

Overview

by *Harold S. Wechsler*

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A former editor of NEA higher education publications, Wechsler writes on the histories of college admissions policies, efforts to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice on college campuses, ethnic studies, and education for business and for teaching.

*This fall, Teachers College Press will publish his new book, *The Middle College Movement, a study of high schools for at-risk students, located on community college campuses.**

Faculty and staff are most likely to meet their core professional obligations—teaching their students, conducting their scholarly inquiries, and serving their colleges and communities—when they have adequate compensation, a voice in college affairs, and external support. For seven years, the *NEA Almanac of Higher Education* has reported on these working conditions. This year, the *NEA 2000 Almanac* reports mixed results. Some measures, such as salaries for full-time faculty members, improved during the past decade. Salaries for full-time faculty members on 9/10 month contracts increased by 3.5 percent to \$54,303 in 1998-99, writes John Lee in “Faculty Salaries: 1998-1999,” NEA’s annual review of compensation trends. Faculty purchasing power also increased. But other measures show a less rosy picture. Faculty salaries, for example, trailed pay received by other workers with advanced degrees for most of the 1990s.

How does performance-based funding affect the condition of the professoriate? Providing budgetary rewards for meeting performance targets, notes William Zumeta in “Accountability: Challenges for Higher Education,” “may be the leading edge of the accountability movement.” Zumeta traces the use of performance measures in policymaking and budgeting, and outlines inadequacies in current definitions of accountability. Maintaining quality higher education, he concludes, requires balancing academic autonomy with social responsibility: a synthesis achievable only by re-establishing trust between key stakeholders.

Salaries and working conditions have not improved for part-time and non-tenure track faculty, notes Gregory M Saltzman in “Union Organizing and the Law: Part-Time Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants.” The proportion of part-time faculty teaching at American colleges and universities nearly doubled between the 1970s and 1990s, he notes. Low salaries and non-existent benefits, Saltzman adds, led to growing interest in unions among part-timers, non-tenure track faculty, and teaching assistants. Saltzman examines the legal right of these colleagues to organize and bargain. The *Yeshiva* case does not cover these categories, Saltzman notes, but courts and regulatory agencies recognized part-timer and T.A. bargaining rights at some public and private colleges. Rapid growth in these categories,

he concludes, gives unionized full-time faculty members a strong economic incentive to help their colleagues to organize and to improve their working conditions.

The ways we meet our professional responsibilities are rapidly changing. The use of instructional technology and ownership of intellectual property moved from peripheral to front-burner issues in less than two decades. When addressing these issues, write Gary Rhoades and Christine Maitland in "Innovative Approaches to Bargaining," we may learn lessons from colleagues in other professions. Take residuals, for example. Residuals, frequently used to compensate performers, may be an appropriate model for faculty and colleges looking for equitable methods to share the proceeds from intellectual property. Faculty may also consider innovative processes in bargaining when addressing unfamiliar issues. Rhoades and Maitland show why interest-based bargaining worked at two NEA units. A joint union-management problem-solving committee learned about issues relating to distance education and courseware use, and then used its expertise to gain acceptance of recommended contract language from both sides.

Jay L. Chronister, in "Benefits and Retirement: Issues for the New Century," assesses career patterns in the post-mandatory retirement era and discusses recent federal legislation affecting incentive retirement plans. He notes changes in the cost of benefits, updates the legal status of benefits for domestic partners, and analyzes the growing presence of long-term care insurance in the benefits package.

How do we assess and compare the financial status of colleges and universities? Deagelia Peña, in "Higher Education Financial Variables: An Analysis," lists key factors that contribute to the financial health of the 1,493 institutions that offered at least two, but less than four years, of postsecondary education.

A positive balance sheet at these colleges, she finds, may imply sacrifices by faculty members.

College and university staff also share in these sacrifices, writes Linda K. Johnsrud in "Higher Education Staff: Bearing the Brunt of Cost Containment." Outsourcing, Johnsrud notes, may result in reduced salaries, benefits, and job security for staff; it may also involve substantial, if hidden, costs to a college. Johnsrud offers a list of alternatives to contracting out a service, including "insourcing"—determining whether in-house expertise can accomplish the service more efficiently or effectively.

Jay Chronister, who has contributed essays on faculty benefits and retirement since the inception of the current *Almanac*, recently retired from his professorship at the University of Virginia after many years of distinguished service. Regretfully, he also retires from the roster of *Almanac* authors with this edition. Jay's insightful articles deftly combined a command of complex policy issues and practical advice for his many readers. We are grateful for his contributions to the *Almanac*, and look forward to his continued counsel and support.

NEA higher education publications report on the latest trends in curriculum and instruction, working conditions, and national and state policies. But keeping up with the needs of faculty and staff requires two-way communication. Send your suggestions for improving NEA higher education publications and your submissions to *Thought & Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal* to: Cornelius Lehane, 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (clehane@nea.org).

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PART I
STATUS OF THE PROFESSION
