

Faculty Contributions and Institutional Impact,

Approved by UCFA on April 7, 2026

Summary

As a world-class institution of higher learning, it is crucial that we maintain our commitment to attracting and retaining exceptional educators and scholars. Faculty are one of the university's greatest strengths, and supporting their work is essential to our reputation, educational quality, and long-term sustainability. A raise for faculty is a strategic investment that will positively impact the whole of the university. Below are several key examples of the impact of the faculty to support this.

Faculty Excellence

Michigan State University, alongside its renowned faculty, continues to shape the future as a boldly public, globally engaged institution. Our faculty serves as the foundation of MSU's mission: advancing education, fostering impactful outreach, driving groundbreaking research, and leading diverse scholarly endeavors across disciplines. Over the past year, faculty contributions have been integral to achieving milestones that reflect MSU's commitment to excellence, innovation, and service to the public good.

Teaching

MSU faculty supports an ever-growing student body – we're adaptive, ensuring a high-quality education for a diverse student population. Enrollment is up 0.4% (from 41,234 in 2025 to 41,415) for undergraduates, with a total enrollment of 51,838. Additionally, there are 1,754 new degree-seeking graduate students at the master's and doctoral levels. New graduate professional enrollment totals 743 students. Total graduate enrollment, including graduate professional students, is 10,423 students. Furthermore, in 2025 MSU received 64,492 applications for the fall class, exceeding last year's 62,138 by 3.8%, therefore we believe we can continue to expect robust enrollment numbers.

While the [number](#) of tenure stream faculty has increased by 2.49% (1,890 to 1,937, the number of fixed-term faculty has decreased by 3.58% (1,230 to 1,185) between 2024-25 and 2025-26. Thus, the number of faculty has not kept pace with the student population.

Furthermore, faculty are key to supporting the President's critical student success initiatives. New programs to assist and encourage first generation college students and transfer students are supported not only by advisors and professional staff, but by faculty whose efforts are central to expanding experiential learning opportunities.

Research

Impressively, in 2025 there was a 13.33% increase in research funding (\$759.2 million to \$850.2 million). As our faculty numbers have not significantly increased, we can infer that faculty have both an increase in research funding, along with an increase in students to

educate. Our national rankings were stable in 2025, again highlighting the successful efforts of our faculty.

Rankings

Academic rankings are a reflection of institutional prestige, driven in large part by faculty excellence. Our national rankings were stable this past year, again highlighting the successful efforts of our faculty. We maintained our strong presence in the U.S. News & World Report rankings at 64th staying at 45th overall in the *Washington Monthly* rankings and 26th among public institutions. We also rank 60th in the recent Wall Street Journal rankings, which is the third highest among the 16 public institutions currently in the Big Ten. Additionally, MSU has been ranked 85th among the world's top 100 institutions, 36th among U.S. institutions, and 14th among public universities. These accomplishments underscore the profound contributions of our faculty to MSU's mission, external perception, and broader societal impact.

Operating Context and Institutional Pressure

Faculty at MSU are advancing the institution's missions (teaching, research, and outreach) in an increasingly complex and challenging higher education environment. Nationally, public universities are facing heightened political scrutiny, growing constraints on academic freedom, declining public trust in both expertise and the value of higher education, and significant volatility in external funding. These very real pressures shape the way faculty work in tangible and consequential ways.

At the institutional level, MSU faculty have absorbed the 9% universal budget reduction, including the loss of colleagues, reduced programmatic capacity, and increased service and instructional demands. At the same time, faculty are being asked to engage meaningfully with several major presidential priorities unfolding concurrently, including the One Health initiative, General Education Modernization, academic-only budget redesign, and new advisory structures such as the Green and White Council. Each of these efforts reflects important institutional ambitions and long-term vision. Collectively, however, they have introduced overlapping demands on faculty time, attention, and expertise, often in the absence of clear timelines, resource commitments, or defined pathways for faculty input.

Despite these constraints, faculty productivity in teaching, research and student support has remained strong, a testament to our commitment, adaptability and professionalism. We are also navigating rapidly evolving expectations related to generative artificial intelligence in teaching and research. While AI presents opportunities, it has also introduced new pedagogical and ethical responsibilities that are largely siloed and hidden within our work.

Faculty Continuity and Institutional Strength

Supporting the presidential priority of becoming a next-generation organization requires sustained attention to faculty excellence, continuity, and success. Faculty play the central

role in mentorship, research, and academic climate, all of which are critical to student achievement and institutional strength.

As MSU's domestic student body becomes increasingly diverse—students of color now make up 27.8% of the class—faculty diversity is equally vital to promoting student success. Research consistently demonstrates that a diverse faculty contributes to improved educational outcomes by offering varied perspectives, mentorship opportunities, and relatable role models for underrepresented students. A faculty that brings varied perspectives and experiences strengthens teaching, mentorship, and the broader educational experience.

Investing in faculty not only supports the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty but also ensures that MSU remains a welcoming and supportive environment where both students and faculty can thrive. Strengthening these connections reinforces our commitment to fostering a next-generation organization where student and faculty success go hand in hand.

BIG TEN Comparisons

As we navigate the evolving landscape of higher education, we are mindful of the competitive nature of faculty compensation within the expanding Big Ten, which now includes prestigious institutions like UCLA and the University of Washington. In the most recent AAUP faculty salary survey, Michigan State University ranks 7th for professors, 10th for associate professors, and 16th for assistant professors among the 16th public Big Ten institutions. It is important to note that comparisons across institutions can be challenging due to variations in faculty composition, which can impact direct comparisons; however, the weighted average salary places MSU 12th in the conference. This underscores the need for strategic investment in faculty compensation to maintain and enhance our competitiveness as a leading research university within this dynamic and growing consortium.

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A commitment to investing in faculty is an investment in the future of the university. Faculty are at the heart of our research, student engagement, and academic reputation. By acknowledging the impact of our faculty, we not only strengthen the morale and stability of our current faculty, but we also signal to prospective faculty members that this institution values their contributions and is committed to fostering an environment of excellence. This investment will ensure that we continue to offer a world-class education, retain exceptional talent, and maintain our reputation as a leading institution of higher learning.

Recommendation

Based on all the information provided, including the exemplary work of the faculty over the past year, the need to recruit and retain tenure-stream faculty, and the importance of addressing wage equity and salary alignment with peers, the University Committee on Faculty Affairs (UCFA) recommends that the university provide merit raises at or above the inflation rate.

Investing in competitive and equitable salaries is essential for retaining and attracting the exceptional faculty who advance MSU's mission of education, research, and community engagement. Such investments also reinforce the university's standing as a leading institution in higher education and demonstrate a steadfast commitment to valuing faculty contributions and supporting their professional growth.

We appreciate the continued collaboration with the Provost's Office in sustaining MSU's tradition of academic excellence. Faculty contributions remain essential to the university's mission, and continued recognition of that work is vital to MSU's future.