

FOREWORD

by *Harold S. Wechsler*

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A former editor of NEA higher education publications, Wechsler has published books and articles on student access to higher education, on the history of the disciplines, and on education for business and for teaching.

Wechsler is currently writing a history of middle colleges—high schools for at-risk students located on community college campuses—and a history of efforts to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice on college campuses.

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Why have critics of higher education singled out faculty members as the prime culprits in the “decline” of higher education? This 1996 edition of the *NEA Almanac of Higher Education* suggests several compelling answers, amid comprehensive analyses of faculty salaries, benefits, workload, and productivity that document just how short-sighted an explanation faculty-bashing really is.

Average salaries for full-time faculty members, John Lee finds in his contribution to this year’s *Almanac, Faculty Salaries, 1994-95*, increased 4.3 percent last year. This increase exceeded inflation, but salaries in current dollars remain below their 1972 peak. The gap between the best and least well-paid faculty members has increased since 1972.

Faculty Workload and Productivity in the 1990s, by Henry L. Allen, is based on the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF-93). This project, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, asked a sample of over 31,000 faculty members about their conditions of employment. Allen’s analysis largely confirms what most faculty have known or suspected. The average reported faculty workweek remains a high 52 hours. Classroom and student contact hours have increased since a similar 1987 survey, and faculty members devote far more time to instructional activities than to research.

Walter P. Metzger’s essay on critics of college teaching enumerates the key characteristics of the six waves of criticism of faculty that have appeared since World War II. Metzger, professor emeritus of history at Columbia University and a distinguished historian of American higher education, notes that critics find it easier to blame faculty members than systemic or economic determinants that shape academic change.

In *Negotiating Academic Restructuring*, Rachel Hendrickson, Christine Maitland, and Gary Rhoades examine change in academe from the faculty union perspective. Unions, they note, should “negotiate a greater role in strategic planning and governance” to assure maximum association and faculty involvement when a college or university begins to “restructure.” Their contribution examines contract clauses that address all the major aspects of restructuring, from provisions for reorganization and retrenchment to the treatment of instructional technologies in faculty contracts.

The forces driving restructuring are, in many cases, a function of state budget pressures.

Over the past two years, notes William Zumeta in *State Policy and Budget Developments*, an improving economy has resulted in increased appropriations in many states for postsecondary education. But Zumeta questions the prospects for sustaining current funding levels. A new economic downturn, shifts in state budgeting priorities, decreased federal assistance, and public resistance to increased federal or state taxation, he suggests, may result in a serious financial squeeze within a few years, especially if the demand for higher education increases as expected.

Adding to that fiscal pressure will be increasing benefit costs, notes Jay L. Chronister in *Benefits and Retirement: A Changing Environment*. Between 1989-90 and 1993-94, Chronister points out, increases in average benefit costs outstripped average salary increases. Benefit costs increased as a percent of salary nearly everywhere. Uncapping mandatory retirement, Chronister adds, will not result in substantial increases in the number of faculty members age 70 or over. The available data, he notes, make clear that the "vast majority" of faculty still intend to retire prior to age 70, and two-thirds of surveyed institutions expect an increase in the retirement rate in the next five years.

Also increasing, note David Montgomery and Gwendolyn Lewis in *Administrative Staff: Salaries and Issues*, are salaries for administrators, which jumped 4.4 percent between 1993-94 and 1994-95, the largest increase in four years. Independent institutions and com-

munity colleges showed the largest gains. Salaries for administrators at four-year colleges usually exceeded salaries at two-year colleges, though the differential declined as the median salary decreased.

Two themes emerge from the essays in this year's *Almanac*: Faculty and staff must play key roles in both solving the difficult problems higher education currently faces and setting priorities for the future. These constituencies must also set their own research agenda; one that does not start from the assumption that faculty and staff are at the root of higher education's current problems.

Researchers, for example, might do well to investigate the effect of productivity pressures on faculty and staff, degree of faculty and staff involvement in governance, the effects of increased reliance of part-time faculty on curricular coherence and effective instruction, or the effect of retrenchment and of "contracting out" administrative services on maintaining a campus "community."

Special thanks for research and editorial assistance to Andrea Grodsky, Lisa Lenze, Michael Maranda, Ingrid Overacker, and Betty Tran, staff members of the Resource Center for Higher Education, a joint project of NEA and the University of Rochester.

To learn more about the issues raised in this *Almanac*, or to contact us in cyberspace, the NEA-University of Rochester higher education gopher resides at GOPHER://NEA-RCHE.WARNER.ROCHESTER.EDU/, and the overall NEA site on the World Wide Web is at [HTTP://WWW.NEA.ORG](http://WWW.NEA.ORG).