AAVC/AAVMC VETERINARY FACULTY BENEFITS STUDY

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American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

The Ohio State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

American Association of Veterinary Clinicians

Recent analysis of the academic veterinary workforce indicates an overall position vacancy rate of about 10%, with the rate likely to be considerably higher in clinical faculty.[1] In the face of this remarkable shortage, recruitment and retention of faculty in an extremely competitive labor market become issues of paramount importance and impact. For this reason, the AAVC and the AAVMC jointly commissioned an analysis of benefits packages currently provided as part of total compensation for veterinary clinical faculty.

During fall of 2023, all AAVMC member institutions in the US were included in a survey to determine the range of benefits being offered to academic clinicians. Initially, each institution's AAVC point-of-contact was emailed a survey link with a request to forward to their respective HR director. The HR directors were then asked to provide their institution's responses to the associated questionnaire. As follow-up, the Deans from non-responding institutions were subsequently contacted and asked to work with their HR directors to complete the questionnaire.

Overall, 32 of 33 US institutions initiated a response to the survey (97%). Of the 32 respondents, 26 (81%) completed the entire questionnaire. One respondent completed 88% of the questionnaire and five completed 5% or less.

With the questionnaire titled "Health & Welfare Benefits", participants were asked to identify all benefits plans offered or made available by their institution to entry-level, full-time clinical specialists. Full results are presented in the Appendix.

- Other forms of bonus or additional compensation are available at 30% of responding institutions. These include merit-based bonus options throughout the year, payment for emergency duty, clinical overload pay, extra teaching compensation, longevity pay, and incentive pay for research productivity.

Competitiveness of academic salaries can be enhanced through these commonly available bonuses and production-based compensation.

- Retirement savings
  - Most respondents (78%) offer a mandatory retirement savings program. Of those with such programs, 81% reported that their institution provides an employer match, ranging from 3% to 23% (mean = 10%, median = 10%).
  - An even greater proportion of responding institutions (93%) offer a supplemental retirement savings program. Of these, 24% reported an employer match.
  - A majority of responding institutions (59%) offer a pension plan.

- Life insurance – Employer-paid life insurance was reported by 93% of respondents. In addition, some respondents' institutions also paid for life insurance for the employee's family (26% for spouses, 15% for domestic partners, and 22% for children).

- Disability insurance – Overall, 89% of respondents reported offering either short- or long-term disability insurance, and 48% offer both.

In addition to these notable employment benefits, most U.S. colleges and schools of veterinary medicine qualify as non-profit employers in the context of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. As such, faculty employees may well meet the program's criteria for student loan forgiveness, which could represent a very significant added boost for financial security.

Other quality of life benefits were reported as well. In general, these are less common and perhaps increasingly unique to academia, including:

- Adoption assistance is provided by 22% of responding institutions, with amounts ranging from $1,500 to $10,000 (mean = $5,700, median = $5,000).

- Childcare assistance is available for employees at 41% of responding institutions – 33% provide childcare on-site, 22% provide subsidized childcare, and 15% provide both.

- Tuition benefits were found to be quite common. Across responding institutions, 89% reported tuition assistance for the employee and 52% for the employee's dependents.

- Legal assistance was reported as a benefit at 70% of responding institutions.

Within the sphere of benefits supporting personal health and wellbeing, a certain degree of variability was identified across and between responding institutions. Without question, a degree of enhancement might be desirable in certain areas or/and by certain institutions. As a whole, however, the breadth and depth of the benefits identified in this study speaks clearly to the collective commitment of AAVMC member institutions (in the U.S.) to faculty welfare.

Professional Growth and Development. Similar to personal health and wellbeing, some specific employment benefits are generally expected to support professional growth and development of employees such as veterinary clinical-specialist faculty. Typically, these items have a pre-determined dollar limit, and include specific professional membership dues, licenses, liability insurance, and professional development expenses. Although specific amounts and items were found to vary by employer, this general group of benefits is quite prevalent across career pathways in the veterinary medical profession. However, certain benefits that promote professional growth and development are, for the most part, unique to academic employment settings. These include:

- The opportunity to earn sabbatical leave, as reported by 92% of responding institutions.

- The possibility of earning tenure, which is available at 96% of reporting institutions.

- The opportunity to negotiate clinical release time, which is available for

Colleges and schools of veterinary medicine are facing a critical workforce shortage, especially with clinical faculty. Recruitment and retention of clinical specialists is particularly challenging due to the plethora of attractive employment opportunities that exist in private practice. In this extremely competitive labor market, where academic budgets are generally not deep enough to enable institutions to match private-sector salaries dollar-for-dollar, employment benefits emerge as issues of paramount importance and impact. This study has clearly demonstrated the overall commitment to faculty welfare that exists at U.S. colleges and schools of veterinary medicine, with particular emphasis on physical and mental health, work/life balance, financial security (both during and beyond the period of employment), and other quality of life benefits.

In short, the depth and breadth of benefits packages available for veterinary clinical-specialist faculty were found to be robust with regard to both *personal health and wellbeing* and *professional growth and development.* Although many of the benefits identified are certainly available in the private sector, it is likely that at least some aren't available at the levels identified in this study or in the broad, collective groupings that were discovered. Other benefits offered by academic institutions just don't exist in non-academic employment settings.

As academic veterinary medicine contemplates potential solutions to the faculty shortage, the rich benefits packages available with academic employment are an asset to be recognized, highlighted, and leveraged.

1. American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges. Internal data. 2024.

2. Doherty C, Ouedraogo F, Hansen C. 2024 AVMA Report on the Economic State of the Veterinary Profession. Veterinary Economics Division, AVMA, Schaumburg, IL, April 2024, 62 pp.

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◦ Employee	27	92.6