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ABSTRACT

Issues concerning an aging faculty are discussed, including faculty vitality and quality in an era of institutional constraints and limited career opportunities, restricted mobility of faculty between institutions, and limited recruitment of young faculty. Perspectives of the faculty and their institutions about these issues are outlined, and change strategies are proposed. The historical context since the 1950s that contributed to these conditions is traced. Because a large proportion of U.S. faculty members is young, replacement needs for faculty will be low. The majority of faculty in four-year institutions are tenured so that there is a long-term cost commitment and reduced staffing flexibility. Economic conditions have placed college faculties in an increasingly distressed economic status. The preparation and interest of college faculty is highly specialized by subdiscipline and field of inquiry. Issues posed by these conditions for the professoriate and for their institutions are detailed, and responses to the issues are proposed. Most of the strategies are designed to: (1) increase the rate of turnover in positions held by tenured faculty with emphasis on the more senior persons, and (2) control the tenure process. (SW)

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THE GRAYING OF THE PROFESSORiate

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This paper is based on an address presented by Professor Chronister at the University of Pittsburgh during a dinner honoring him as the 1983 "Distinguished Alumnus" of the Higher Education Program. In it he discusses the important issue of faculty vitality and quality in an era of institutional constraints and serious limitations on faculty in terms of career development opportunities within institutions, of mobility between institutions, and perhaps most serious, of recruitment of young faculty into higher education. Professor Chronister outlines the major issues from the perspectives of the faculty as well as their institutions and suggests some strategies for coping with these issues.

The Graying of the Professoriate

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For over a decade the literature on higher education has been replete with forecasts of enrollment decline and financial stress for colleges and universities in this country. The forecasts of the last decade have become the facts of life of the current decade.

Over the years the most critical investment of resources that colleges and universities have made has been in the human capital that we call faculty. It is generally accepted that the academic vitality and quality of a college or university is a function of the vitality and quality of the institution's faculty. As higher education attempts to chart its way through the remainder of the twentieth century, among the most critical problems which institutions face are those involving their most valuable resource, their faculty. The most serious of these issues are embodied in the title of this paper, "The Graying of the Professoriate." The meaning of this phrase and its implications for institutions of higher education and for the professoriate will be the focus of this analysis. In order to understand fully the issues related to faculty it is necessary to provide the perspective of the recent history of higher education.

The Recent Historical Context

The rapid expansion of this country's colleges and universities from the late 1950's through the early 1970's was

responsible for the creation of a highly supportive job market for faculty and prospective faculty. Between 1960 and 1970 the total full-time resident instructional faculty at colleges and universities increased from approximately 154,000 to about 369,000 (NCES, 1979, p. 104). Enrollment in graduate programs grew significantly during these years as individuals prepared to join the professoriate. Pelikan states that between 1960 and 1974 first-year graduate students increased from 191,180 to 597,695 (1983, p.16). The Carnegie Council states that during peak growth years, additions to the professoriate were being made at the rate of 20,000 and more per year (1980, p. 305). The growth years, in addition to creating the demand for a significant increase in new additions to the professoriate, also created an environment conducive to high mobility of faculty among institutions. Cartter indicates that during these years college professors were jokingly referred to as "twentieth century nomads" as they utilized interinstitutional job changes as a means of accomplishing rapid advancement in rank and salary (1976, p. 160). It is estimated that in the one year of 1963, eight percent of college professors changed institutions (Cartter, 1976, p. 151).

The sixties also provided a strongly supportive economic climate for faculty in terms of significant increases in salary and real income, in addition to rapid promotion and the awarding of tenure. In constant dollars faculty compensation increased by 41.2 percent between 1959-60 and 1969-70 (Carnegie Council, 1980, p. 297).

It should also be noted that over the years, institutions, as well as the professoriate, have pursued a process of structuring knowledge, and those who pursue knowledge, into specialized disciplinary and departmental classifications. This process was accelerated during the growth years in the preparation of teachers and scholars to meet the needs of what appeared to be an insatiable market for the products of Ph.D. programs. Colleges and universities sought, hired, promoted, and tenured faculty who were specialists in narrowly defined discipline areas. As a result of this pattern, specialization and narrowness in disciplinary field and expertise, rather than diversity, breadth, and flexibility of preparation is a faculty legacy with which higher education and the professoriate must deal in the nineteen eighties, and beyond.

In sharp contrast to the sixties, faculty members in the seventies began to face an increasingly hostile economic environment. Inflationary economic conditions coupled with fewer employment opportunities caused by enrollment stabilization and the prospect of decline resulted in substantial losses in potential mobility and real income. For the past decade, faculty members have been losing both relatively and absolutely in terms of real compensation. The 1980-81 AAUP Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession provided data showing that between 1970-71 and 1980-81, real salaries of faculty declined by about 21 percent. Typifying the situation was the change in real income between the 1979-80 and 1980-81 academic years when faculty salaries, on average, increased by 8.7 percent in current

dollars at the same time that the Consumer Price Index rose by 11.6 percent, resulting in a loss in purchasing power of -2.6 percent (Academe, August 1981, p. 212). In 1981, David Breneman, then of the Brookings Institution, anticipated little relief from this problem, and expected the decline in the real income of faculty and staff members to continue for some time (1981, p. 18). In terms of market mobility, Cartter reports that interinstitutional job changes by faculty declined 60 percent between 1968 and 1972 as demand in the academic job market changed (1976, p. 161).

Although it should be recognized that regional differences exist, opportunities for faculty members in the labor market have declined sharply in all but a few active disciplines. The fields which appear to be most critically affected by an oversupply of personnel are the humanities and social sciences (Pelikan, 1983, p. 20). According to the Carnegie Council, the current level of net additions to college faculties is about zero and will remain at the level, or below, for much of the remainder of this century (1980, p. 305). Replacement needs for faculty will also be extremely low, based to some degree on the age structure of the current faculty. A report by TIAA/CREF provided data showing that nearly 46 percent of their policy holders were in the age range of 36 to 50, and only 21.6 percent were over age 55 (1982, p. 4). These data are generally representative of the national age distribution of faculty in higher education (Carnegie Council, 1980, p. 305; Novotny, 1981, p. 2).

In conjunction with the deleterious age segmentation of faculty, another developing characteristic of the professoriate has been the rise in the percentage of faculty members with tenure. The proportion of faculty with tenure in four year institutions averaged 50 percent in 1969-70, but reached 75 percent in 1980 (Carnegie Council, 1980, p. 82). From an institutional perspective, tenured faculty represent a long term cost commitment and a reduced degree of staffing flexibility.

One other recent action should be considered as having a significant impact on faculty staffing issues. Since July 1, 1982, because of the 1978 amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, institutions of higher education are no longer able to require faculty to retire at age 65 due solely to reasons of age. The effect of this change in federal legislation has been to add five years to the careers of college faculty. Although a number of institutions had permitted retirements as late as age 70 prior to the Amendments to the ADEA, the "normal" retirement age for faculty at the majority of institutions has been 65. Because of economic concerns it has been suggested that colleges can expect an increasing proportion of those faculty members who would have retired at the "normal" retirement age of 65, or earlier, to use the federal age discrimination legislation to stay until age 70 (Furniss, 1981, p. 9).

As a result of the factors set forth in this brief historical sketch, higher education faces the remainder of the current decade with a professoriate which can be described as follows:

1. Age: The faculty members in higher education are relatively young. In a discussion of the changing age profile of faculty, Novotny cited data which showed that in the late 1970s the median age of faculty was about 42, and that the median age would reach 50 to 52 by about 1995 (Novotny, 1981, p. 2).

2. Tenure: As cited earlier in this paper, the faculty in higher education are approximately 75 percent tenured as of 1980. The Carnegie Council reported that the modal age of tenured faculty in four year institutions was 36 to 45 in 1980, and that it would not be until the year 2000 that the modal age would reach 56 to 65 (1980, p. 25).

3. Economic Status: The economic situation nationally, and the particular conditions existing on most college campuses over the past five to six years have placed college faculties in an increasingly distressed economic status. In addition to the well chronicled loss in real income, faculty have faced an increasingly distressed labor market due to enrollment declines at many institutions, creating reductions in faculty positions. The two sides to the labor market problem are the loss of interinstitutional mobility to improve work conditions and/or salary, as well as the more fundamental issue of retaining a current position.

4. Preparation: In preparation and interest the faculty in higher education can be described as highly specialized by subdiscipline and field of inquiry.

A relatively young, tenured faculty, stable or declining in size, to whom an additional five years of employment has been granted because of the amended Age Discrimination in Employment

Act , in a period when the expectation is for no net additions to the academic labor force, has critical implications for both the professoriate and individual institutions of higher education.

Issues for the Professoriate

For the professoriate the issues involve both the current cadre of faculty as well as new aspirants to the profession. With the age structure of the current faculty, the prospects for young, aspiring faculty members, particularly women and minorities, appear rather dismal through the 1990's. With no net additions to the professoriate expected over the next ten to fifteen years because of enrollment decline, and with the reluctance on the part of institutions to award tenure to faculty, tenured faculty can be expected to become less mobile in employment. To help offset the high costs attributable to a gradually aging, tenured faculty, institutions can be expected to continue to fill the small number of vacancies that do become available with young, less expensive faculty. But these young scholars will not enjoy the benefits of those who came before them. In most cases they will not be hired in tenure-track positions and most will be given only one, two, or three year terminal appointments. The majority of these young faculty will lead a nomadic life moving from one campus to another in hopes of securing a permanent position and the benefits that are provided by such an appointment. For those fortunate enough to acquire a tenure-track appointment, the current and projected tenure

situation may mitigate against achieving the security that tenure provides due to decisions based on criteria other than scholarship or the quality of teaching of the junior faculty member.

To promote financial and staffing flexibility, the expanded utilization of part-time faculty can also be expected at many institutions. The financial benefit to the institution of using part-time faculty is two-fold: 1) the cost per course for instruction is usually less in terms of salary and benefits, and 2) the commitment to the part-time faculty member usually extends only for a semester or similar academic unit of time. The impact of the use of part-time faculty is to reduce further, for aspiring junior faculty, the availability of already scarce positions. It may be expected that many of the young aspirants to the professoriate will utilize part-time faculty appointments as a means of gaining access to full-time teaching positions on college and university campuses, but with limited success.

As a result of what Fernandez (1978) has called the "academic depression", it is safe to predict that higher education, and society, will lose a generation of bright young scholars to other labor markets such as business, industry, and government. Such a scenario has serious implications for the contributions that the "lost generation" of scholars could make to the professoriate, to higher education, and to American society.

Currently employed senior faculty also suffer from problems created by the current characteristics of the professoriate. Problems created by the current milieu include loss of mobility,

constraints on compensation, loss of positions due to program discontinuance, the loss of intellectual challenge which can be fostered by young colleague scholars in their midst, and the loss of support that aspiring Ph.D. students provide to the scholarly effort and productivity of senior faculty. The problems of faculty mobility and compensation have already been discussed in this paper. It is sufficient to say at this point that faculty are seeking and hoping for relief from the loss of real income that the professoriate has suffered over the last decade.

Within the context of the current economic and financial climate, the age and tenure structure of the professoriate creates problems for institutions attempting to overcome the problems of inadequacy of compensation and real income (Carnegie Council, 1980, pp. 25 & 80). The problems of salary will be dealt with in more detail in the next section.

In a succinct essay entitled "Scholarship and its Survival", Pelikan presents an interesting discussion of the significance of the junior scholar to the productivity and intellectual vitality of senior faculty (1983, pp.15-24). Although Pelikan's essay makes specific reference to graduate students as intellectual stimulants, we might assume that the same chemistry would prevail among colleagues when these same junior scholars assume the mantle of the professoriate and join senior colleagues as members of college faculties.

Issues for Institutions

The impact of a relatively young faculty, which is stable or declining in size, on individual institutions is multidimensional in nature. From a financial perspective, a highly tenured faculty, when combined with enrollment uncertainty and constraints on financial resources, places an institution in an economically untenable position. The age distribution of faculty cited earlier, with a minimal turnover of faculty through retirements, will mean increased commitment of institutional funds to compensation of an aging faculty without the mediating effect of an influx of lower salaried junior faculty. An older faculty is a higher paid faculty (Carnegie Council, 1980, p. 25). If financial resources are not provided for at least minimal increases in salary, the loss of key faculty to other employment opportunities is an increasingly likely possibility. Needless to say, faculty morale, as well as institutional vitality, is adversely affected in such a scenario.

During the past several years nearly every institution has been called upon to reduce or seriously contain costs. When inflation forces institutions to hold faculty positions vacant or to withhold salary increases in order to pay utility bills, critical questions must be raised about the maintenance of the quality of academic programs. In this situation, the more highly tenured an institution's faculty, the fewer options there are available for dealing with financial problems.

It is widely recognized that for institutions to be financially and programmatically viable into the 21st century

they will be required to accommodate to evolving societal needs as well as to the changing interests and desires of the student constituents they seek to serve. Some of these accommodations will necessitate the development of new curricular offerings while others will involve modifying or terminating existing programs to reflect changes in program thrust and/or student enrollment. In each case changes in the composition of faculty, or more directly, the need for flexibility in faculty staffing, must be a paramount concern of institutions. Many institutions are finding that highly specialized faculty members, now tenured, who were hired during the growth years are less resilient in accommodating to changing and evolving program needs.

As a function of governmental and societal pressures over the past decade, institutions of higher education have made concerted efforts to increase the employment of women and ethnic minority faculty. The current milieu of financial constraints, minimal faculty vacancies, staff reductions, and high tenure ratios jeopardize the gains made by institutions in recent years in this important arena. The problem involves not only the potential losses of women and minorities due to staff reductions, but also the problems associated with not having tenure slots available as minority faculty pursue career advancement.

Responses to the Issues

In attempting to deal with the problems created by the "graying of the professoriate," institutions have studied and implemented a variety of alternatives. The majority of the strategies or alternatives are designed to 1) increase the rate

of turnover in positions held by tenured faculty with emphasis upon the more senior persons, and 2) to control the tenure process.

The two major categories of alternatives designed to create turnover in tenured faculty positions are 1) programs to encourage career change among mid-career faculty, and 2) programs to facilitate retirement prior to the normal or mandatory age. Emphasis upon the development of programs to facilitate career change in faculty is an institutional effort to accelerate and expand a process which has always taken place within academe, traditionally caused by external market inducements (Patton, 1983, p. 5a).

The current programs offered in higher education to encourage career change by faculty primarily in low demand teaching areas involve supplementing traditional market inducements for change with institutional inducements. These inducements include the provision of such incentives as institutionally paid training leaves, paid retraining leave with a severance pay option, and earnings supplements with severance option (Patton, 1983, pp. 5a-6a). The paid retraining leave programs may address institutional needs from two perspectives: the retraining of faculty to meet changing institutional needs with the intent of retaining the faculty member (in-placement); and retraining programs provided to faculty to assist them in acquiring employment elsewhere (out-placement). The paid retraining leave with a severance pay option is designed not only to help the faculty member gain the skills necessary to be

employed elsewhere but also to provide a financial incentive to facilitate the change. The earnings supplement and severance pay are designed to encourage outplacement by providing the departing faculty member a severance payment plus a supplement for a specified period of time to assist with the transition to what may be a lower paying second career position. Patton presents an overview of a variety of mid-career programs in a report entitled "Voluntary Alternatives to Forced Termination" (Academe, January-February 1983, pp. 1a-8a.).

In recent years there has been a significant increase in references to the implementation of programs to encourage early retirement of faculty as a means of dealing with reducing costs associated with older faculty, as a strategy for reducing staff, as a means of creating faculty turnover to accommodate needs for recruiting faculty for developing program areas, and as a strategy for creating tenure slots for qualified junior faculty. As with career change programming, the development of early retirement programs is an effort on the part of colleges and universities to accelerate and expand flexibility in tight times. In the case of formally established early retirement programs, institutions are offering inducements to facilitate and encourage voluntary retirement decisions on the part of faculty.

As with mid-career programs, the programs developed to encourage retirement prior to the mandatory age of 70 attempt to provide inducements which will address the variety of retirement concerns of the targeted faculty populations. All such programs must pass muster on a number of legal considerations, not the least of which are the requirements and guidelines encompassed in

the amended Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (see: Business Officer, 1981; Shapiro, 1980-81). Most early retirement programs are identified by the type of inducement they provide to encourage retirement as shown in the following list: (1) early retirement benefit payments larger than those justified by actuarial tables, (2) lump-sum severance payments, (3) annuity enhancements, (4) phased retirement, and (5) continuation of perquisites (Patton, 1979 & 1983).

Neither early retirement programs nor career change programs are panaceas for dealing with the problems created by a highly tenured, and relatively young faculty. Both approaches have financial and personnel costs to the institution and can be viewed as short term solutions to longer term problems.

As a longer term consideration, recognition must be given to the increasing discussion and debate which surrounds tenure. In her 1979 review of the academic profession, Shuiman made the following observation: "In the academic model, tenure is the lynchpin of the academic reward system: it is the goal toward which young faculty work; it marks the junior scholar's acceptance into a higher rank; and, barring egregious behavior, it promises academic employment through retirement" (1979, p. 29). To many, the tenure system is the characteristic which differentiates the professoriate from other professions. In earlier days the tenure decision rested largely on considerations of scholarship. In recent years, factors which have also become part of the tenure decision making process include tenure quotas,

tenure ratios, and variables such as enrollment trends and work loads that might be termed environmental factors (Craven, 1981, p. 113). The major immediate concerns facing higher education institutions and the professoriate are the development of policies to defer the tenure decision and slow the march of untenured faculty members toward the tenured ranks (Chait & Ford, 1982). Among the options to be considered are extended probationary periods, suspension of the up-or-out policy, more strenuous criteria for awarding of tenure, fixed term tenure appointments, and a series of multiple year contracts.

In Conclusion

In his article entitled "New Opportunities for Faculty Members", Todd Furniss begins with the statement--"One life, one career: rich, full, and satisfying, leading to a golden sunset"--to set the stage for his discussion of the challenges facing academics today (1981, p. 8). As can be surmised from the overview presented in this paper, the careers for many will not be a single career and many will not find the professoriate rich, full, or satisfying. This situation is not a problem for only the professoriate or only institutions, but is a concern for both and must be addressed jointly. If higher education is to remain a vital social institution during the remainder of this century, it must place a premium upon academic self-renewal, not only by creating mechanisms to acquire new faculty with new ideas, but by providing for academic self-renewal of its existing faculty

resources. It is also important that faculty recognize the mutuality of institutional interests and self-interest in meeting the challenges created by the graying of the professoriate.

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