

Overview

By Harold S. Wechsler

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A former editor of NEA higher education publications, Wechsler writes on the history of minority access to college, efforts to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice on college campuses, ethnic studies, and education for business and for teaching. He is currently studying the encounter between first- and second-generation students and American colleges before 1960.

Wechsler's publications include "Eastern Standard Time: High School-College Collaboration and Admission to College," published by the College Board in A Faithful Mirror: Reflections on the College Board and Education in America, an anthology of essays commemorating the Board's centennial, and Access to Success in the Urban High School: The Middle College Movement, a study of high schools for at-risk students, located on community college campuses, published by Teachers College Press.

Is the recession over? Technically, yes, but our colleges and universities are living with the consequences of three years of economic reverses. Many states severely cut higher education expenditures and sharply raised tuition to balance their budgets. Federal tax cuts and shifts in spending priorities restricted the growth of Pell Grant maximums, despite rising tuition amidst increasing demand. Meanwhile, the economy and higher education are undergoing structural changes that will not end with the recession.

The *NEA 2004 Almanac* focuses on the effects of economic decline and structural change on the conditions of academic work for faculty, staff, and students. Our authors show how to improve working conditions through bargaining, professional development, and the political process. Here are the specifics:

How did the recession affect faculty salaries? "Hard economic times in a state result in diminished faculty salaries, or at least in pay increases that fail to keep pace with the national average," report Suzanne B. Clery and Barry L. Christopher in "Faculty Salaries: 2002–2003." Faculty salaries increased by 2.7 percent in 2002–2003—a 0.5 percent purchasing power increase accounting for inflation. But salaries for faculty at four-year colleges declined in six states; eight states reported salary declines at two-year colleges. The average salary gap between unionized and non-unionized colleges increased; the union advantage for 2002–2003: \$4,515.

The proportion of part-time faculty, notes Henry Lee Allen in "Employment at the Margins: Nonstandard Work in Higher Education," increased from 22 to 43 percent over the past three decades. Allen lists the socioeconomic trends that contributed to the rise of "nonstandard" academic work, and details the distribution of contingent faculty by type of institution and by discipline. Students at our community colleges, he concludes, may face the most adverse consequences of reliance on a predominantly contingent faculty.

"Between 1997–98 and 2000–01, average (enrollment-weighted) annual tuition growth for state resident undergraduates at four-year public colleges and universities ranged from 3.5 to 4.5 percent," notes William Zumeta in

"Higher Education Funding: Stagnation Continues; Financial Restructuring Underway." "The average tuition increase figure then jumped to 6.8 percent in 2001–02, 10.5 percent in 2002–03, and 14.1 percent in 2003–04 [13.8 percent in the community colleges]." The culprit: recession-related declining state appropriations for higher education; FY 2003 funding was below FY 2002 enacted levels in 21 states. Zumeta also notes a decline in the proportion of state wealth invested in higher education that long antedated the recession.

Collective bargaining contracts focus on *workload*-related issues, especially in times of economic duress. But bargainers must also confront changes in the *workforce* brought about by technological innovation, write Gary Rhoades and Christine Maitland in "Bargaining Workload and Workforce on the High Tech Campus." These innovations "unbundle" the faculty role; that is, separate the content from delivery. Unbundling—most apparent in distance education courses—may also affect campus-based education as more technical professionals come between students and faculty, note Rhoades and Maitland.

The rapidly rising cost of health care forces us to reconsider strategies to improve our benefits, contends William Dale Crist in "Faculty Benefits and Retirement: Politics Trumps Collective Bargaining." Winning adequate benefits at the bargaining table, he argues, requires political action. The increased cost of medical and dental insurance, he adds, accounts for about half of the rise in benefit costs. Directing the attention of politicians to reforming our delivery system for medical care, Crist concludes, takes on increased importance in a pivotal election year.

In "The Relative Value of Teaching and Research—Revisited," James S. Fairweather revisits a key question for faculty: what aspects of our work do our colleges and universities reward? Pay, he found "was inversely related to time spent on teaching at public and independent institutions." "The more time spent on teaching, the less the pay." Research and scholarly productivity and faculty pay were positive correlates; the data

showed little evidence "that teaching will emerge as a positive factor in pay on a national level any time soon."

Senates provide another arena for faculty influence on campus. In "Effective Shared Governance: Academic Governance as a Win-Win Proposition," Michael Miller and Michael Katz describe the range of influence possessed by current senates and suggest the conditions under which we may maximize our role in academic decision-making. Campus leaders, they note, "if committed to the ideals of scholarship and integrity, must continually search out effective methods to build communities out of disparate constituencies." "The need for such leadership," they add, "has never been greater."

Who works in support staff positions? Total higher education ESP staff increased by 5.8 percent between 1991 and 1999, notes Linda K. Johnsrud in "Higher Education Support Personnel: Demographics and Worklife Issues." The support/service and the clerical and secretarial professional groups together represent about two-thirds of all ESPs. How satisfied are NEA support staff professionals with their working conditions? Johnsrud uses membership survey data collected by NEA's Research division to report on sources of ESP worklife satisfaction. ESPs, she notes, express the greatest concern about wages and promotion opportunities: "ESP's must perceive decisions to allocate scarce resources as transparent and fair to all employees." "Many ESPs believe there are no means for advancement within their work units," she adds; "Employers and collective bargaining groups must therefore make promotion opportunities a priority."

This *Almanac* includes a CD-ROM containing institutional salary data for 2002–2003, along with files containing articles from previous NEA *Almanacs*. Thanks to the University of Rochester's Margaret S. Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development for its constant support, and to the *Almanac's* editorial and production staff—especially Marsha Blackburn, Hallie Logan Shell, Alice Trued, and Jim Van Etten—for their enthusiasm, friendship, and expertise.