



ACC Compensation Equity Policy Development Compensation Guidance For Cardiologists

Introduction and Disclaimer

This represents informal advice from an experienced Writing Committee and not American College of Cardiology policy or practice. These are intended as general guidelines and approach and not as specific recommendations. Users should remember that each situation differs; all statements do not apply to all situations. This document is provided for informational purposes only and does not provide legal advice; please consult with your own counsel for legal guidance on compliance with applicable laws and regulations. This document is not intended to and does not encourage any coordination between competitors with respect to compensation practices. To comply with the antitrust laws, competitors should not discuss or agree on the salaries or other compensation.

Scenario 1:

What to Do If Your Organization Doesn't Have a Compensation Plan or a Plan That Applies to You

1. Find out more about why there is no plan or why you aren't covered by it. There may be a good reason for this. For example, it may be that early career cardiologists are paid a flat salary for a set period of time.
2. Talk with leadership to understand your organization's history and culture regarding compensation.
3. Educate yourself about the rationale for compensation plans for individuals and for programs (equity and business cases).
4. If there is interest by leadership in developing a plan, volunteer to help work on it.
5. If there isn't interest, recognize that you accepted the job and compensation as is and should, in good faith, continue to have excellent job performance.

Scenario 2:

What to Do When You Think You May Be Underpaid but Aren't Sure

1. Check your pay stub for errors and clarify anything you don't understand before challenging anything. Keep records.



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2. Know your organization's compensation plan and understand, in detail, how your personal compensation has been and will be determined.
3. Understand if and how your organization's compensation plan is rewarding your activities and your results. If alignment is poor, consider the options available to redirect your efforts if you wish to.
4. While it is desirable to get more information regarding comparable compensation, due to the confidential nature of the subject, this can be difficult. Internal inquiries may be frowned upon while external sources may not provide relevant data. Be aware that sharing of salaries can be legally complex.
5. Determine who you can confide in. Is there a 'trusted agent' such as an ombuds person/ faculty office/ HR representative, etc. with whom you can talk confidentially and anonymously to get at the truth? This role is filled by various positions in different organizations.
6. If you cannot determine whether or not you are being underpaid, consider having an exploratory, non-confrontational, information-gathering conversation with your boss/supervisor. Decide whether this is best done as part of an annual review or a stand-alone meeting.
7. Refrain from discussing with your co-workers outside of one or two trusted individuals, especially in the absence of hard evidence. Gossip and or agitation are generally not helpful.

Scenario 3:

What Should You Do When You Can Confirm That You Are Definitely Underpaid

1. Recognize that you have three choices: Accept current compensation, change your compensation or job description, or leave the position/institution. A change in compensation may be very appropriate if job description, expectations or performance have substantially changed.
2. Recognize that you accepted the job with the current pay structure and should continue to have excellent job performance regardless of how the situation plays out.
3. Seek confidants within your organization whose opinion you value and whom you trust not to disclose your concerns if you wish to better understand the situation. Is there a 'trusted agent' with whom you can talk confidentially and anonymously? Alternatively, consider identifying



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such an individual outside of your organization (see legal advice below).

4. While it is acceptable to discuss confidentially with close friends, do not try to adjudicate this in the 'court of your peers'. This is a conversation to conduct with leadership.
5. Talk to your supervisor/boss. Take a calm and non-accusatory approach, framing the conversation as an exploration. Present the data regarding your compensation as you understand it and ask for corrections. Citing others' salaries, whether justified or not, is generally frowned upon and may even be grounds for dismissal. You may want to rehearse this. This conversation shouldn't be part of your annual review but may follow it.
6. Renegotiate your compensation in your current role or a change in job description that may better fit the organization's compensation plan. Identifying and articulating your value to the organization is key (beyond just working hard), as is thinking broadly about components of compensation beyond salary, which may present an opportunity to compromise. Time this meeting to occur a few months before salaries are set for the next year, not after.
7. Try to avoid making your underpayment into a gender or race/ethnicity discrimination thing as this can be inflammatory and may cause your supervisor/boss and or colleagues to take your concerns as a personal insult; keep the conversation and rationale about your job performance and productivity and fairness/equity as much as possible.
8. Decide whether or not you wish to talk to a labor attorney about your situation and your options. This should be done confidentially at first until you are sure of your goals and plans. Be prepared with pay stubs and any other relevant documents, such as your employment contract.
9. Decide if you wish to file an official complaint. This is a very big step from which there is no backtracking. It may escalate to involve a complex series of claims about discrimination and harassment and become accusatory. Even if the issue remains compensation alone, leadership or even peers may resent this and you may need to be willing to leave your organization if it goes poorly. Recognize that a confrontational approach or adversarial exchange may lead to a poor recommendation and hamper your ability to obtain another position.