

Not all college faculty are equal

Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr. Letters from Academia

resented while white professors are slightly underrepresented. Most of them work for public institutions and for the most part use effective teaching practices. They represent 16.3 percent of all college professors.

- **Teaching-heavy faculty:** They spend 38.6 hours a week on average on core tasks. But most of that is in teaching, so they are not tenured or on tenure-track. Most of them are lecturers and instructors and most are women. They mostly work for very small colleges. Despite their emphasis on teaching, they do not tend to use very effective teaching practices. They represent 32.5 percent of the professorate.

- **Research-heavy faculty:** They work on average 42.8 hours per week. They spend most of their time on research, a moderate amount teaching, and a low amount on service. Most of them are in the biological sciences, agriculture, natural resources, physical sciences, mathematics, computer science, social sciences and engineering. Most are males and Asians, while African American and white professors are underrepresented. The major-

ity of them work at very competitive colleges. Their teaching practices are comparable to those of the classic faculty. They represent 15.5 of the professorate.

- **Service-heavy faculty:** They work 52.4 hours per week on average. As the name of their category indicates they spend most of their time on service, a moderate amount on teaching, and a low amount on research. Most of them are tenured professors, with very few untenured ones among their ranks. Not surprisingly, most of them are full or associate professors and do not work for highly competitive institutions. They represent 9 percent of all professors in academia.

- **Moderate-load faculty:** They work 27.6 hours per week on average, spending a moderate amount of time teaching and low amounts on research and service. They devote less time overall to those three activities combined than do the other groups. For the most part they include professors that have another job on the side, such as doing consulting or seeing patients. Professors in education, health professions, and social-service professions are overrepresented with most of them working off of the tenure track or at colleges without a tenure system, mostly in private, non-competitive institutions. Their effective teaching practices are less than those of the average

professor. They represent 26.7 percent of professors.

What can be inferred from these data? Many things.

First of all, those who spend most of their time teaching are not necessarily those who employ the best teaching practices. This is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, there has been some current of thought lately of creating more teaching-only positions at some universities, meaning they should be better teachers while also saving money for the university because they larger number of students. However, this study shows that is not the case. It was a surprising conclusion of this study that teaching-focused faculty members made relatively infrequent use of effective teaching practices, such as "discussions with diverse others," that research suggests enhance student learning.

Second, the finding that those spending significant time doing research are also the better teachers confirms the maxim that you can only teach a subject well if you are a practitioner of it. In fact, students enjoy listening to someone who has first-hand experience, especially if they incorporate students into their research.

Third is the fact that many professors (a quarter of them), have active professional lives outside academia where they

earn most of their incomes. That is particularly the case for professionals in the health sciences, social services, or consulting services. This finding helps to explain why people in those professions command a higher salary because you have to pay them enough to compensate for what they stop doing when they enter the classroom.

A more general conclusion is that if we want colleges and universities to render a better service to students we should keep promoting the idea of a balanced workload between teaching, research, and service. Also, we need to appreciate that tenure and tenure-track professors are typically better at what they do than the rest, and, therefore, we should hire more of them, not fewer. The current practice at many universities is to fill their teaching ranks with lower paid adjunct and non-tenure track instructors.

This research clearly shows that if we want to make better use of taxpayers' money in higher education, then we should enhance the traditional values of the academy, such as scholarship and tenure.

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Despite the fact that college faculty seem to lead very public lives because they show up in front of audiences on a regular basis, the fact of the matter is that most people – even faculty themselves – don't know how much time they spend doing the different aspects of their jobs. A new study helps us better understand faculty by grouping them according to the way they spend their time.

A team of researchers from the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University at Bloomington just published a report based on the analyses of responses to the center's survey of 16,000 full-time instructors who teach at least one undergraduate course. They scrutinized the time that professors spend doing what they do in the core areas of teaching, research, and service. Titled, "Faculty Types and Effective Teaching: A Cautionary Exploration of How Faculty Spend their Time," the report classifies college faculty into five categories: classic, teaching heavy, research heavy, service heavy, and moderate load.

- **Classic faculty:** They spend an average of 53.5 hours a week doing research teaching, and service in that order of importance. They are represented mostly by tenured and tenure-track faculty. Asian, black, and multiracial professors are slightly overrep-