HERI Research Brief

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HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT UCLA
home of the COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

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The American College Teacher

National Norms for 2007-2008

The 2007-2008 faculty norms are based on the responses of 22,562 full-time college and university faculty members at 372 four-year colleges and universities nationwide. The comprehensive results of the survey are reported separately for all faculty, male faculty, female faculty, and faculty by academic rank and institutional type. A "faculty member" is defined as any full-time employee of an accredited four-year college or university who spends at least part of his or her time teaching undergraduates. The responses are weighted to provide a normative profile of the American faculty population for use by policy analysts, campus administrators, and educational researchers. This is the seventh in a series of faculty surveys administered on a triennial basis.

GOALS FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Faculty demonstrate consistent responses compared to three years ago in what goals they value for undergraduate education and increases in the value they place on particular areas of students' development. Specifically, the goals of helping students to develop critical thinking skills and discipline-specific knowledge remain at the forefront of what faculty consider essential to undergraduate education, with 99.6 percent and 95.1 percent of faculty, respectively, indicating that these goals are "very important" or "essential." Other top goals for undergraduate education include helping students to evaluate the quality and reliability of information (97.2 percent) or developing information literacy, and promoting the ability to write effectively (96.4 percent). In addition, 72.8 percent of faculty indicate that instilling an appreciation for the liberal arts among students is an important goal for undergraduate education. This percentage was just 57.9 in the 2004-05 HERI faculty survey, a 14.9 percentage point increase. The largest gains since 2004-05 faculty survey are for goals to "instill in students a commitment to community service" (55.5 percent of faculty, an increase of 19.1 percentage points), and to "enhance students' knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups" (75.2 percent of faculty, an increase of 17.6 percentage points).

Faculty Goals for Undergraduate Education* Measured in Both 2004-05 and 2007-08

	All Four-Year Faculty	
"Very Important" or "Essential"	2004–05	2007–08
Instill in students a commitment to community service	36.4	55.5
Enhance students' knowledge of and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups	57.6	75.2
Instill basic appreciation of the liberal arts	57.9	72.8
Develop ability to think critically	99.0	99.6
Help master knowledge in discipline	94.6	95.1

*for a comprehensive list of items measured in both 2004-05 and 2007-08 see full report

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STUDENT-CENTERED PEDAGOGY AND EVALUATION METHODS GAIN FURTHER TRACTION

Although today's faculty are just as likely as faculty in 2004-05 to use multiple-choice exams, they are 8.6 percentage points more likely to use short-answer questions and 9.6 percentage points more likely to use term/research papers to assess learning. In addition, the use of bell curves in grading coursework has diminished somewhat from three years ago to 16.8 percent overall and just 13.9 percent among faculty who are newest to the professoriate (assistant professors). By rank, full professors (21.0 percent) are still much more likely to grade on a curve than assistant professors (13.9 percent), but assistant professors are much more likely to use multiple-choice exams than full professors (36.9 vs. 27.3 percent).

Faculty Approaches to Evaluation and Teaching, by Academic Rank and Survey Year

Methods Used in "All" or "Most" Courses Taught	All Faculty 2005	All Faculty 2008	Percent Point Change	Assistant 2008	Associate 2008	Full 2008
Selected Examination Methods						
Short-answer exams**	36.9	45.5	8.6	47.2	47.1	44.3
Term/research papers	34.7	44.3	9.6	46.4	45.3	44.2
Multiple-choice exams**	32.3	33.1	0.8	36.9	31.8	27.3
Grading on a curve	19.4	16.8	–2.6	13.9	16.8	21.0
Selected Pedagogy						
Cooperative learning (small groups)	47.8	59.1	11.3	66.3	58.0	49.6
Using real-life problems*	n/a	55.7	n/a	61.0	53.4	49.6
Group projects	33.3	35.8	2.5	40.3	34.6	31.0
Multiple drafts of written work	24.8	24.9	0.1	26.6	24.3	22.9
Student evaluations of each other's work	16.0	23.5	7.5	26.4	21.1	19.4
Reflective writing/journaling	18.1	21.7	3.6	25.3	19.4	16.8
Electronic quizzes with immediate feedback in class*	n/a	6.8	n/a	7.8	6.4	4.7
Extensive lecturing (not student-centered)	55.2	46.4	–8.8	43.3	45.2	51.8

Note: *Question added to 2007–08 survey. **In 2004-05 questions were worded "methods used on mid-term and/or final exams."

Pedagogy in the classroom is also steadily moving in a student-centered direction. Compared with three years ago, faculty today are 8.8 percentage points *less* likely to use extensive lecturing in the classroom ((46.4 vs. 55.2 percent, respectively), 11.3 percentage points *more* likely to use cooperative learning (59.1 vs. 47.8 percent, respectively), and 7.5 percentage points *more* likely to engage students in the evaluation of each other's work (23.5 vs. 16.0 percent, respectively). Overall, assistant professors are *more* likely than associate and full professors to employ student-centered methods and *less* likely to use extensive lecturing. For instance, assistant professors are 16.7 percentage points more likely than full professors to report using cooperative learning (66.3 vs. 49.6 percent, respectively), and full professors are 8.5 percentage points more likely than assistant professors to report using extensive lecturing (51.8 vs. 43.3 percent, respectively). This suggests that the trend toward student-centered approaches in pedagogy will continue to grow, as current professors retire and new assistant professors enter the professoriate.

ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP AND ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP

Generally, faculty indicate that the connection between their institution and the local community is an important part of the mission of higher education. Overall 87.9 percent of faculty report that they agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that colleges and universities have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues. The same percentage indicates that colleges should encourage students to be involved in community service activities. Faculty also think that community service should be among the factors considered in college admissions. Specifically, two-thirds of faculty (66.4 percent) agree "strongly" or "somewhat" that community service should be given weight in college admissions decisions.

ATTITUDES AND VIEWS ON DIVERSITY

The institutional climate for diversity based on race/ethnicity and gender continues to be an important topic for discussion on college campuses today. Similar to the 2004-2005 HERI Faculty Survey, the large majority (93.6 percent) of today's faculty believe that

a racially/ethnically diverse student body enhances the educational experience of all students, and few faculty (10.6 percent) report that there is a lot of racial conflict on campus.

The majority of faculty believe that strides still need to be made in terms of the hiring of women and faculty of color. Almost three out of four faculty (73.2 percent) state that their institution should hire more faculty of color, and 57.1 percent think their institution needs to hire more women faculty. Differences of around 10 percentage points by gender are also apparent in terms of the need to hire faculty of color and female faculty. Specifically, female faculty are 10.2 percentage points and 9.9 percentage points more likely than male faculty to believe that their institution needs to hire more faculty of color and female faculty, respectively.

In addition, although the large majority of faculty indicate that all faculty are treated fairly on their campus, men are more likely than women to indicate that women, faculty of color, and gay and lesbian faculty are treated fairly. Specifically, 76.4 percent of women and 92.1 percent of men think that women faculty are treated fairly, 83.6 percent of women and 92.1 percent of men think that faculty of color are treated fairly, and 77.6 percent of women and 83.2 percent of men think that gay and lesbian faculty are treated fairly.

OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION IS HIGH, BUT FEWER WOMEN ARE SATISFIED THAN MEN

Although a strong 74.8 percent majority of faculty are satisfied with their careers, more men report overall job satisfaction than women. The largest discrepancy in career satisfaction is in the area of opportunity for scholarly pursuits, where 58.4 percent of men and 47.4 percent of women express satisfaction. Male faculty are also much more likely than female faculty to be satisfied with their job security (80.8 percent vs. 72.8 percent) and their prospects for career advancements (57.7 percent vs. 49.9 percent).

Differences are also apparent by academic rank (full, associate, assistant professor) for men and women. Generally, male and female professors seem to be almost equally satisfied on most measures at the assistant professor rank; however, as rank moves to full professor, the central tendency is for male professors to generally be more satisfied than their female counterparts. In the area of opportunity for scholarly pursuits, 50.6 percent of female full professors report satisfaction, compared with 66.0 percent of men. Female full professors are also less likely to be satisfied than their male counterparts with their teaching loads (53.2 percent vs. 66.2 percent) and their prospects for career advancement (58.1 percent vs. 66.9 percent).

FEMALE FULL AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS WHO ARE VERY SATISFIED WITH THEIR SALARIES AT RISK FOR LEAVING

Generally, the percentage of faculty who report that they have considered leaving their current institution for another institution decreases as satisfaction with salary increases. However, among full professors who indicate they are "very satisfied" with their salaries, women at public institutions (47.2 percent) are more likely to have considered leaving their current institution for another in the last two years than men at public institutions (20.1 percent), men at private institutions (21.0 percent) and women at private institutions (21.5 percent). The same pattern is evident at the associate professor level, with a greater percentage of women at public institutions (48.8 percent) having considered leaving, compared with men at public institutions (33.8 percent), men at private institutions (30.3 percent) and women at private institutions (26.9 percent). In addition, at the full professor level women at public institutions who are very satisfied with their salaries are nearly equally as likely to have considered leaving their current institution for another as are female full professors at public institutions who are only marginally satisfied.

Faculty Satisfaction with Aspects of Their Career, by Academic Rank and Gender

	All*		Full		Associate		Assistant	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Freedom to determine course content	91.2	93.3	92.2	95.2	93.4	93.7	90.4	91.4
Autonomy and independence	83.6	85.9	85.2	87.4	82.5	85.4	82.8	83.7
Job security	72.8	80.8	91.9	93.0	85.9	86.0	62.9	65.6
Overall job satisfaction	72.1	76.6	74.3	80.4	68.5	73.2	71.7	73.0
Teaching load	53.5	60.4	53.2	66.2	49.2	55.1	51.4	54.5
Prospects for career advancement	49.9	57.7	58.1	66.9	49.4	52.4	54.4	58.1
Opportunity for scholarly pursuits	47.4	58.4	50.6	66.0	42.1	53.9	46.0	50.2

*All respondents to the survey who are full-time faculty who teach undergraduates are included in the percentages

FACULTY DISSATISFIED WITH SALARY COMPENSATION

For the first time faculty satisfaction with compensation was investigated on the HERI Faculty Survey using three separate items (salary, health benefits, and retirement benefits), as opposed to "salary and fringe benefits" as had been used in previous versions of the survey. Only 46.2 percent of faculty are satisfied with their salaries, with men more satisfied than women (48.9 percent vs. 41.9 percent). Faculty are considerably more satisfied with the compensation areas of health benefits (63.3 percent) and retirement benefits (68.7 percent), and in these areas there is much more parity in terms of satisfaction between men and women.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BALANCE DIFFICULT

Only 34.2 percent of faculty overall believe they have established a healthy balance in their lives personally and professionally, with female faculty appearing to have greater difficulty than male faculty in striking a balance (27.3 percent vs. 38.7 percent). College faculty appear to experience many sources of stress in both their professional and personal lives. The three most commonly cited sources of stress by faculty were self-imposed high expectations (80.1 percent), lack of personal time (74.1 percent), and managing household responsibilities (72.7 percent). Additionally, nearly two-thirds of faculty (62.8 percent) report personal finances as a stressor.

Across virtually all stressor items, more women than men report experiencing stress. More women than men report at least moderate stress from lack of personal time, managing household responsibilities, self-imposed high expectations, job security, and subtle discrimination. The greatest gender differences are due to subtle discrimination, where more than twice as many women (38.7 percent) than men (18.2 percent) cite subtle discrimination in the form of prejudice, racism, and/or sexism as a source of stress.

Please contact the Higher Education Research Institute for more information or to order your copy of the 2007-2008 Faculty National Norms monograph.

Source:
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