

# Overview

**By Mark F. Smith**

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**T**he essays in the *NEA 2010 Almanac of Higher Education* analyze the impact of the economic downturn on our colleges and universities. Economists may believe that the Great Recession is over, but the employment outlook remains bleak despite some moderation brought about by federal stimulus funds. The President's American Graduation Initiative highlights the role higher education plays in economic development. President Obama envisions a key role for community colleges, with their array of liberal arts and professional programs. He expects the AA degree to become the modal level of educational attainment by 2020. But it will take more faculty, staff, and resources than Congress is considering for colleges and universities just to maintain current enrollments.

Despite the gloomy economic outlook, Suzanne B. Clery and Barry L. Christopher report some salary increases for full-time faculty on 9/10-month contracts (3.4 percent; 3.2 and

3.9 percent in public and private institutions, respectively). But wage gaps continue to increase by rank, gender, control, and discipline. The data has yet to show the impact of furlough policies adopted in many states. President Obama's educational goals, the authors show, will require (under current conditions) approximately 36,000 to 42,000 additional community college faculty and 192,000 four-year college faculty.

William Zumeta, in "The Great Recession: Implications for Higher Education," shows the obstacles colleges and universities face in obtaining more resources. By the end of FY 2010, states face at least \$178 billion in budget gaps, with another \$180 billion of red ink by the end of FY 2011. States are slashing programs, cutting jobs, and imposing enrollment caps and increased tuition and fees. Federal stimulus funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act prevented widespread collapse, but few fiscal signs indicate rapid improvement.

Henry Lee Allen, in “Women Professors: New Challenges for the Next Generation,” examines the gains made—and the challenges remaining—for gender equity in higher education. The number of women faculty in scientific disciplines at Research I institutions has increased, yet they remain a small minority except for the health sciences. The presence of women faculty predicts success for women students, so growth in their ranks is doubly essential for higher education. Unions and universities, Allen argues, should do more to promote women’s quality of life and scholarly productivity. Such initiatives will help prevent faculty burnout, contribute to individual success, and heighten public appreciation.

Gregory M. Saltzman, in “Decision-Making Principles of Labor Arbitrators in College and University Grievance Cases,” reviews rules governing grievance arbitration cases. Grievance arbitrators judge whether a practice violates specific contract provisions. They do not establish broad philosophical principles of justice. Handled properly, Saltzman concludes, grievance resolution may benefit employee and employer.

Gary Rhoades and I, in “Negotiating Our Position in Hard Times,” examine policy and contract protections for faculty against economy-driven layoffs, furloughs, and program cuts. Nearly all contracts contain reduction in force or financial exigency policies that give management the upper hand in implementation. Faculty members must protect themselves by using all available tactics, including specific contractual and faculty handbook protections, a broader grievance strategy, and a public relations campaign to reach students and taxpayers.

Adrianna Kezar and Cecilia Sam, in “Beyond Contracts: Non-tenure Track Faculty and Campus Governance,” highlight “the importance of access to governance for improving the working conditions of contingent faculty.” Contingent participation in governance

remains nominal, note the authors, despite some recent progress. Such participation, they add, is worth fighting for. Once accorded that right, contingents assume more responsibility for becoming full members of the academic community.

Valerie Martin Conley examines the impact of budget shortfalls and the resulting curtailed benefit plans on higher education employees in “Retirement and Benefits: New Realities in An Economic Downturn.” As more employers move from defined benefit to defined contribution plans, union negotiators must understand plan characteristics and work toward plans that best meet employee needs.

Vicki Rosser examines job security issues in “ESP’s: Job Protection Issues.” Almost half of all ESPs are “very concerned” about job security, according to recent surveys. ESP hiring increased in recent years, but most of the increase occurred in only one of five basic ESP job types—the support/service category. Job security protections tend to favor management. Some contracts require informing the union and protecting seniority, but most agreements do not prohibit subcontracting or outsourcing.

The *NEA Almanac* includes a CD-ROM containing faculty salary data by institution for 2008-09, and articles from previous *NEA Almanacs* and *Thought & Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal*. The disk also includes the College and University Data Analysis System (CUDAS), a database developed by NEA that encapsulates key IPEDS data with an easy to use search and retrieval engine.

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