professors](#), according to the Tribune analysis. Weiss, the [assistant professor](#) at the UNT Health Science Center, is one of the top invasive cardiologists in the state, says center spokeswoman Dana Benton Russell, and almost 70 percent of his salary depends on his clinical performance. “He works round the clock as an invasive cardiologist, in addition to conducting research and teaching residents and the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine,” Russell says.

But other professors in a broad array of fields, from marketing to engineering to computer science to business, [make nearly \\$300,000](#) annually. At UT, the [highest-paid employee](#) with a professor title is [Adam Heller](#), a research professor in chemical engineering, who makes \$328,511. At Texas A&M, it’s [Elsa Murano](#), who [stepped down](#) as the university’s president last year and now [makes \\$425,000](#) as a professor of nutrition and food sciences.

Administrators — deans, provosts, vice presidents, department chairs — regularly make well into the six figures, the data shows. At UT, some 57 employees [make more than \\$250,000](#) (including a handful of [coaches](#), who top the list.) At Texas A&M, 53 employees have crossed the [quarter-million mark](#).

Below the flagship-school level, salary ranges go down somewhat at schools such as the University of Houston, where only 14 employees make quarter-million-dollar salaries; [Texas Tech](#), where only 13 people make that much; and the University of North Texas, where only six employees are paid that well. At Texas State, only the president — [Denise Trauth](#), who makes \$342,290 — betters the quarter-million mark.

### Tier one means higher salaries, tuition

The rapidly rising cost of higher education, much of it driven by personnel, has caused some to question whether colleges and their students are getting their money’s worth. Costs could continue to rise as additional state universities seek to become “tier-one” schools. The University of Houston, which is in the running for that coveted status as one of the state’s top research institutions, spent \$139 million on faculty salaries and wages in 2008. Two years later, that number was up to \$163 million. “We have allocated \$10.1 million in our proposed budget for next year for faculty and staff recruitment and retention in support of our priorities for tier one and national competitiveness,” says spokesman Richard Bonnin.

Because there’s no agreed-upon definition of a tier-one university, precisely what it takes to become one can be a bit murky. The term generally refers to the top national research universities, and it’s commonly accepted that a tier-one school must have annual research expenditures of more than \$100 million. Another key indicator of tier-one status is membership in the [Association of American Universities](#), an elite association of research campuses. It also helps to have a strong national reputation, as reflected in rankings like those published in [U.S. News & World Report](#).

In Texas, only UT, A&M and [Rice University](#) fit the criteria. In the last legislative session, a bill was signed authorizing financing to upgrade one of Texas’ seven “emerging research” universities. Those schools — now competing for the tier-one designation — are UH, UT-Dallas, the University of North Texas, UT-Arlington, Texas Tech, UT-San Antonio and UT-El Paso.

To that end, recent UH budget proposals have shifted money toward professor salaries and away from athletics and construction. To help finance a proposed budget of \$1 billion next year, tuition for UH’s central campus is expected to increase 4 percent, a figure in line with [recent tuition hikes](#) at other state schools.

With public university tuition steadily increasing, critics reject the argument that schools are facing money problems beyond their control. “Professor salaries at Texas public universities have increased at twice the rate of inflation over the past 10 years,” says Justin Keener, vice president of policy and communications at the conservative [Texas Public Policy Foundation](#). “Is it the role of [state] government, during a recession especially, to keep up with the highest-paid professors across the nation?”

With the state confronting the likelihood of a massive budget shortfall, Keener says the big-ticket items should face the most scrutiny. “Maybe we need to take a look at how many students each of those professors are teaching,” he says. “If this is about teaching and education, let’s look at what the student surveys say about those professors, and if students are getting a good bang for their buck. Where’s that data?”

In 2009, the Texas Public Policy Foundation backed a bill sponsored by state Rep. [Lois Kolkhorst](#), R-Brenham, designed to get at the issue of how Texas taxpayer money was being used in higher education. Signed into law in June 2009 and taking effect this fall, it requires professors to make available, within three clicks from the university homepage, detailed information about department budgets, curricula and student evaluations. “I believe that the student is a consumer, and that enhanced transparency will help them make better choices,” Kolkhorst says. “College education is one of the largest investments in one’s life, both financially and professionally.”

Some professors have fought the change, saying it creates unnecessary work, costing time and money, to provide information of little public use. But Keener has little sympathy for such complaints. “I’m sorry — you’re paid with tax dollars,” he says. “Everyone has to be accountable.”

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