Salaries of Counselor Educators: A Multilevel Analysis

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Abstract

We examined the salaries of counselor educators at CACREP-accredited programs in public institutions across the United States. A dataset of individual and institutional characteristics, including salary, academic rank, ACES region, enrollment, and percentage of students receiving Pell Grants, was created by pooling publicly available salary data from all 50 states. The multilevel analysis revealed that salaries at R1 institutions and institutions with larger enrollment tended to be higher. Moreover, there were significant differences in salaries across ACES regions. The information on regional and individual salary differences will empower the field to support its professionals better, ensuring they are adequately compensated for their essential work and fostering a more motivated and effective workforce.

Keywords: counselor education, salary analysis, career counseling

Introduction

With their unique skill sets and professional responsibilities, counseling faculty play a crucial role in higher education (Preston et al., 2020), providing guidance and support to students navigating academic, personal, and career challenges. Their work often extends beyond classroom instruction to include clinical supervision, student advisement, community partnerships, and professional gatekeeping—tasks that directly affect student wellness and institutional retention. Despite these vital contributions, counselor educators frequently earn substantially less than colleagues in comparable academic fields. This salary disparity can weaken recruitment pipelines, contribute to faculty turnover, and ultimately compromise the quality of counseling preparation available to students (Isaacs & Sabella, 2013).

Multiple factors influence faculty earnings, including discipline, market demand, required credentials, and the potential for external funding. For instance, faculty in health professions or STEM disciplines often command higher salaries because their fields attract robust research funding, involve licensure requirements that translate to lucrative private-sector opportunities, and face persistent workforce shortages. In contrast, counselor education—though equally rigorous—tends to be housed within colleges of education, where state-funded pay structures and limited grant support constrain compensation growth. In 2021, health professionals earned on average $60,000 more than their education counterparts, underscoring how disciplinary market forces and funding availability shape pay scales across academia (Flannery, 2022; NEA, 2022).

Moreover, both novice and seasoned counseling faculty frequently lack clear information about salary benchmarks within and outside their field of expertise. This opacity makes it challenging to determine fair market value, negotiate equitable compensation, or advocate for parity across disciplines. As a result, counseling faculty may experience diminished morale, reduced job satisfaction, and higher burnout—factors that can ripple outward, affecting program stability and student outcomes. A transparent understanding of cross-disciplinary compensation patterns is therefore not merely an economic issue but a matter of equity, professional respect, and the long-term sustainability of counselor education programs.

The type of institution where a faculty member is employed represents a critical factor in shaping compensation, workload, and professional expectations. Institutional types—such as research universities, community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)—exhibit notable variations in salary structures, often influenced by their missions, funding models, and the demographics of the populations they serve (Kreuter, 2012). Acknowledging these institutional differences is vital to understanding systemic inequities within higher education, as they reveal how resource allocation, institutional prestige, and historical context collectively influence faculty experiences and contribute to broader patterns of diversity and equity across the academic landscape. (Kreuter, N. (2012)).

Regarding individual-level factors, tenure status plays a role in determining salary. Tenure-track positions, which offer a path to permanent employment and enhanced job security, typically pay more than non-tenure-track roles, which are often contractual and temporary in nature. Individual career history adds yet another layer of complexity. Factors such as successful retention negotiations, contributions to intellectual property, and administrative responsibilities can influence salary levels, mainly as faculty accumulate more experience and credentials (NEA, 2022).

Much of the discussion in referred journals has focused on counselors' incomes, specifically those working in private practices and school settings (Hill et al., 2005; NAATP, 2023; Olmstead et al., 2005), but not on the incomes of counselor educators. This study examines the current salaries of faculty working in counseling training programs within university settings. Our research aims to investigate how individual demographic characteristics impact salaries within the context of institutional characteristics. This salary study will provide up-to-date, comprehensive, and urgently needed information on the salary landscape in the counseling education profession. Without this work, inequities in compensation may go unnoticed, leading to dissatisfaction and high turnover among faculty, which in turn affects the quality of education and mentorship provided to students (Lackritz et al., 2004). Moreover, institutions require data to make informed decisions about salary adjustments, which could lead to an underpaid workforce compared to industry standards. Over time, inequitable pay practices can damage an institution's reputation, making it harder to attract and retain top talent. A salary analysis study is necessary to promote the financial well-being of counselor educators, enhance the quality of education, and ensure overall institutional equity.

Previous Faculty Salary Analyses

Salary analyses have been conducted across institutions and disciplines. Renzulli et al. (2006) examined the wage gap between faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The intersection of race, class, and gender is explored by comparing faculty salaries across institutions, while controlling for institutional regional location, size of the tenure-track faculty, and type of institution. The study revealed that men are paid less at HBCUs than at PWIs, which contributes to the overall wage disparities between HBCU faculty and PWI faculty. On average, male faculty at HBCUs are paid $5,349 less than their counterparts at PWIs, and women faculty at HBCUs are paid $2,000 less than their counterparts at PWIs (Renzulli et al., 2006). While the study encompasses over 7,400 postsecondary institutions across the United States, the data are derived from a national survey conducted during the 2001-2002 academic year.

The American Counseling Association (2014) conducted its inaugural survey of counselor compensation to assess salary levels and benefits among counseling professionals. The survey, which included nearly 9,000 respondents, revealed various compensation patterns across counseling specialties. The key findings were that counselor educators earn an average primary salary of $66,405 annually. Regarding specialty areas, mental health, clinical mental health, and community counselors have the lowest average annual salary at $40,422. When comparing states, Counselors in California earn the highest average salary ($64,197 annually), while those in Hawaii and the Northwest earn the least (a little over $43,000 annually). Many counselors hold multiple jobs, with 34% also working a second job in addition to their primary counseling position. Counselor educators are most likely to have secondary positions, with 57% reporting that they work more than one job. In 2024, the ACA followed up on the initial study with a Counseling Workforce Report based on survey data collected from over 11,000 counselors (ACA, 2024). The results from this survey study indicated that the average salary of professional counselors was $70,956, representing a 43% increase from 2014. In contrast, the average salary of counselor educators was $66,405, representing a 16% increase from 2014.

As the salary studies conducted by ACA in 2014 and 2024 relied on self-report data, we designed the current salary study to generate up-to-date and comprehensive salary information across counselor education programs nationwide from publicly available administrative data. Given the importance of gender, race, institutional type, and region in explaining salary disparities, as revealed in prior research, we further examined salary variability as a function of individual and contextual characteristics. Specifically, we addressed the following questions:

1. What are the salary levels of counselor educators from across the country?
2. How do the salaries of counselor educators vary across individual and institutional characteristics?

Method

Data Source

CACREP-accredited graduate counseling programs exist at all types of post-secondary institutions. According to the CACREP Vital Statistics Report (2023), there are 434 accredited programs representing all 50 states (CACREP, 2023): 250 at public institutions, 175 at private not-for-profit institutions, and nine at private for-profit institutions. Although the exact law requires the public posting of faculty salaries, most states list a breakdown of tax dollars as a matter of public record. This breakdown includes state employee salaries and budgets. In other words, the salary data of all employees of public institutions is publicly available.

We compiled the most recent years of salary records available online for 1,990 faculty members from 218 CACREP-accredited counselor education programs (embedded in a variety of departments, including the Department of Counseling) at public institutions from 50 states. We used data from official sources whenever possible. For example, data were retrieved from the University of North Carolina System's *Salary Information Database* (University of North Carolina System, n.d.). Additionally, we obtained personnel data, including names and ranks, from institutional websites. We then obtained institutional-level data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.).

Variables

Salary. The outcome variable, salary, is expressed in US dollars, without adjustment for inflation. 90% of the salary data are from 2023 or 2022.

Rank. We focus on tenure-track or tenured faculty in this study, and hence academic rank (Assistant, Associate, Full) as an individual-level predictor. Rank is typically indicated on program websites.

Institutional Characteristics. Institutional characteristics from IPEDS include Minority Serving Institution (MSI) designation (Yes/No), Carnegie Classification, total enrollment, and number of Pell Grant recipients. An institution is designated as an MSI if at least 25% of full-time undergraduate students identify as students of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Additionally, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are statutorily defined as MSIs. There were six categories in the Carnegie Classification. We grouped the institutions in the sample into R1 (Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity) versus non-R1 (all others). The number of Pell Grant recipients was included because it serves as an indicator of an institution's financial resources, as only undergraduate students with exceptional financial need are eligible for Federal Pell Grants. Lastly, we classified the institutions by region according to the Association for Counselor Education & Supervision (ACES). ACES comprises five regions, each serving as a subdivision and providing leadership and resources to its members who reside in the same geographical area. The regions also have their governing bodies and a set of bylaws. The five regions are North Atlantic ACES (NARACES), North Central ACES (NCACES), Rocky Mountain ACES (RMACES), Southern ACES (SACES), and Western ACES (WACES).

Analysis

We estimated a multilevel model to address the main research question, which concerned whether salary was predicted by individual characteristics in the context of institutional characteristics. As individuals were considered nested within institutions, the error terms among individuals within states were theoretically non-independent, because individuals within the same institution were expected to be more like each other than to individuals from another institution. Therefore, a multi-level model was used to account for the non-independence in error terms. Below is an illustration of the full model:

Level 1 Model:

$$Y_{ij} = \pi_{0j} + \pi_{1j} * (\text{Rank}) + e_{ij}$$

Where Y_{ij} represented an individual faculty member's salary, π_{0j} represented the mean salary within each institution, π_{1j} represented the fixed effects of the race, gender, and rank, and r_{ij} represented the individual faculty member's variability around the institution mean.

Level 2 Model:

$$\pi_{0j} = \beta_{00} + \beta_{01} * (\text{Total Enrollment}) + \beta_{02} * (\text{number of Pell Grant recipients}) + \beta_{03} * (\text{R1 vs. R2}) + \beta_{04} * (\text{ACES region}) + r_{0j}$$

$$\pi_{1j} = = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11} * (\text{Total Enrollment}) + \beta_{12} * (\text{number of Pell Grant recipients}) + \beta_{13} * (\text{R1 vs. R2}) + \beta_{14} * (\text{ACES region}) + r_{1j}$$

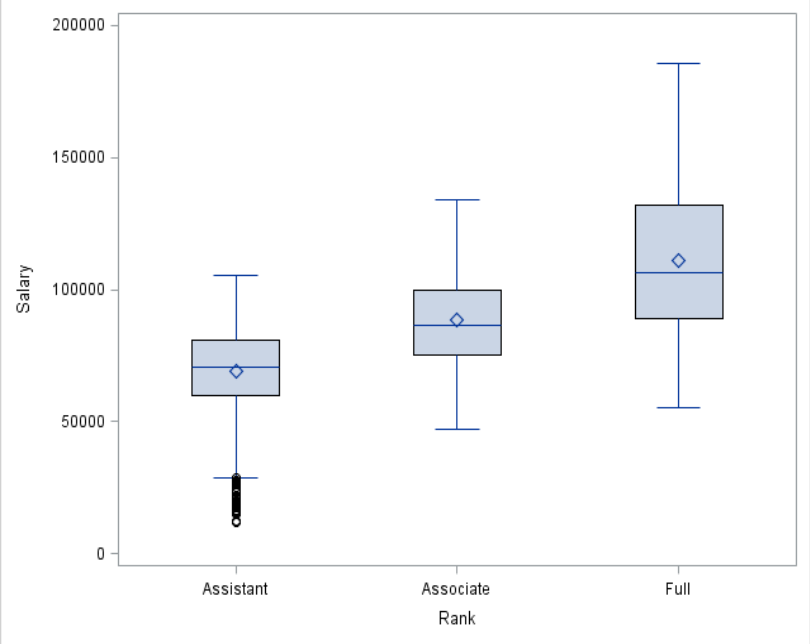
Where β_{00} represented the institutional mean, and β_{01}, β_{02}, β_{03}, β_{04}, β_{11}, β_{12}, β_{13}, β_{14} represented the fixed effects associated with each indicator of institutional characteristics (i.e., enrollment, number of Pell Grant recipients, R1 status, ACES region); and r_{0j} represented the institutional level variability around the institutional mean. We first estimated a null model wherein no predictors were entered. The intraclass correlation coefficient was significantly greater than 0. Therefore, we proceeded with estimating the full model with Level 2 predictors. We compared the full model with reduced models (with fewer predictors) based on fit indices (e.g, AIC, BIC) and identified the most parsimonious and theoretically sound model.

Results

Among the 1,990 faculty members, there was an even distribution of Assistant, Associate, and Full professors. There were 701 Assistant Professors (35.4%), 649 Associate Professors (32.7%), and 552 Full Professors (27.8%). Additionally, the 81 adjunct professors in the sample were also excluded from further analyses, as the salaries of adjunct professors can be inconsistent, and many institutions do not include adjunct professors on their websites.

Initial examination of the univariate characteristics revealed considerable variability in the salary variable. Some data points were likely outliers (e.g., salaries over half a million or less than $10,000). Some of the extreme values were included because we were unable to distinguish between 9-month and 12-month salaries, salaries for individuals holding administrative positions, or salaries for part-time faculty. Consequently, we removed the top and bottom 5% of the individual salaries at the Assistant, Associate, and Full ranks. Preliminary analyses suggested that there was a clear distinction in salaries between professors of different ranks (Figure 1)

Figure 1. *Salary Distribution Across Academic Ranks*



The Counselor Educators in this study came from 217 institutions. 30% of their institutions are designated as MSIs, whereas 22.6% were classified as R1s. The mean total enrollment is 16,366 (*SD* = 12,300). On average, 4,363 students received Pell Grants (*SD* = 4,715) per institution. As shown in Table 1, all 50 states were represented in this sample; however, we were able to locate information for more programs in some states than others. For example, 18 Counselor Educator programs from Texas were included in the sample, but only one program from Vermont was included. Nonetheless, each ACES region is represented by multiple programs. Figure 3 shows that the salary distribution varied substantially across regions. The mean salary in RAMACES was around $75,000, but around $95,000 in NARACES.

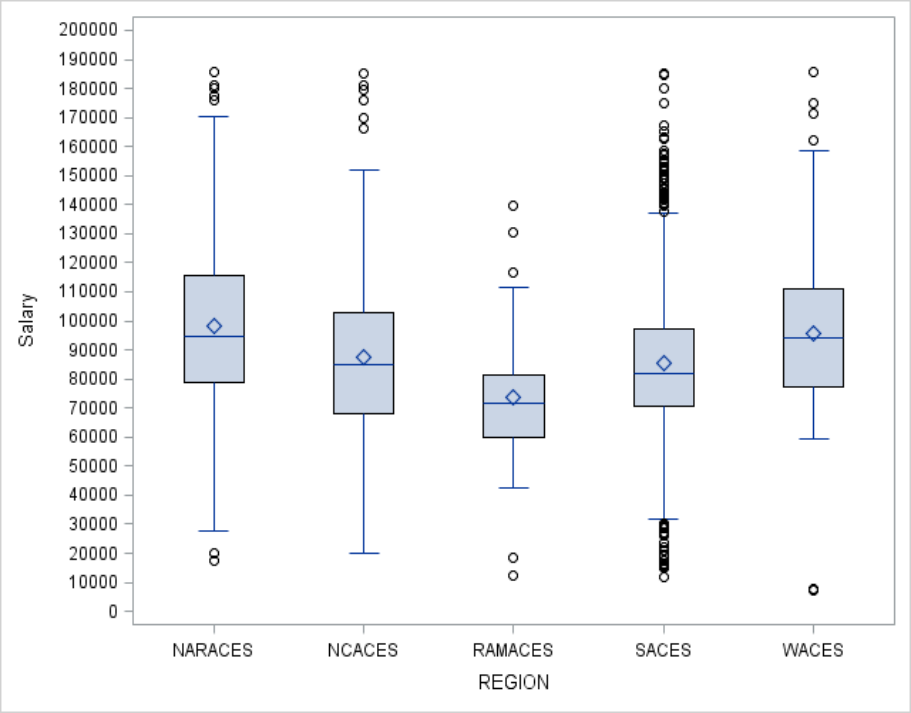
Table 1. *State and ACES Region of the CACPRE-Accredited Programs in the Sample (N = 217)*

State	ACES Region	Count	Percent
AK	WACES	1	0.46
AL	SACES	10	4.61

State	ACES Region	Count	Percent
AR	SACES	3	1.38
AZ	WACES	2	0.92
CA	WACES	7	3.23
CO	RAMACES	4	1.84
CT	NARACES	4	1.84
DC	NARACES	2	0.92
DE	NARACES	1	0.46
FL	SACES	7	3.23
GA	SACES	8	3.69
IA	NCACES	2	0.92
ID	RAMACES	2	0.92
IL	NCACES	7	3.23
IN	NCACES	2	0.92
KS	NCACES	3	1.38
KY	SACES	5	2.3
LA	SACES	9	4.15
MA	NARACES	2	0.92
MD	SACES	3	1.38
ME	NARACES	1	0.46
MI	NCACES	4	1.84
MN	NCACES	4	1.84
MO	NCACES	3	1.38
MS	SACES	4	1.84
MT	RAMACES	3	1.38
NC	SACES	10	4.61
ND	NCACES	1	0.46
NE	NCACES	3	1.38
NH	NARACES	1	0.46
NJ	NARACES	8	3.69
NM	RAMACES	3	1.38
NV	WACES	2	0.92
NY	NARACES	7	3.23
OH	NCACES	9	4.15
OK	NCACES	4	1.84
OR	WACES	4	1.84
PA	NARACES	7	3.23
PR	NARACES	1	0.46
RI	NARACES	1	0.46
SC	SACES	5	2.3
SD	NCACES	2	0.92
TN	SACES	9	4.15
TX	SACES	18	8.29

State	ACES Region	Count	Percent
VA	SACES	9	4.15
VT	NARACES	1	0.46
WA	WACES	2	0.92
WI	NCACES	4	1.84
WV	SACES	2	0.92
WY	RAMACES	1	0.46

Figure 2. *Salary Distribution Across ACES Regions*



Given the patterns shown in the preliminary analyses, we focused on rank and region in the multi-level modeling to examine the extent to which individual and institutional factors predicted salaries. Table 2 shows the fixed effects of all predictors. Table 3 presents the least squares mean salary, along with 95% confidence intervals, for each subgroup. Results of the multi-level model showed *that salary was significantly predicted by rank* at the individual level (see Table 2). At the institutional level, *total enrollment and region were significant predictors*, whereas R1 status and the number of Pell Grant recipients were not. As shown in Table 3, a larger student body was associated with a higher mean salary. Assistant Professors had lower salaries than Associate Professors, who had lower salaries than Full Professors. *Faculty within the RAMACES and SACES regions had lower salaries than their peers in other regions*.

Most importantly, there was an interaction effect between rank and regions. Specifically, there was significant variability in salaries across regions within the same rank, with the highest variability observed among Full Professors (Table 3 and Figure 3). For example, the estimated salary for Full Professors in RAMACES was $91,546, which was lower than the estimated salary for Associate Professors in NARACES ($93,472).

Table 2. *Estimates of Fixed Effects Predicting Salary*

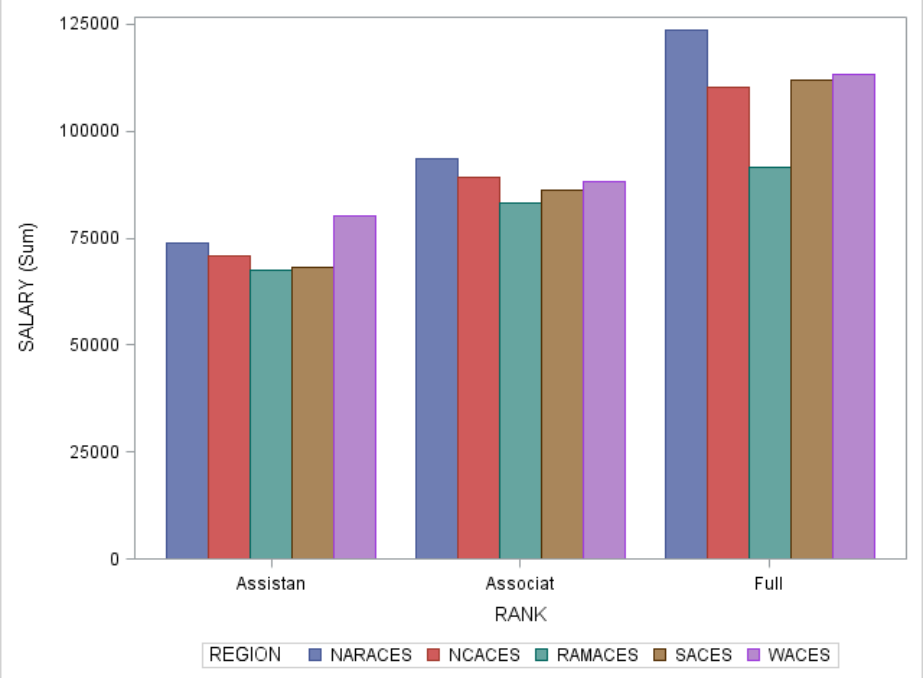
Effect	Estimate	Standard Error	DF	t Value	Pr > |t|
Intercept	90219	6260.1	204	14.41	<.0001
Rank - Assistant	-24730	4616.97	305	-5.36	<.0001
Rank - Associate	-8698.02	5427.69	305	-1.6	0.1101
Rank - Full (reference)	0	.	.	.	.
Total Enrollment	0.2799	0.1405	204	1.99	0.0478
Number of Pell Grant Recipients	-0.1057	0.2691	204	-0.39	0.6948
R1 - No	-5633.31	3399.11	204	-1.66	0.099
R1 - Yes (reference)	0	.	.	.	.
Region - NARACES	32077	5960.47	204	5.38	<.0001
Region - NCACES	18543	5674.36	204	3.27	0.0013
Region - SACES	20307	5391.02	204	3.77	0.0002
Region - WACES	21408	6730.77	204	3.18	0.0017
Region - RAMACES (reference)	0	.	.	.	.
Rank*Region - Assistant*NARACES	-25638	5671.82	305	-4.52	<.0001
Rank*Region - Assistant*NCACES	-14992	5261.71	305	-2.85	0.0047
Rank*Region - Assistant*SACES	-19367	4914.7	305	-3.94	0.0001
Rank*Region - Assistant*WACES	-8697.26	6260.5	305	-1.39	0.1658
Rank*Region - Assistant*RAMACES	0	.	.	.	.
Rank*Region - Associate*NARACES	-21451	6222.6	305	-3.45	0.0006
Rank*Region - Associate*NCACES	-12023	5939.62	305	-2.02	0.0438
Rank*Region - Associate*SACES	-16993	5686.37	305	-2.99	0.003
Rank*Region - Associate*WACES	-16674	6576.33	305	-2.54	0.0117
Rank*Region - Associate*RAMACES	0	.	.	.	.
Rank*Region - Full*NARACES (reference)	0	.	.	.	.
Rank*Region - Full*NCACES (reference)	0	.	.	.	.
Rank*Region - Full*SACES (reference)	0	.	.	.	.
Rank*Region - Full*WACES (reference)	0	.	.	.	.
Rank*Region - Full*RAMACES (reference)	0	.	.	.	.

Table 3. *Least Squares Mean Salary for Different Subgroups*

Effect	Estimate	95 CI Lower	95 CI Upper
Rank - Assistant	$71,934	$68,512	$75,357
Rank - Associate	$88,277	$84,743	$91,811
Rank - Full (reference)	$110,403	$106,867	$113,939
R1 - No	$97,174	$91,782	$102,566
R1 - Yes (reference)	$90,331	$85,865	$94,797
Region - NARACES	$88,980	$85,823	$92,137
Region - NCACES	$93,745	$86,187	$101,302
Region - SACES	$80,793	$72,829	$88,758

Effect	Estimate	95 CI Lower	95 CI Upper
Region - WACES	$87,388	$84,344	$90,432
Region - RAMACES (reference)	$93,021	$87,409	$98,634
Rank*Region - Assistant*NARACES	$73,645	$67,050	$80,239
Rank*Region - Assistant*NCACES	$70,757	$65,528	$75,986
Rank*Region - Assistant*SACES	$68,146	$64,582	$71,710
Rank*Region - Assistant*WACES	$79,917	$70,633	$89,201
Rank*Region - Assistant*RAMACES	$67,206	$58,370	$76,042
Rank*Region - Associate*NARACES	$93,864	$87,438	$100,290
Rank*Region - Associate*NCACES	$89,758	$84,582	$94,933
Rank*Region - Associate*SACES	$86,552	$82,984	$90,119
Rank*Region - Associate*WACES	$87,972	$79,534	$96,411
Rank*Region - Associate*RAMACES	$83,238	$72,782	$93,694
Rank*Region - Full*NARACES (reference)	$124,013	$117,570	$130,456
Rank*Region - Full*NCACES (reference)	$110,479	$105,140	$115,819
Rank*Region - Full*SACES (reference)	$112,243	$108,403	$116,083
Rank*Region - Full*WACES (reference)	$113,344	$104,610	$122,079
Rank*Region - Full*RAMACES (reference)	$91,936	$81,937	$101,935

Figure 3. *Estimated Mean Salary by Rank Across Regions*



Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of individual demographic characteristics on salary within the context of institutional characteristics. We meticulously compiled a comprehensive dataset of

personal and institutional characteristics, including salary, academic rank, ACES region, student enrollment, and the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants.

Institutional Size Matters

Our data uncovered an unexpected and significant salary disparity across academic ranks, regardless of race and gender. This finding highlights the need for equitable salary structures, a preference widely shared among individuals, and raises intriguing questions that warrant further investigation. As anticipated, salaries exhibit an upward trend as one advances through the academic ranks. Our data set also revealed that institutions with larger student enrollments, rather than their Carnegie classification or percentage of Pell Grant recipients, had higher average salaries. According to Nelson (2024), a "large" university is one with over 15,000 students, and a "small" university is one with fewer than 5,000 students. The demand for the product (the educational experience) and our CACREP standards determine the number of faculty the university needs. However, the student population size dynamic is closely tied to undergraduate enrollment and the number of high school graduates expected to pursue their education in college (O'Connell-Domenech, 2024).

Location Matters

The salary distribution varied substantially across regions (SACES and RAMACES) and was consistently lower than that of other regions. According to our data, the counselor education faculty in the country's Southern and Rocky Mountain regions had lower overall salaries across all academic ranks. Although there is no scholarly literature to corroborate this finding, the US Census (Poverty Rates by US Counties, 2023) confirms that the South and Rocky Mountain regions are home to some of the poorest people in the nation. Institutions cannot afford to raise tuition and fees significantly and still attract students, especially since young people from low-income areas are often less likely to attend college (Bureau, 2023).

The most noteworthy result from our data analysis was the discovery of an interaction effect between the academic rank and ACES regions. Specifically, there was significant variability in salaries across areas within the same rank, with the highest variability observed among Full Professors. For example, the estimated salary for Full Professors in RAMACES was $91,546, which was lower than the estimated salary for Associate Professors in NARACES ($93,472). Given the above references, it remains plausible that the higher economies in the West and Northeastern regions likewise influence salary (2023). These regions also have higher living costs (transportation, housing, and food), so the wages must be respectfully adjusted. According to Forbes, the top 5 states with the highest salaries in 2022 were Massachusetts, New York, Washington, California, and New Jersey. Likewise, the states with the lowest were Mississippi, Arkansas, West Virginia, South Dakota, and Alabama (Wong, 2024).

Implications

Counselor Education Faculty Recruitment and Retention

The study's results will help inform current faculty members whether they are reasonably paid compared to their peers. Counselor education administrators and college deans can use the results to compare current (active) counselor educators with those in other professions. The analysis can also be used to address pay gaps based on the factors within the model. If a sitting faculty member expresses a pay disparity, they could use this information to promote equity.

Furthermore, the study provides valuable benchmarks, such as location, to guide administrators in offering competitive compensation packages. This is crucial for attracting top talent. The data can

also inform administrators about their university's position in the market, particularly in comparison to its competitors, which can be a significant selling point in recruitment efforts.

Talent Attraction and Informed Negotiation

For budding counselor educators entering the job market and counseling faculty seeking to transition to a new role, the results of this study can help individuals understand their market value. Knowing one's worth can allow the applicant to negotiate with confidence. The potential employee can ask for compensation that aligns with their skills, experience, and industry standards. Additionally, such knowledge can assist one's approach to job applications and interviews with greater confidence, positively influencing how the potential employer perceives the applicant.

Understanding one's value in the market can have significant protective and preventive benefits. It is essential for making informed decisions, negotiating effectively, and ensuring long-term career satisfaction. This knowledge can guide job searches, ensuring that roles align with professional goals and financial needs. It also empowers applicants to reject offers that do not align with their worth, avoiding potential dissatisfaction and economic stress.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study had several practical limitations, real-world constraints that affected how the study was conducted. These are the "real-life hurdles" that researchers face—not necessarily flaws in design, but unavoidable conditions that shape the scope of the project. These limitations included the accuracy of the reported information and the reliance on public institutions only. As noted earlier in the analysis section, there were some salary outliers. Specifically, it was unknown if faculty had administrative duties (such as department chair). Therefore, some reported salaries were extremely high (e.g., $249,000) or low ($10,000). We mitigate this uncertainty by excluding the top and bottom 5% of all salaries from consideration. However, it is unknown if other sources of income went unaccounted for. Moreover, since we did not have information on the type of faculty position within each institution, we were unable to distinguish between 9-month and 12-month salaries. Future research could expand on these findings by corroborating publicly available data with survey data from a subset of individual faculty.

Another limitation was the inability to include faculty from counselor education programs at private institutions. Unlike public universities, which are subject to state laws requiring transparency, private universities are generally not obligated to disclose salary information. The distinction of not publicizing salaries is a competitive advantage for private institutions. The private schools can better negotiate with potential hires and retain faculty without being directly compared to other institutions. Also, publicizing salaries could lead to a "salary war" where institutions feel pressure to increase pay to compete, potentially driving up costs continually.

The current study was conducted by a small group of doctoral students and faculty at an institution with limited financial and structural support. Nonetheless, the implications of this work extend far beyond a single academic context, with potential relevance for counselor educators, students, and institutional leaders across the United States. Replicating this study under the auspices of a professional association, such as the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), could substantially enhance its methodological rigor, scope, and impact. National associations possess both the infrastructure and the credibility to coordinate large-scale data collection, allocate dedicated resources, and engage a more diverse range of programs—including public, private, and faith-based institutions—that may not be accessible to smaller research teams.

Such organizational involvement would also enable more systematic data management and the inclusion of richer, individual-level variables (e.g., race, gender, administrative role, institutional type, and summer funding status). These data could support advanced, intersectional analyses and

provide more robust conclusions about the structural and equity-related dynamics within counselor education. Moreover, a professional association–sponsored study would enhance the field's capacity to translate findings into actionable recommendations for policy and practice. The resulting evidence base could inform equitable funding mechanisms, professional development initiatives, and institutional policies that strengthen support for counselor educators and students across diverse contexts.

Conclusion

Salary analysis studies are essential because they provide valuable insights into compensation trends, enabling organizations to ensure they offer competitive and fair pay. By analyzing salaries, employees and institutions can identify disparities, such as pay gaps based on gender or race, and take steps to address them, promoting equity and employee satisfaction. Salary analysis also helps in budgeting and financial planning, allowing organizations to allocate resources effectively and attract and retain top talent. Moreover, regular salary reviews enable companies to stay aligned with industry standards, ensuring they remain competitive in the job market. Salary analysis is crucial for maintaining a motivated and well-compensated workforce, thereby supporting organizational success and sustainability.

Moreover, salary analysis studies are essential in counselor education because they provide critical insights into the compensation trends within the field, helping to ensure that counseling faculty are paid fairly and competitively. Equitable compensation is vital for attracting and retaining skilled counselor educators in a profession dedicated to training and research in mental health and well-being, which directly impacts the quality of care provided to clients. This study will reveal pay variance based on geographical location, enabling faculty and institutions to address these differences and promote fairness and equity. Lastly, we hope this salary study informs educational institutions and policymakers about the economic value of counselor education, guiding curriculum development, accreditation standards, and policy decisions. By understanding and addressing salary trends, the field can better support its professionals, ensuring they are adequately compensated for their essential work and fostering a more motivated and effective workforce.

References

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