

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The importance of community college faculty for higher education cannot be overestimated: Huber (1998) reports that community college faculty constitute 31 percent of all U.S. higher education faculty, teaching 39 percent of all higher education students and 46 percent of all first-year students. Accordingly, the way in which the two-year college faculty teach and interact with their students has a profound effect on the overall conduct of American higher education.

As the principal point of contact between students and institutions, community college faculty are central to all issues of college role and function. Since the maturation of the community college system in the 1960s, researchers have investigated the means by which community college faculty deliver their most important service—teaching—to their students. Several of these researchers, including Garrison (1967) and Cohen and Brawer (1972, 1977, 1984) have undertaken broad analyses of the relationship between the community college professoriate's development as a distinct profession and its professional practice. These studies demonstrate a link between the characteristics of the community college professoriate and its service to its student clientele. Accordingly, faculty activities, their environments and professional relationships, as well as their attitudes and values, deserve continual examination.

As useful as the studies noted above can be for those who seek to understand the community college professoriate, they require updating. In the past twenty-five years the community colleges have changed in many dimensions. They have broadened the types of students they serve, established new statements of mission, and extended their activities into a wider array of community services. Many have begun characterizing themselves as community development centers. Furthermore, many of their leaders have adopted the idea that the colleges are participants in the global economy through attracting international students and building courses to be beamed to students in other countries. Distance education has become a growing element within community colleges, which are more likely than other higher education sectors to employ distance technology in planning and broadcasting curriculum.

At the same time, the community college student body and faculty have changed. Enrollments grew from 3.8 million in 1975 to 5.3 million

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twenty years later, even while the number of colleges changed hardly at all. Student demographics shifted, with the number identifying themselves as white falling from 80 percent to 70 percent. The faculty increased from 160,000 to 270,000. Part-timers now account for nearly 65 percent of all community college faculty. In sum, larger colleges with an increasing proportion of students of color meet a faculty composed in large part of part-time instructors.

Several of the chapters in this volume draw on a survey of community college faculty administered by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) in 2000. In the interest of economy, it would be useful to outline, briefly, the means by which the survey was administered. In addition, it would be helpful to offer, in brief terms, the sample's demographic characteristics.

With the CSCC survey, a national, random sample of community college faculty responded to questions concerning their backgrounds, practices, and attitudes. It is important to note that the survey updated a similar study of humanities instructors conducted by the CSCC in 1975, and so some longitudinal comparisons for humanities faculty can be made between 1975 and 2000.

In May 2000, CSCC staff invited 240 college presidents, chosen at random, to participate in the study. If college presidents declined to participate, another college of similar size (as measured by student FTE) was invited in its place. By September 2000, 478 colleges had been invited to participate; of these, 70 declined to take part, 156 agreed to participate, and the remainder did not respond. No inferences can be drawn from the ways in which institutions responded to the invitation.

Community college presidents were asked to appoint a local facilitator to serve as the designated on-campus contact person and to take responsibility for administering the survey on the campus. Facilitators sent CSCC staff a Fall 2000 course schedule, which was used to select the faculty sample. By late September, course schedules had been received from 114 of the 156 participating colleges. To generate a sample of approximately 1,500 completed surveys, 2,292 respondents were chosen at random by selecting every  $n$ th class listed from the course schedules (the value of  $n$  varied by the size of the community college).

In early October 2000, survey packets were mailed to local facilitators, who distributed them on their campuses and retrieved them from respondents via an anonymous double-envelope mailing system. By January 2001, 1,531 of the 2,292 surveys sent in October had been returned. Five colleges, with ninety-five surveys among them, chose to withdraw from the study between the time of their presidents' decisions to participate and the survey deadline. An additional 204 surveys were deemed undeliverable by the local facilitators, almost always because courses were changed between the time the schedules were printed in the spring and the beginning of the Fall semester. In total, then, 1,531 of 1,993 valid surveys were returned, for a response rate of 76.8 percent.

The survey instrument consists of a questionnaire of approximately two hundred questions in eight pages, with 75 percent of survey questions being exact or near-exact repetitions of questions asked on the 1975 survey. Most survey questions are designed to illuminate one or more of several analytical categories concerning major categories of faculty practices and attitudes, including demographics, curriculum and instruction, satisfaction, professional involvement, and concern for students. Many of the chapters in this volume explore one or more dimensions of the practices and attitudes with which these constructs are concerned, while others draw on additional data to illuminate other aspects of the professoriate.

Before proceeding to this volume's chapters, it would be useful to provide a brief examination of the demographic characteristics of the CSCC sample. In the CSCC study, men and women are found to comprise the faculty in nearly equal measure. This result is slightly different from figures reported by the National Center for Education statistics, which reports that just over half (54.7 percent) of community college faculty are men (U.S. Department of Education, 1997, Table 227). White instructors, at 86.6 percent, form a majority of respondents; African-Americans, at 4.8 percent, being the next largest racial/ethnic group. These findings are consistent with those of Palmer and Zimble (2000), whose analysis of 1992 data show that 86.1 percent of the community college professoriate is white/Caucasian.

Respondent ages fall into a nearly normal distribution around the range of forty-five to fifty-four years old. Over one-third (38.2 percent) of instructors are between forty-five and fifty-four years of age, with the vast majority (83.4 percent) between thirty-five and sixty-four. The bulk of respondents have not served in an administrative role for any length of time. Most (68.3 percent) respondents report that they have never taught in a four-year college or university. A sizable minority of respondents (37.9 percent) report having taught in a secondary school. However, as noted below, this figure is substantially lower than in the past, demonstrating the decreasing significance of high schools as sources for community college instructors.

Full-timers form 69.5 percent of the total sample for the current study. This figure constitutes a clear overrepresentation of full-timers. (For example, Palmer and Zimble, 2000, find that full-timers formed only 38 percent of the community college professoriate in 1992.) The proportion of full-timers is attributable to the sampling procedure followed in this study, as outlined above. Most respondents neither have nor seek doctorates. Only 15.6 percent report holding a doctorate, and an even smaller percentage (8.8 percent) are pursuing this type of degree. The sample is not quite evenly divided between liberal arts and occupational instructors, with members of the former group holding a majority.

Not only do Cohen and Braver note a tendency toward greater demographic diversity in their 1977 analysis, but other scholars since (Palmer and Zimble, 2000) have observed this trend. The CSCC survey, in keeping

with these findings, shows that community college faculty are more diverse in 2000 than in 1975, and are closer to being representative of the U.S. population in general. Women in particular have made gains since the 1975 survey, and, at least according to the results of the current survey, have achieved parity with men. The proportion of faculty of color has increased as well, with the percentage of humanities respondents identifying themselves as white/Caucasian falling from 90.6 percent in 1975 to 79.7 percent in 2000.

The faculty are in general older than they were in 1975, most probably because of hiring patterns within the community college system. In addition, they are more experienced, with longer periods of service to their profession. In 1975, 58.2 percent of humanities faculty had served for over five years; by 2000, this figure has climbed to 74.0 percent. This trend persists for all instructors, with 72.2 percent of them having served for longer than five years. This lengthening is almost certainly related to the pattern by which the community college system was developed, with rapid growth in the 1960s followed by a period of relative stability. Relatively few community college instructors have served as administrators, but those who have demonstrate the same trend toward a longer period of service in 2000 than in 1975.

While nearly 60 percent of community college instructors in the humanities taught in the secondary schools in 1975, only 45.4 percent did so by 2000, with an even smaller percentage of community college instructors in general (37.9 percent) teaching in the high schools. Among humanities instructors, 19.9 percent in the 2000 study have taught at the four-year level for five or more years, while only 14.5 percent of those in the 1975 study did so. In short, the high schools are much less important sources of community college faculty than they were in 1975, and the colleges and universities are more important.

As noted above, the chapters in this volume explore the characteristics, practices, and attitudes of the community college professoriate from a diverse array of perspectives. Each chapter yields insights and analyses into discrete aspects of the professoriate; taken together, these chapters offer a nuanced, finely grained portrait of community college faculty.

In Chapter One, Palmer analyzes disciplinary differences in instructional practice, using the NSOPF:99 dataset. With Chapter Two, Lee explores community college faculty's uses of professional reference groups. Brookfield, in Chapter Three, discusses the use of critical reflection to improve instructional practice among community college faculty. Schuetz, in Chapter Four, Kozeracki, in Chapter Five, and Leslie and Gappa, in Chapter Six, explore the significance of differences in employment status. However, the focus of these chapters differs: Schuetz focuses specifically on differences in instructional practice on the basis of employment status, while Kozeracki examines faculty attitudes toward students, and Leslie and Gappa look more broadly at overall similarities and differences between full-time and part-time faculty. Chapters Seven and Eight analyze the experience of minority faculty: Hagedorn and

Laden investigate working conditions and attitudes for women faculty, with a particular focus on women of color, while Bower combines qualitative and quantitative data to examine the experience of ethnic/racial minority faculty. In Chapter Nine, Murray discusses the effectiveness (and lack thereof) of faculty professional development programs. In Chapters Ten and Eleven, Weisman, Marr, and Outcalt look to the future for community college faculty: Weisman and Marr explore issues of community within community colleges, and Outcalt offers recommendations for research and practice drawn from the CSCC survey. Finally, Fleming's Sources and Information chapter provides details on additional resources for further study of the community college professoriate.

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