

Honesty, Integrity, and Average Salaries

Daniel B. Szyld

Professor of Mathematics and member of the TAUP Negotiating Team

Please allow me to begin this note with an exercise of the kind we give to the students in our Math GenEd class:

Q. Consider two Phillies players, Greg Dobbs, whose batting average this season was .301 (in 226 at-bats) and Ryan Howard, whose batting average was .251 (in 610 at-bats). What is the combined batting average of the two players?

A. Dobbs got 68 hits in 226 at-bats for his .301 average, while Howard got 153 hits in 610 at-bats for his .251 average. Together they made 221 hits in 836 at-bats for a combined batting average of .264.

Of course, as you expected, the combined batting average (.264) is closer to that of Howard since he had the most at-bats. You would never say that the combined batting average is $(.301 + .251)/2 = .276$, half way between the two. It would not make any sense. In fact, .276 times 836 at-bats, i.e., 231 hits, computes to ten more hits than actually took place.

A similar question is the following:

Q. There were 581 full professors at Penn (2007–08 AY) and their average salary was \$163.3K. There were 13 full professors at Philadelphia University, and their average salary was \$95.0K. What was the average salary for full professors between the two institutions?

A. Let us see, $581 \times \$163.3K$ is a total of \$94.8773M, and $13 \times \$95.0K$ is \$1.235M, for a total salary of all 594 professors of \$96.1123M. So, the average salary of full professors of these two institutions is \$161.81K.

Of course you expected the combined average to be much closer to that of Penn (with 581 FP) than to that of Philadelphia U (with only 13 FP). You would never just compute the average of two averages and obtain \$129.5K, which is a meaningless number.

Using the same concept one can compute for example the average salaries of full professors of selected institutions in the Philadelphia region.¹ I compiled the appropriate data in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of full professors of selected 16 regional institutions, average salaries (in thousands of dollars), and total FP salaries in each institution (in millions of dollars). Bottom row: total number of FP and total FP salaries in the region.

Institution	# Full Profs	Average Salary (in \$ thousands)	Total Salaries of Full Profs (in \$ millions)
Drexel U	169	\$129.4	\$21.8686
Haverford	33	111.8	3.6894
La Salle U	55	90.7	4.9885
Lehigh U	212	117.2	24.8464
Penn State-Main	765	125.4	95.9310
Philadelphia U	13	95.0	1.2350
Rutgers-Camden	83	129.1	10.7153
St Joseph	58	105.0	6.0900
Swarthmore	83	126.5	10.4995
Temple U	407	121.6	49.4912
U Delaware	420	126.0	52.9200
U Penn	581	163.3	94.8773
Pitt-Main	391	121.9	47.6629
U Sciences Phila	35	88.9	3.1115
Villanova	148	115.0	17.0200
West Chester U	147	94.2	13.8474
Total	3600		\$458.7940

Thus the average salary of full professors in the Philadelphia region is \$458.794M/3600, i.e., \$127.44K.

Of course you would never compute the average of the averages (i.e., summing up the sixteen numbers in the third column of Table 1 and divide by 16), which would be \$116.31K. I am sure you would agree by now that this is a totally meaningless number².

But this is precisely the number provided by Temple Human Resources to the TAUP Negotiating Team in early October, and it is the same number published in the *Temple Times* of October 13, 2008. The list of institutions was chosen by Temple. In their charts, Temple attempts to show that the average salary of full professors at regional institutions is \$116.31K, which is lower than Temple's full professors' average of \$121.6K. The heading above the charts says, "Survey indicates that Temple compensation is competitive."

In fact, this number is only one bar in one of the three charts published³. In total one can check twelve of the eighteen so-called "averages" in the same manner. Data for the other six are not published in *Academe*. All those averages are totally wrong. As it turns out, as in the case of the full professors the true averages are always higher than reported, and higher than Temple's. In other words, the AAUP

survey does not show what Temple claims. Temple's full professors' \$121.6K is about 4.6% lower than the regional average of \$127.44K.

As you may recall, I have publicly questioned the wisdom of using "comparables" which were not doctoral institutions, and which are not large universities in large cities (or with which Temple does not compete for faculty). I also questioned this at the bargaining table, and in fact I said that one can consider it an insult to be presented with these charts. Furthermore, I warned the University negotiating team, and specifically George Moore, University Counsel, not to publish this nonsense. I am sure I am not the only one who found preposterous the lists of comparables presented by management.

When I found out through my own computations just days ago, not only that the comparables were ridiculous but also that the numbers given to us (and the public) were not truthful, it added salt to the wound. The Temple administration appears to be either incompetent, or dishonest, or both.

I believe that providing the data with bogus comparables is deceiving at best, if not outright dishonest. But giving us falsely calculated information in my book crosses the threshold of civility.

I should add that for several weeks now, we have been asking for explanations regarding these charts. Who compiled the comparables? Where does the data (other than what we see in *Academe*) come from? How are the averages in your charts computed? So far we have received no answers.

With this recent discovery, I would expect any administration with integrity to issue a public retraction and apology.

This brings me to another point. As you may know, I compiled a table (in the *TAUP Bulletin* of November 17) with what I believe are comparable institutions (using the three criteria outlined above), and found that Temple's average salaries are near the bottom of that table for all ranks. I presented this table to management during negotiations (with the state mediator present). What followed was an inquisitorial rant, questioning what I had produced. "Why is the University of Delaware not in the list"? (It is not in a large city.) "And what about Rutgers-Camden?" (It is not a doctoral institution.) "Aren't those averages lower than Temple?"

In other words, my integrity and honesty was being challenged. I was on the TAUP negotiating team in 2004–5, and again this year. I have been at the table for a total of about 18 months over the two negotiations. I am used to harsh disagreements and tough discussions. But questioning my honesty and integrity (and that of my fellow team members) is beyond the pale.

Unfortunately, this seems to be institutionalized. The University spokesperson was quoted in the Temple News as saying that management wants "the entire community to have the latest, most accurate information." (read, TAUP is not honest). The Human Resources website reads, "We are committed to providing timely, accurate information on the process, proposals and negotiation status" (ditto). My analysis indicates their claim is totally false.

On a personal note, it pains me to see President Hart's reputation being tarnished by her representatives. It pains me to see the public face of Temple University discredited with falsehoods. It pains me to see that the University is spending money on studies conducted by the Mercer consulting firm on the use of pay-for-performance (the system used for the administrators who bring you false charts), instead of negotiating honestly and with respect for a fair contract for its faculty and staff.

Notes:

¹Data comes from *Academe* (March-April 2008). It is available at <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2008/MA>

²One can use a simple average across entities sometimes, such as when you are comparing prices of identical commodities sold in different places. The average price of milk does not depend on the number of gallons sold at a given store. However, the average salary of professors does depend on the number of individuals at a particular institution. Moreover, milk at one store is the same as milk at the next. Professors at research universities are not interchangeable with professors at baccalaureate or masters-level colleges.

³See <http://www.temple.edu/newsroom/templetimes.htm>, but hurry up; this edition has already been changed from the original.