



Jesse Winter photo

How has the compensation field evolved in the last century?

At the turn of the 20th century, manufacturing was fueling Taylorism or scientific management – manipulating the factory's production line and work assigned each laborer to drive productivity increases. Today, more focus is directed to manipulating or designing pay to drive productivity increases. Pay-for-performance directly aligns value produced with compensation paid. Compensation today goes well beyond the paycheck to “total rewards” – career advancement, work-life balance, paid vacation, office culture, health and retirement benefits, and so on.

How are pay-for-performance and total rewards having an impact on HR practice?

Human resources must communicate more transparently why people are paid what they are. To ensure employees understand what they must do to earn more takes effort. At the same time, compensation beyond wages and salary is more than one-third of the total cost of a typical U.S. employee. Combined, that is a lot for HR to drive strategically on behalf of the business.

What role does the institute play to help inform compensation practice?

We build bridges between academia and practice. Our webcasts and certificate series on performance pay metrics and practice alignment offer continuing education. Our Emerging Scholars Conference brings together practitioners and rising-star scholars to introduce these brilliant minds to each other and surface important compensation questions that research can better address with practitioner insight and more interdisciplinary thinking. We also bring academic research techniques to bear on company-specific projects.

Do you involve students in the work of the institute?

ICS provides research mentoring for undergraduate, master's and Ph.D. students working on a faculty project or a project of their own. Students develop a core appreciation for research and data collection. We're grateful for alumni gifts that support this program.

Why do you enjoy your work as an economic historian and researcher?

You really have to explore and dig for the historical data you need. That exploration is really engaging for me. It trains you to step back and study an issue from a broader lens, thinking more carefully about the context of an economic issue or problem.

What sets ILR apart as a place to study pay?

Thirty years ago, ILR's George T. Milkovich published the still-dominant textbook “Compensation,” establishing the field of compensation studies at ILR. Today, you won't find another school with ILR's distinction and interdisciplinary approach to compensation as it relates to the workplace and employment policy. As someone focused on the study of compensation, this is an amazing place to be.