



HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT UCLA
home of the COOPERATIVE INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

Embargoed for Use Until
9:01 p.m. (PDT), Oct. 23, 2012

Financial concerns a major source of stress for faculty at U.S. public colleges, universities

Alana Klein Prisco, akprisco@ucla.edu
310-825-1925

Faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities continue to experience multiple sources of work–life stress, but those at public institutions in particular cited financial concerns as a top source of stress over the last two years, according to a new UCLA report on teaching faculty at the nation's institutions of higher education.

The report, "Undergraduate Teaching Faculty: The 2010–2011 HERI Faculty Survey," is produced by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the [Higher Education Research Institute](#) (HERI) at UCLA, which issues the national faculty report every three years.

Stress fueled by financial concerns

The report found that institutional budget cuts in particular represented a top source of stress among faculty at public colleges and universities, and stress related to personal finances was highest among faculty at public four-year colleges.

Full-time faculty at public universities (86.1 percent) and public four-year colleges (83.4 percent) reported that institutional budget cuts cause "some" or "extensive" stress. In contrast, only 47.2 percent of full-time faculty at private universities and 62.5 percent of full-time faculty at private four-year colleges reported stress from budget cuts.

Additionally, a greater percentage of faculty at public institutions felt stress from their teaching load and from working with underprepared students than did their counterparts at private institutions.

Despite these differences across institution type, faculty at all types of institutions experienced high levels of stress in the form of self-imposed expectations (84.8 percent) and a lack of personal time (82.2 percent), as they have in years past. However, this is the first

year that stress related to economic hardships rivaled these top sources among faculty at public institutions.

"Public colleges and universities have had to make significant changes in recent years due to budget constraints that impact not only faculty salaries but also their teaching and quality of life," said Sylvia Hurtado, director of HERI and lead author of the report. "This is the first evidence of the impact of budget cuts on faculty as state funding levels for public institutions decline. State funding for public education will be a key issue at the ballot box in the November election in California."

Part-time faculty lack institutional support

The report also found disparities between full-time and part-time faculty. Despite their significant and growing presence on campus — part-time faculty now account for roughly 700,000 of the 1.8 million faculty at two- and four-year institutions in the United States — many part-time faculty do not have access to key institutional resources, according to the HERI report.

Only 18.4 percent of part-time faculty had access to a personal office, and less than half of part-time faculty (47.7 percent) had a shared office. About two in five (42.0 percent) reported having access to an institutionally provided personal computer on their campus, and a similar proportion reported having access to a phone and voicemail.

"The precipitous rise in the employment of part-time faculty at colleges and universities has not been accompanied by institutional policies and resources designed to support part-time faculty in their efforts to be effective educators," said Kevin Eagan, a co-author of the report and HERI assistant director for research.

Increased student-centered teaching

The report found positive trends relating to undergraduate teaching. An increasing percentage of male and female faculty used student-centered teaching methods, including class discussions, cooperative learning and student presentations. While 78.9 percent of women and 68.3 percent of men used class discussions as a teaching method nearly a decade ago, 88.0 percent of female faculty and 78.3 percent of male faculty used this teaching method in 2010–11.

"These results are important, as they illustrate the increasing tendency to place students at the center of instruction, an approach that shifts the focus from teaching to learning and leads to improved student attitudes and learning outcomes," said Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, dean of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSEIS) at UCLA.

However, extensive lecturing continues to be a widely used teaching method across different fields, particularly in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. While the use of extensive lecturing has been shown to negatively affect student outcomes, the good

news is that more female faculty in STEM (60.3 percent) used cooperative learning methods in the classroom, exceeding male faculty in both STEM (40.7 percent) and other fields (52.6 percent). Female faculty in the social sciences and humanities were also most likely to use cooperative learning in the classroom, at 71.8 percent.

Faculty facts at a glance

- 74.2 percent of all faculty at four-year institutions felt stress from institutional budget cuts.
- 82.2 percent used class discussions as a teaching method.
- More than one-third of part-time faculty did not have access to an office on campus.
- More women than men used student-centered instruction methods in undergraduate classes, and women were less likely to use extensive lecturing.

The 2010–2011 Faculty Norms report is based on the responses of 23,824 full-time faculty members at 417 four-year colleges and universities. The data have been statistically adjusted to provide a normative profile of full-time faculty at four-year colleges and universities in the United States. The report also includes results from 3,547 part-time faculty working at 266 four-year colleges and universities.

HERI has been surveying faculty in higher education since 1978, and this report is the eighth in a series of surveys administered triennially. This is the first report on a national survey of undergraduate faculty at four-year institutions that offers a comparison of faculty across general disciplines.

To view a summary or to order a copy of the report, "Undergraduate Teaching Faculty: The 2010–2011 HERI Faculty Survey," (S. Hurtado, M.K. Eagan, J.H. Pryor, H. Whang, & S. Tran), visit www.heri.ucla.edu.

The Higher Education Research Institute is one of the premier research and policy organizations on postsecondary education in the country. Housed in the UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, the institute is an interdisciplinary center for research, evaluation, information, policy studies and research training in postsecondary education. Please visit our blog (www.heri.ucla.edu/blog) and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/hericirp) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/heriucla).