Also striking at the assistant professor level is the variation in salary differentials by discipline across institutions. For example, the salaries of new assistant professors in economics were 34.0 percent higher than the salaries of new assistant professors in English language and literature at the twenty-fifth percentile institution but were 65.3 percent higher at the seventy-fifth percentile institution. The comparable salary advantages at the twenty-fifth and seventy-fifth percentile institutions for business management and administrative services were 88.6 and 131.2 percent, respectively. For computer and information services, they were 57.5 and 79.8 percent; for engineering, they were 34.0 and 58.1 percent; and for law and legal studies they were 45.7 and 103.2 percent. So, again, knowing the average salary differential nationwide between two disciplines at the new assistant professor level provides little information about the salary at any given institution.

How have salary differentials by discipline changed over time among the institutions in the Oklahoma State sample? Figures 1 and 2 show the ratios of the average salary of faculty in three high-paying fields—business management and administration, engineering, and law and legal studies—to the average salaries of faculty in English language and literature at both the full professor and new assistant professor levels, from 1984–85 to 2000–01. Because the institutions that respond to the Oklahoma State survey vary from year to year, we used three-year averages for all years to minimize disparities caused by changes in sample institutions. So, for example, the ratio reported for full professors of business for 1990–91 is computed as the averages of the ratios that existed in the survey data for 1989–90, 1990–91, and 1991–92.21

During the period covered, the salaries of both professors and new assistant professors of business management and administrative services in the sample grew steadily relative to the salaries of their counterparts in English language and literature. In 1984–85, business faculty had an average salary premium of 17.9 percent at the full professor level and 59.1 percent at the new assistant professor level. By 2000–01, these differentials had grown to 42.8 percent and 101.7 percent, respectively.

The premium paid to full professors of engineering changed much less; it rose from 17.2 to 26.0 percent during the period. Moreover, the salary premium paid to new assistant professors in engineering actually declined from 52.3 to 45.1 percent. Similarly, although the salary premium paid to full professors of law and legal studies grew from 42.9 to 56.0 percent, the premium paid to new assistant professors of law and legal studies was slightly lower at the end of the period than it was at the beginning of it (the premium declined from 69.0 to 63.6 percent). These patterns—growing salary premiums for full professors of engineering and law but declining salary premiums for new assistant professors—coincide with rapid adjustments to market conditions in the salaries of new assistant professors in these disciplines but much smaller adjustments in the salaries of full professors.

It is important to stress that this analysis of disciplinary faculty salary differences is based upon data that come almost entirely from public doctoral institutions. Differentials at private doctoral institutions may be larger; however, we cannot say for sure because information about individual salaries and average salaries within departments at these institutions is much more