

State Government

Some Characteristics of the N.C. State Government Personnel System

by Harold H. Webb

North Carolina state government includes approximately 83,000 positions subject to the N.C. State Personnel Act. These positions will be included in the forthcoming pay equity study mandated in 1984 by the General Assembly. The positions are spread among 17 state agencies (50,000 positions), 16 campuses of the University of North Carolina system (15,000), and public health, social services, and mental health/mental retardation/substance abuse units in most of the 100 counties (18,000). Of the 83,000 positions subject to the State Personnel Act, approximately 45 percent are currently occupied by women and 55 percent by men.

The State Personnel system currently includes over 3,000 job classifications. These classes identify the work being done in such diverse areas as monitoring and protecting air and water quality, law enforcement (highway patrol, wildlife, prisons, campus police, etc.), treating the mentally and physically ill (psychiatric hospitals, mental retardation centers, N.C. Memorial Hospital), collecting taxes, providing maintenance for the thousands of buildings and acres of land owned by the state—the list could go on for several pages.

Of the states involved in various phases of pay equity studies, only New York is larger in terms of number of positions potentially affected

(well over 100,000). The next largest is Louisiana with 68,000, and the number goes as low as 9,000 in Idaho. The number of different job classifications in these states varies from 810 in Iowa to 3,400 in Maryland (57,000 positions) and well over 4,000 in New York.

In North Carolina, the job evaluation system is commonly known as the Position Classification system. Developed by Isman Baruch in the 1940s, the system has been used in public jurisdictions (including the federal government) and some private companies for many years. Positions are evaluated in terms of factors which most creditable systems would use, e.g., difficulty, scope, variety, and intricacy of work; responsibility; accountability and consequence of actions; interpersonal contacts; work environment and hazards; supervisory and management responsibilities; etc. Most job evaluation systems, whether quantitative or not, utilize essentially these same factors, though they may be combined in different ways or divided differently into sub-factors. Judgments are being made about the rank of positions no matter which job evaluation system is in place.

Harold H. Webb is state personnel director and past president of the National Association of State Personnel Executives.

The system currently in use in North Carolina state government differs from the Hay, Willis, or any other quantitative system in this major way: While job factors are considered individually in each of the systems, the judgments are not *quantified* by the present North Carolina system, but are expressed *narratively*. In the point systems, those judgments are quantified through a process of weighting the factors and assigning point values to them.

In a 1982 study, *Patterns of Pay in N.C. State Government*, the N.C. Office of State Personnel found that females in State Personnel Act (SPA) positions made 82 percent of what males in SPA positions made (see pages 28-29 for a summary of this report).

On a national basis, females make about 60 percent of what all males make. In other words, the state of North Carolina, on the average, is ahead of employers nationwide in pay equity. Some of this difference stems from the fact that white collar jobs predominate in state government.

Females make 82 cents for every dollar men make in state government, when comparing *actual salaries*. But when comparing the salaries of female to male state employees in terms of *pay grades*,* females are paid 95 percent of the salary grade of males. Within salary grades are 9 steps,

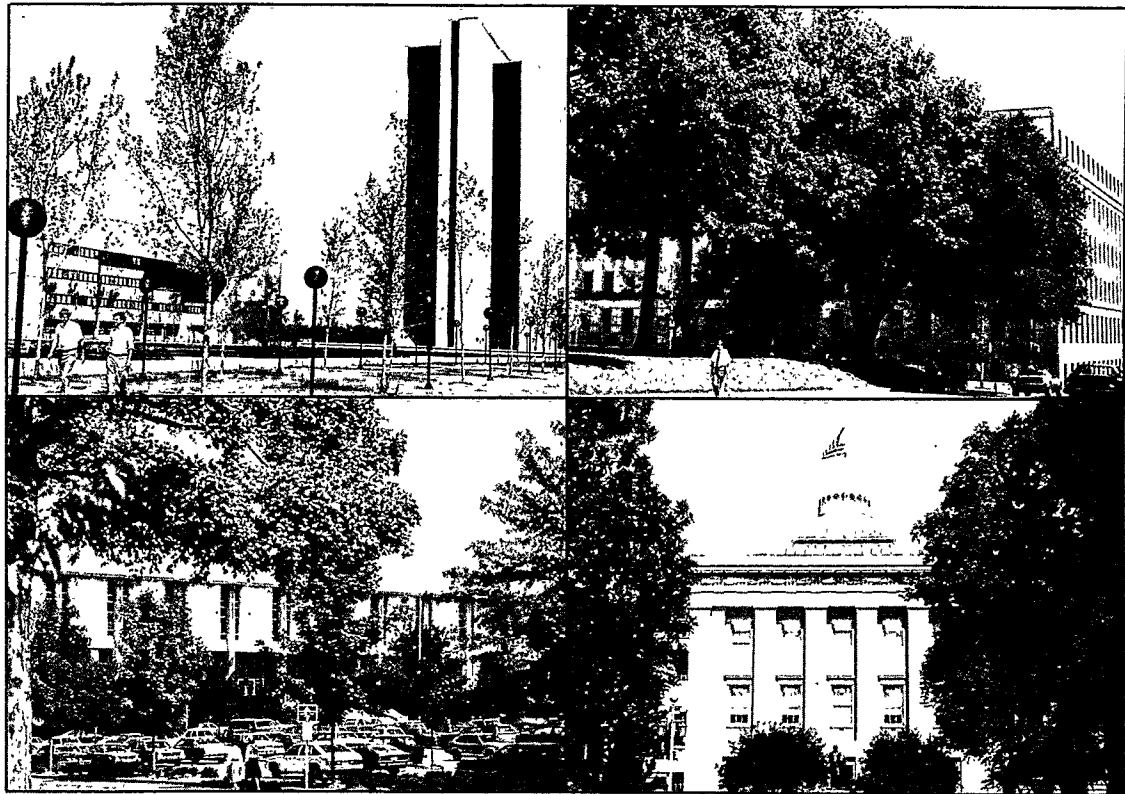
based primarily on merit. With each step, the employee receives a 5 percent pay raise. The 95 percent figure results from recruitment efforts, training, promotion, and other efforts to improve job equality for females.

The terms "comparable worth" and "pay equity" mean the same thing to some people but different things to others. Comparable worth has come to have the connotation of a women's issue to many people, even though a job classification system incorporating principles of comparable worth might benefit men as well as women.

It is important to note that the General Assembly recently funded a "pay equity study" and went a step further: "The Pay Equity Study shall be conducted as a general examination of the pay equity issue, and shall *include but not be limited to a factor based on supply and demand on the relevant job market* for a given job category which factor shall be given equal weight" (emphasis added)—House Bill 80, Section 146(a).□

**In the North Carolina personnel system, pay grades range from Grade 50 to Grade 96. Each grade includes nine steps, and each of the 3,000 job classifications is assigned one of the pay grades.*

The hub of N.C. state government.



Carol Majors