

June 2007

From Ruth Cowan in response to posting of job description for visiting assistant professor at Texas A&M that paid \$36,000 plus benefits. I am NOT going to circulate this announcement. Those are slavery wages they are offering in Texas. We have several ABDs in this department who have one year doctoral fellowships that pay more than \$36,000.

From Nina Lerman: Well, Ruth, I imagine it all depends. If your choice is nothing, or a collection of adjunct classes with no benefits, a full-time job with full benefits could look pretty good. My guess is that quite a few state schools outside of major metropolitan areas are paying less than the top doctoral fellowships. (I don't know what cost of living looks like in College Station, but here in Walla Walla, WA we're all horrified because the median home price has shot up to something like \$140,000, which means that you have to pay close to \$1000 a month for a nice little 3BR house with a yard....) We pay our sabbatical replacement faculty more than that, but we're seeing a steady stream of people holding a couple of 1-year positions before they get a tenure-track job, which means that the reference letter from the temporary job, and the teaching experience, can be important in moving on.

Yet another US-focused topic, but I'm curious what other US-based people are seeing in the current job market.

From Rachel Maines: Well, I guess I'm in no position to criticize A&M, because my position at Cornell comes with a salary of \$0 and no job security, but I'm free to make money any other way I can, and to buy my benefits from Cornell at what I as a former business owner know is an excellent rate. Of course I have no real duties either. I think I'm with Nina on this one--you gotta have a place to stand, even if it's short term and there's no money in it. Ruth, I worked at Cornell from 1999 to 2005, 39 hours a week, for considerably less than \$36,000, and counted myself fortunate to be employed at all.

Ruth is right that \$36,000 is a low salary for an academic, but my father just retired from the University of Pittsburgh after more than 30 years, most of them as an associate professor, and his top salary was \$46,000. Go figure. So I'm going to forward the posting.

Really, as Stieglitz said, "everything is relative, except relatives, and they are absolute." No scholar is really in this for the money.