

The American College Teacher

National Norms for the 2004–2005 HERI Faculty Survey

Selected Findings

Working with Underprepared Students

Just half of faculty today say that they are satisfied with the quality of their students. Moreover, across all types of colleges and universities, only slightly more than one-third (36 percent) of respondents agree that faculty on their campus feel that most students are well-prepared academically. By contrast, findings from the 2004 CIRP Freshman Survey show that record numbers of today’s entering college students (70 percent) rate themselves as “above average” or “highest 10%” academically. Nearly half (48 percent) also report earning “A” grades in high school (see Sax, Hurtado, Lindholm, Astin, Korn, & Mahoney, 2005).

Importantly though, there is wide variation in views on student preparedness among faculty at different types of colleges and universities (see Table 1). Generally speaking, faculty at two-year colleges and public four-year colleges are the least inclined to view their students as academically well-prepared. In contrast, over two-thirds (67 percent) of private univer-

sity faculty perceive their students as well-prepared academically. Overall, 41 percent concur that “most” of the students they teach lack the basic skills for college level work.

Working with what they consider to be underprepared students is a source of at least some stress for 56 percent of faculty (11 percent of these respondents report “extensive” stress associated with this aspect of their work). The stress faculty experience within this realm is most pervasive at two-year colleges, where 68 percent of faculty report at least some stress and least common at private universities, where just 34 percent indicate similar stress levels.

Apart from the inherent pedagogical challenges associated with teaching students who they feel are not adequately prepared for college level work, faculty who teach this population of students may be frustrated by their perceived mismatch between responsibility and reward. For example, while 62 percent of faculty agree that their institution takes responsibility for educating underprepared students, just 6 percent

Table 1
Faculty Views on Underprepared Students, by Institutional Type (percentages)

	All	Universities		Four-Year Colleges		Two-Year Colleges	
		Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Agree “somewhat” or “strongly”							
Faculty feel that most students are well-prepared academically	36	37	67	28	45	22	21
Most of the students I teach lack the basic skills for college level work	41	33	16	45	30	65	52

agree with the proposition that it is “very descriptive” of their campus that faculty are rewarded for their efforts to work with underprepared students. Nonetheless, only 25 percent of faculty feel that their institution should *not* offer remedial/developmental education.

Goals for Undergraduate Education

Developing students’ ability to think critically (endorsed as “very important” or “essential” by 99 percent of faculty), helping students master knowledge in a discipline (94 percent), and promoting students’ ability to write effectively (87 percent) are the most strongly emphasized faculty goals for undergraduate education. Clearly, the focus of faculty is on developing the practical skills embedded in a liberal education (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002). Over half (56 percent) of all faculty see the goal of instilling a basic appreciation for the liberal arts and the development of moral character (59 percent) as “very important” or “essential.” Substantially fewer (38 percent) express similar views regarding the importance of providing for students’ emotional development. Preparing undergraduates for employment after college and graduate or advanced education is deemed a “very important” or “essential” goal by 73 and 61 percent of today’s faculty,

respectively. However, just 30 percent believe that the chief benefit of a college education is that it increases one’s earning power.

Teaching and Research Practices and Perspectives

When examining faculty approaches to teaching and their preferred methods of evaluation, we find considerable differences in pedagogical practice among faculty who are at various stages of their careers. Most notably, early career faculty are more inclined than their mid-career and advanced career colleagues to use student-centered teaching and evaluation methods (see Table 2).

These differences are most directly evident in the extent to which “most” or “all” courses taught by faculty respondents include cooperative learning (57 percent of early career vs. 36 percent of advanced career faculty), group projects (37 vs. 27 percent), student presentations (48 vs. 40 percent), reflective writing/journaling (22 vs. 13 percent), student evaluations of each other’s work (20 vs. 12 percent), and student evaluations of their own work (22 vs. 16 percent). By contrast, advanced career faculty are more likely than their early career colleagues to engage in extensive lecturing (62 vs. 51 percent) and to grade on a curve (25 vs. 14 percent).

Table 2
Faculty Approaches to Teaching and Evaluation, by Career Stage¹ (percentages)

Teaching and evaluation method used in “most” or “all” classes	All	Early	Mid	Advanced
Extensive lecturing	55	51	55	62
Cooperative learning (small groups)	48	57	47	36
Student presentations	45	48	44	40
Group projects	33	37	33	27
Multiple choice mid-term and/or final exams	32	34	32	30
Student evaluations of their own work	19	22	19	16
Grading on a curve	19	14	20	25
Reflective writing/journaling	18	22	18	13
Student evaluations of each other’s work	16	20	15	12

¹“Advanced Career” faculty earned their highest degree prior to 1976; “Mid-Career” earned highest degree between 1976 and 1994; “Early Career” earned highest degree after 1994.

Engaged Scholarship and Public Service

In general, today's faculty view the goal of maintaining close relationships between colleges and society at large as an important mission of higher education institutions. Over three-quarters (81 percent) report that colleges have a responsibility to work with their surrounding communities to address local issues and close to 85 percent support the idea that colleges should encourage students to be involved in community service activities. However, while for 61 percent of all faculty, preparing students for responsible citizenship is a "very important" or "essential" goal for undergraduate education, only 38 percent assign similar levels of importance to instilling in students a commitment to community service.

Overall, 46 percent of faculty say that creating and sustaining partnerships with surrounding communities is of "high" or "highest" institutional priority. However, slightly less than one-third (31 percent) perceive there to be a similar degree of institutional emphasis placed on providing resources to support faculty engagement in community-based teaching or research. Specifically in terms of perceived institutional priorities for undergraduate education, 33 percent of faculty today indicate that their campus places "high" or "highest" priority on helping students learn how to bring about change in American society.

(From Lindholm, J.A., Szelényi, K., Hurtado, S., & Korn, W.S. (2005). *The American College Teacher: National Norms for the 2004–2005 HERI Faculty Survey*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.)

The HERI Faculty Survey

The 2004–2005 Faculty Survey is the sixth survey of undergraduate teaching faculty that HERI has conducted triennially since 1989. In each administration year, over 55,000 faculty at some 500 two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and universities participate in the survey. In addition to demographic information, the questionnaire focuses heavily on topics such as how faculty members spend their time, how they

interact with their students, their preferred methods of teaching, their perceptions of institutional climate, and their primary sources of stress and satisfaction. The questionnaire also includes a section that allows participating institutions to ask their faculty up to 21 locally developed questions.

Participating institutions receive a detailed profile of their faculty, as well as national normative data for similar types of institutions. Additional supplemental reports are available for a nominal fee. The data can be used for many purposes, including institutional self-study and accreditation activities, campus planning, and faculty development programs. The data are also useful for research that addresses the perspectives, experiences, and behavior of faculty and related implications for policy and practice. The normative data, along with an overview of findings, are published in *The American College Teacher*. Copies of the full report are available from the Institute (see Publications Order Form on the back of this brochure).

References

- Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002). *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*. Washington, D.C.: AAC&U.
- Sax, L.J., Hurtado, S., Lindholm, J.A., Korn, W.S., & Mahoney, K.M. (2005). *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2004*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

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Upcoming 2005–2006 CIRP Surveys

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) will offer three student surveys during the 2005–2006 academic year that are open to all two- and four-year colleges and universities. For further information please refer to the HERI website: www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri

The Freshman Survey

The annual survey of entering college freshmen covers an array of demographic, experiential, and attitudinal issues. The questionnaire covers degree aspirations, major and career plans, and expectations about college. Participating institutions receive a campus profile report, plus national normative data. Institutions can merge their Freshman Survey data with other campus data to create a longitudinal data file for institutional research, planning, and accreditation studies.

The Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey

The YFCY Survey provides information on the academic, social, and personal development of first-year college students. When coupled with CIRP Freshman Survey data, YFCY data are especially useful for studying persistence, adjustment, and other first-year outcomes. Students' responses are compared to national and institutional peer group aggregates to enable institutions to determine where their first-year cohort "stands" relative to the first-year experience at large.

The College Student Survey (CSS)

The CSS permits institutions to assess how their students have changed since they entered college. The survey includes measures of self-assessed academic, social, intellectual, and emotional capabilities, and more conventional measures of academic success such as undergraduate GPA and GRE test scores. When combined with the CIRP Freshman Survey data, the CSS serves as a longitudinal measure of cognitive and affective growth in students.

The 2007–2008 HERI Faculty Survey

The next triennial administration of the HERI Faculty Survey will take place during the 2007–2008 academic year. Please contact the Institute for more information about the registration timeline and how your campus can become involved.

Publications Order Form

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