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The University of Toronto's attempt to address the gender pay gap isn't enough

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The University of Toronto undertook a bit of spring cleaning last week in announcing a 1.3-per-cent salary raise for female tenure-stream faculty members. But the effort doesn't go nearly far enough in fixing the gender pay gap on campus.

Ensuring people are fairly paid according to their skills and job responsibilities is trickier than it may seem. Seeking to explain salary as a function of professional rank is natural. Associate professors ought to be paid more than assistant professors, indeed.

Unfortunately, there is a fly in the ointment that complicates the analysis. Outcomes such as academic rank, grant funding and publication success are themselves prone to gender discrimination. Women are granted tenure, achieve promotions and reach other significant career milestones at lower rates than men, even when the women are equally meritorious. Arguing, then, that salary differences are explained by these gender-influenced outcomes is like saying men earn higher salaries because they are paid more money.

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