

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY™

Professional and Scientific Council

FY 2024 Salary Statement on Behalf of Professional & Scientific Staff at Iowa State University

Jamie Sass, President, Professional & Scientific Council

My name is Jamie Sass, and I am the Professional and Scientific Council President at Iowa State University. As the representative of over 3,000 Professional and Scientific Employees of Iowa State University, I would like to thank the Iowa Board of Regents for the opportunity to share remarks regarding salaries for FY24, including a call to action from Iowa State's professional and scientific employees to better meet cost-of-living adjustments.

The Value of the Student-Facing P&S Employees in Recruiting and Retaining Students

Unfortunately, I cannot join you in person today because of my professional commitments to the University's lifeblood: our students. My job, on paper, is coaching students to be stronger professional communicators. My job, in practice, is coaching students AND student retention, which often involves wearing my "mom" hat during 1:1 meetings with students to provide advice on the many personal challenges they are facing, take advantage of resources available to them, and start their assignments earlier among other things like reminding them to drink more water and go to bed earlier.

As higher education stares down the [enrollment cliff](#), each student recruited, enrolled, and retained is increasingly valuable. And as Generation Z is [increasingly distrustful of higher education and its inherent value](#), every student's value will only grow. The mission-critical work done by student-facing professionals like me and my professional and scientific colleagues in academic advising, dining and residence, student engagement, and so many others is a cornerstone for student recruitment, enrollment, and retention. In other words, we are working to help maintain the University's most valuable asset: our students.

Student-facing professional and scientific employees at Iowa State University are charged with keeping students at Iowa State happy and successful. Anecdotal stories from my constituents tell me student-facing professional and scientific employees, the very ones charged with getting students on campus and then keeping them there to protect tuition dollars, are burned out. For the first time in my career at Iowa State, I'm seeing my colleagues leaving Iowa State in waves, chasing different opportunities with better chances for career advancement and yes, better salaries. A long-term academic advisor recently left her higher ed career for an industry position because "money talks, and with stuff so expensive, I finally had to listen. I couldn't do another year like last year. I miss my students, but I don't miss not knowing if I'll get a raise." Losing talented, invested professionals who value student success because they are underpaid will devastate the long-term success of student recruitment and retention and ultimately, our University.

The Value of ALL P&S Employees in Advancing the University's Mission

Professional and Scientific Council Past President Clayton Johnson said it best in 2017: “Regardless of our positions, ALL Professional and Scientific employees continue to advance the mission of Iowa State University: to ‘Create, share, and apply knowledge to make Iowa and the world a better place.’ We work directly with students, we work directly with research, and we work directly with Iowans.” Our professional and scientific employees impact students, the University, and Iowa. Below are some award winners from the [2022 Professional and Scientific Council Citation Awards](#) who are making a tangible contribution to the State of Iowa and Iowa State University. These excerpts are from their award nomination letters written by their nominators.

Alexa: Making a Difference in STEM Education for Iowa Youth and Educators Statewide

Alexa is responsible for overseeing the youth State Science and Technology Fair of Iowa in addition to 4-H STEM outreach programming for K-12 youth statewide. In her role she has increased youth participation at the 2021 State Science Fair from 124 to 401 students. The increase in youth participants also included 12 new participating schools with youth representing a total of 34 counties participating in the fair. She also initiated a program called STEM in Motion which provides 9-12 grade youth interested in STEM an opportunity to travel outside of Iowa to interact in a real-world setting and career-oriented STEM pathways. This past year she implemented a Science Research Conference for Iowa educators that provided two certified Iowa Area Education Agency (AEA) renewal licensure credits for participating educators. Alexa obtained \$10,000 in funding to support the new Science Research Conference.

CIRAS: Making a Difference in Industry Performance

The Center for Industrial Research and Service (or CIRAS, for short) mission is to improve the performance of industry through applied research, education, and technical assistance. They deliver services from 30-minute counseling sessions to a multi-year transformational engagement. The funding comes from several federal agencies, two state agencies, the University, and private organizations. With the number of different organizations, it's very important to manage these relationships and track and report to stakeholders. For 20 years they used an online database. In 2019 they decided to implement Salesforce as their core operating platform. In 2020 the external integrator decided they were unable to meet their needs and backed out of the project. CIRAS formed a team to manage the implementation themselves. Throughout 2021 the CIRAS Salesforce Implementation Team took on the largest project in CIRAS history. They conducted extensive discovery processing, identifying over 230 requirements to meet the needs of CIRAS. They then developed solutions, performed hundreds of tests and created 80 training videos. On January 3, 2022, Salesforce went live. While many organizations share stories of the struggles of launching a new system, this year has been full of stories of success and excitement. In 2023, CIRAS will be celebrating 60 years serving Iowa industry, and, thanks to this team, they are well-positioned for the next 60 years.

These are but a few highlights of the exceptional work done by professional and scientific employees at Iowa State University. I am constantly humbled by the depth and diversity of the work done by professional and scientific employees and who are impacted by it. We have employees throughout the state in Extension and Outreach educating Iowans in fulfillment of Iowa State University's land grant mission. Our campus communicators are pushing out

messaging and executing beautiful marketing campaigns that entice donors, families, and alumni to remain Forever True. Those in Finance and Operations help keep the University operational and fiscally sound. And please do not ever forget the administrative assistants because I think every function at Iowa State would stop without the magic they do.

Call to Action: Fight in the Legislature for Cost-of-Living Increases

And yet, despite our good work, we have been met with less-than-desirable performance raises for many years. The last five years of performance-based salary increases compared against an ever-increasing cost-of-living has been a brutal financial reality for many professional and scientific employees as many paychecks struggle to keep up with everyday expenses: housing, transportation, groceries, childcare, utilities, etc. Except for 2019, performance-based percentage increases have fallen below cost-of-living adjustments. This impact has been especially noticeable in 2021 and 2022 as performance-based salary increases have yet to even halfway meet cost-of-living increases.

Year after year, I've read the salary policy letters that my predecessors have written, asking for salary increases while highlighting the worth our professional and scientific employees bring to Iowa State. Year after year, Professional and Scientific Council's [Compensation and Benefits Committee](#) has written its yearly report, usually requesting professional and scientific salaries to align more with industry counterparts and accounting for inflationary trends as retention efforts. Reading these documents from past years is difficult and seeing how little has changed.

My constituents are smart people. We are aware of the hard financial realities of Iowa State University, the complexities of its funding, and the role politics play in our finances. We know we work in a unique ecosystem that does not look like any other place of employment, which directly affects how we are paid and staffed. Furthermore, we recognize the financial constraints that have been increasingly difficult in recent years. Regents, I do not envy the job you do. However, seeing raises that do not move the financial needle meaningfully for most professional and scientific employees is demoralizing.

Many of us know we will likely never earn at Iowa State what we could earn in industry, and many stay because we are loyal. We love the students we guide, the faculty we work alongside, the Iowans we serve in 99 counties, and the hundreds of other stakeholders professional and scientific employees bring value to because we bleed cardinal and gold as Iowa Staters. Loyalty has yet to outpace a skyrocketing cost-of-living though, and I do not think that will be (or should be!) enough to sustain the talent Iowa State University is positioned to lose. Failure to retain quality, invested professional and scientific talent with appropriate salary increases hurts the University's stakeholders and bottom line. Most notably, it will hurt students who pay tuition dollars when they can no longer receive the quality of service they deserve because student-facing positions have left.

Please, do what is right for us. Keep fighting for us in the legislature for meaningful salary increases because, without big steps forward, we will continue to face challenges in recruiting and retaining the staff who bring the University to life.

Thank you.