MEMBER IMPRESSIONS OF JOBS AND EMPLOYERS

The survey asked questions about higher education employees’ satisfaction with their jobs and with those who make decisions about their institutions. By and large, job satisfaction was quite high. Higher education members are quite positive toward their department chairs and college administration, but impressions of state legislatures are fairly negative. ESP and AP, who were asked their impressions of their most immediate supervisor, are more positive than faculty toward their immediate supervisor.

- Full-time faculty are more satisfied (89 percent) than part-time faculty are (80 percent); two-year and four-year faculty share a similar level of job satisfaction (87 percent and 89 percent satisfied, respectively); full professors are much more likely to be very satisfied (67 percent), and lecturers and adjuncts are the most likely to be dissatisfied (23 percent).
- When ESP are asked if they feel that they and their work are treated with respect by others at their college or university (a question asked only of ESP), an overwhelming 87 percent say that they feel they are treated with respect; only 8 percent feel they and their work are not treated with respect.
- Member impressions of their state legislatures are more negative (34 percent) than positive (29 percent). Older faculty tend to be among the least favorable (23 percent positive, 41 percent negative).
- Members tend to be much more positive toward administration at their college or university, with 65 percent positive and 16 percent negative.
- Members who are 50 years of age or older are less positive toward their administration (61 percent positive, 20 percent negative) than are members under 50 years of age (70 percent positive, 11 percent negative).
- Faculty impressions of their department chairs are quite positive. Over three-quarters (79 percent) of faculty are positive toward their department chair, and only 7 percent are negative.

STUDENT PREPARATION AND APPRECIATION

Higher education faculty overwhelmingly believe that students are less prepared for college today than they were in the past. As shown in Figure 1, faculty strongly believe that students today have less preparation for learning than students in the past. First, we asked NEA faculty, “In your years in academia, do you think your students are more prepared or less prepared for
college now than they were in the past, or has there been no change in how prepared your students are for college?”

- Among all NEA faculty, a much greater proportion of members say students are less prepared than say they are more prepared than they used to be. Eighteen percent (18 percent) say students are more prepared, one-quarter (26 percent) say there has been no change, and 54 percent say students are less prepared.

- Older faculty and part-time faculty are more likely to find current students less prepared than students were in the past.

A second question, shown in Figure 2, on student quality asked, “Thinking again about your years in academia, do you feel that your students today come to college with any greater or lesser appreciation for learning now than in the past, or has there been no change in your students’ appreciation for learning?”

- Nearly one-half (47 percent) of faculty say students come to college with less appreciation for learning; slightly more than one-third (35 percent) said there has been no change; and 16 percent say student appreciation for learning has gotten better.

- All member subgroups (i.e., faculty at two-year colleges, faculty at four-year colleges, full-time faculty, and part-time faculty) are three times or more likely to say that students have less appreciation for learning today than they are to say that students have more appreciation. The only notable subgroup difference is age—older members are the most likely to say that students bring less appreciation for learning today than students did in the past.

**AGENDA OF HIGHER EDUCATION MEMBERS**

To gauge what job improvements are essential to members, we presented faculty members with 18 aspects of the job, and ESP and AP members with 7 aspects of the job, and asked them to tell us on a 5-point scale how important each aspect was to them. As shown in Figure 3, higher salaries followed by the decline in student quality and improving benefits are the most important concerns for the faculty surveyed. Higher salaries are the dominant concern for higher education ESP.

For faculty, four aspects of the job stand out as the most important: a higher annual salary; better prepared students; improving retirement benefits; and better health benefits. Anywhere from 40 percent to 45 percent of faculty consider these improvements “essential,” and anywhere from 74 percent to 79 percent give them one of the highest two categories of importance. A higher annual salary, better prepared students, better retirement benefits, and better health benefits are cited by faculty as the most important aspects of their job. For ESP, all of these

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**Figure 1**

Faculty believe students are less prepared for college now than they were in the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Much more prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat more prepared</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Somewhat less prepared</th>
<th>Much less prepared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time faculty</td>
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<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time faculty</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-year faculty</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remainder “Not sure.”

"n" represents the unweighted sample and subgroup sizes.
improvements—with the exception of improving student quality, which was not asked of them—were also far and away the most important.

Among faculty, the item that ranks next in importance—a distant 5th—is *greater recognition of teaching*. This issue is more important to tenure-track faculty, even though faculty not on tenure track lines are more likely to be engaged in teaching than research. This item is also considerably more important to faculty working in the humanities.

The next set of concerns for faculty (the items ranked 6th to 9th in importance) include *increasing safeguards for academic freedom*, *greater support for attending professional conferences*, adopting *measures of performance and accountability that are more fair and more accurate*, and *increasing the security of your job*.

Four-year faculty are more likely than two-year faculty to rank support for attending conferences as important, and improving job security is more often cited as important by two-year faculty than it is by four-year faculty.

The remaining eight improvements are the least important to faculty and below the rest. These issues are not unimportant, but these items do not drive faculty’s agenda in the way that economic well-being, students, teaching recognition, and academic freedom do. They are, in order of more important to less important: *better safeguards for faculty intellectual property rights*; *a more equitable tenure process*; *limiting the proportion of part-time and non-tenure track faculty*; *improving access to office resources, including up-to-date computers, software, printers, and materials for teaching and research*; *more support for your research*; *increasing authority to make decisions about content and methods in the courses you teach*; *limiting the emphasis on measures of performance and accountability in higher education*; *more computer support service*; *a lighter teaching load*.

As shown in Figure 4, increasing the security of your job ranks as 4th in importance of the seven items asked of ESP. Not surprisingly, when compared to faculty, ESP are more likely to find job security important. Equally important to job security for ESP is an item that was only asked of them: *more opportunities for advancement and promotion*.

**SUPPORT AND INFORMATION**

The survey asked faculty to whom they turned for support and information. NEA faculty turn to colleagues more than their department chair for information and advice. NEA faculty also find their colleagues better at providing support than their department chair, and much better than the administration. When given a list of sources and asked how likely they are to turn to them for...
Figure 3

Most important aspects of faculty members’ jobs*

1. (essential)  2.  3. (fairly important)  4.  5. (not too important)

- Higher salaries: 45%  34%  16%  4%
- Better prepared students: 42%  32%  19%  3%
- Better retirement benefits: 40%  36%  15%  4%
- Better health benefits: 43%  32%  17%  4%
- Greater recognition of teaching: 34%  34%  20%  7%
- Safeguards for academic freedom: 27%  38%  24%  4%
- More support for conferences: 27%  32%  26%  9%
- Fairer measures of performance: 22%  35%  31%  7%
- Greater job security: 28%  31%  22%  9%

Remainder “not sure.”
Ranked by means. Unweighted n=615.

*Respondents were asked to rank job aspects on a 5-point scale.
†In the questionnaire, this response category reads as follows: “reversing the decline in the quality, preparation, and ability of students entering college.”

Figure 4

Most important aspects of ESPs’ jobs*

1. (essential)  2.  3. (fairly important)  4.  5. (not too important)

- Higher salary: 47%  31%  15%  6%
- Better retirement benefits: 45%  31%  15%  5%
- Better health benefits: 48%  25%  14%  7%
- Greater job security: 37%  26%  21%  7%
- More opportunity for advancement and promotion: 35%  28%  24%  7%
- Increased opportunity for professional development: 28%  24%  31%  11%
- Improve access to office resources: 27%  23%  31%  11%

Remainder “not sure.”
Ranked by means. Unweighted n=150.

*Respondents were asked to rank job aspects on a 5-point scale.
information and advice related to their job, faculty members are most likely to say they turn to a colleague (39 percent extremely likely, 82 percent very or extremely likely), with the faculty member’s department chair the next most likely source (34 percent extremely likely, 68 percent very or extremely likely).

- As a likely source of information and advice, college or university administrators (other than their department chair) rank a distant third (9 percent extremely likely, 45 percent very or extremely likely).

The final two sources pertain to media: 1) The Chronicle of Higher Education or another journal on higher education (6 percent extremely, 29 percent very or extremely likely) and 2) a newspaper or another form of news media (5 percent extremely, 20 percent very or extremely likely).

These results are for faculty, but the pattern is similar for ESP.

When it comes to the support provided to them for their job, the pattern among faculty is almost the same as it is for whom they turn to for information and advice.

- Faculty find colleagues the best source of support (80 percent saying excellent or good at proving support and only 3 percent not-so-good or poor), followed by their department chair (73 percent excellent or good versus 7 percent not-so-good or poor).

- College administrators rank a distant third in terms of how well they provide support (52 percent excellent or good versus 13 percent not-so-good or poor).

- Finally, a member’s professional association—explicitly stated as an association other than their union—receives the lowest rating as a source of support (39 percent excellent or good versus 13 percent not-so-good or poor).

**ATTRIBUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION MEMBERS**

There is a wide gap between higher education faculty and ESP in terms of household income. Among full-time faculty members, 63 percent have household incomes over $70,000, and 11 percent have household incomes under $50,000. ESP are much less well off: 29 percent have household incomes over $70,000, and more than one-third (37 percent) have household incomes under $50,000. The gap in household income between faculty and ESP may be due, in part, to the differences in gender, age, and education between the two groups:

- ESP are much more likely to be female (77 percent) than are faculty (58 percent).

- One-quarter (24 percent) of ESP are under 40 years of age, compared to 16 percent of faculty; 44 percent of ESP are 50 years of age or older, compared to 59 percent of faculty.

- Only 13 percent of faculty members hold less than a master’s degree and one-third (32 percent) hold a doctorate, while over half (53 percent) of ESP hold less than a bachelor’s degree, with only 15 percent holding a graduate degree of any sort.

There are also differences between two-year and four-year faculty, but the differences are not as marked as between faculty and ESP. There are gaps in gender, age, education, and income between two-year and four-year faculty. Among faculty, there are small gender and age differences and large education and income gaps between those who work in two-year institutions and those who work in four-year institutions:

- Two-year faculty are slightly more likely to be female (55 percent) than are four-year faculty (51 percent).

- Two-year faculty are younger than four-year faculty (44 percent versus 38 percent under 50 years of age).

- One-half (52 percent) of four-year faculty hold a doctorate, and 6 percent hold less than a master’s degree, compared to 16 percent of two-year faculty with a doctorate and 19 percent with less than a master’s degree.

- Forty-percent (40 percent) of four-year faculty have household incomes over $100,000, and 7 percent have household incomes under $50,000. Among two-year faculty, 25 percent have household incomes over $100,000, and 15 percent have household incomes under $50,000.

- The proportion of members who work in the liberal arts is about the same for four-year faculty (64 percent) and two-year faculty (63 percent).

**CONTINGENT OR PART-TIME FACULTY**

There are more differences between full-time faculty and part-time or adjunct faculty than simply employment status. A higher proportion of part-time faculty are female and have a lower level of degree attainment than full-time faculty, but the gap in household income between full-time and part-time faculty is not as great as might be expected.

- Part-time faculty are more likely (61 percent) to work at two-
year colleges than are full-time faculty (55 percent).

- Part-time faculty are more female than are full-time faculty (60 percent versus 52 percent).

- Full-time faculty are considerably more likely to hold a doctorate (34 percent) than are part-time faculty (18 percent).

- Part-time faculty are much more likely than full-time faculty to work in the humanities (37 percent versus 21 percent) and less likely to work in math and science (16 percent versus 24 percent) or professional schools (29 percent versus 34 percent).

- Household income is not as different as we might expect. Among part-time faculty, 28 percent have household incomes over $100,000, and 15 percent have household incomes under $50,000. Among full-time faculty, 32 percent have household incomes over $100,000, and 11 percent have household incomes under $50,000.

- On average, part-time faculty receive 45 percent of their household income from their university or college job—considerably lower than the percentage that full-time faculty receive (66 percent).

CONCLUSION

While higher education faculty and staff are largely satisfied with their careers—although they have concerns about their economic well-being—there are other areas of concern for the higher education community. How prepared are our nation’s students? Are faculty perceptions of student preparation for and appreciation of college and the learning environment accurate? If they are, our institutions need to address these concerns to ensure our higher education institutions continue to produce the educated and engaged citizens necessary for our nation’s prosperity.