

*Preliminary Report: Senior Faculty Perceptions and
Practices During the Late Career and Planning for
Retirement*

By

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Executive Summary

With the support of the TIAA-CREF Institute and active participation of the American Association of Higher Education, three sectors of higher education --the Associated New American Colleges, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Minnesota--collaborated on a comprehensive Fall 2003 online survey of faculty aged 50 and older at large public research universities and public and private comprehensive and liberal arts colleges and universities. The purpose of the survey was to learn of faculty work patterns, professional interests, and institutional relationships in the late career; to solicit their plans regarding retirement, including what might cause them to retire early or delay retirement; and to gather faculty perceptions of ways that faculty members and their institutions might cooperate for mutual benefit during the late career and transition to retirement.

The survey was also designed to complement earlier work such as the 2000 AAUP survey of colleges and university retirement policies and the 1999-2000 Mellon College Retirement Project survey of senior faculty at liberal arts colleges, whose results were presented at the TIAA-CREF Institute "Dialogue on Faculty Retirement Incentives" in November 2002. Nearly 2,000 valid responses were received, a response rate that ranged as high as 38.8% at the University of Minnesota to 15.6% at the University of North Carolina. (Although a somewhat low response rate, UNC respondents and non-respondents are demographically very similar.) Creative Analytics, Inc., a survey and assessment firm in Indianapolis, collaborated in survey design, managed the survey website, and provided summaries of the data and data files for additional analysis of responses.

Our preliminary analysis of survey results suggests several potentially significant findings:

- Overall a highly positive senior faculty profile emerges from the survey—an image of hard-working, productive scholar teachers who are motivated by their intellectual pursuits and their institutional contributions, who care about teaching and their students, who are productive in their scholarly areas, who take seriously their service responsibilities to institution and community, and who would choose an academic career if they had it to do all over again.
- On many measures the responses of faculty in the three sectors are remarkably similar, suggesting that faculty views and professional practices have much in common, even though their institutional settings seemingly differ markedly.
- Most respondents are white, male, full-time, tenured or on tenure track full professors whose work includes significant time allocated to administrative responsibilities. Although their income varies widely, all believe they will need about 75% of their current income during their retirement years.
- Senior faculty as a group plan to retire at about age 66 until they reach age 60, when their projected retirement age becomes 67 or 68, possibly due to continuing satisfaction from their work and concerns about health care benefits in retirement. Survey responses suggest that availability of early and phased retirement programs influence faculty retirement decisions and that faculty members desire these options.
- Senior faculty respondents are considerably less positive when asked about faculty governance, institutional management, being rewarded for their institutional leadership and service, and whether they experience time pressures and job-related stress. Only 28% would be willing to retire early should their institution face financial pressures.
- Many senior faculty members would like flexible workload policies and opportunities to contribute to their institutions in new areas where they have strong interests and expertise, an attitude they believe would continue during their retirement years. More than one-third would take advantage of an on-campus internship to gain experience in a new role. In retirement nearly a third would volunteer involving students and speaker/liaison roles with alumni or community groups. 18% would volunteer in institutional fundraising capacities.

Background: Survey Origins and Purposes

The origins of this survey project grew out of a recognition that approximately one-half of all faculty in American higher education are age 50 and older, that colleges and universities have more than two-thirds of their faculty payrolls invested in these faculty, and that a “generation turnover” of these faculty members will occur over the next decade, as they retire in large numbers. This turnover could occur in a highly uncertain environment, as little is known about either the retirement plans of these faculty members or the impact that their retirement will have on their institutions and their students.

Indeed, in an age of ambivalence about the contributions of older faculty (for that matter older workers in general), their work patterns, sources of motivation and satisfaction, and where their contributions may be most valuable seem not well understood. Preliminary analysis of survey findings suggests the hypothesis that many faculty members may retire well past age 65 and policies regarding such variables as workload flexibility, institutional roles and rewards, health care, and early and phased retirement will influence the retirement decision, either toward earlier or delayed retirement.

This survey was designed to learn more about the professional lives of this group of faculty, their work habits and professional needs and aspirations, their institutional and community relationships, and their plans and concerns regarding retirement. Quite frankly, it was also undertaken to discover areas where senior faculty and their institutions might collaborate more effectively to mutual benefit. In probing their institutional relationships, the survey tests an adult development theory that the late career is a time of narrowing interests, more focused commitments, and a desire to make contributions that “leave a legacy,” in the process making meaning of a person’s life and career. Institutions that are able to align their policies and faculty professional opportunities with these more focused senior faculty interests may benefit greatly from the vitality of their late career faculty. Those that are indifferent or inflexible may lose touch with the senior faculty in their midst. The latter in turn may become embittered and/or refocus their interests elsewhere—even off campus—contributing perhaps to ambivalence about their productivity. Survey results provide evidence for this theory.

Most members of today's senior faculty cohort are of the "baby boom" faculty generation that entered the academy during a decade of enormous higher education expansion during the 1960's and into the 1970's. Because of demographic patterns and constricted finances, the tight academic job market between the mid-1970's and mid-1990's resulted in the hiring of many fewer new faculty than earlier. This not only resulted in a much smaller cohort of mid-career faculty in their mid-thirties to age fifty to carry the faculty leadership torch in the near future, but the depressed academic job market resulted in a cutting back of Ph.D. programs and declining attractiveness of academic careers among doctoral students. Consequently, in addition to ambivalence about the value of older faculty to their institutions and what may be lost as the senior faculty generation retires, there is uncertainty about whether replacement candidates will be available in sufficient quality and number to meet higher education's needs during the generation turnover. Moreover, the growing practice of replacing retiring faculty with contract (non-tenure track) and part-time new faculty hires may exacerbate this uncertainty. As Schuster and Finkelstein have documented, more than half of all new faculty positions are off the tenure track (Rice, 2004, p. 31).

In light of this background, our survey results may be useful for a variety of purposes:

- For insights helpful to institutional strategic planning for the late faculty career and retirement transitions.
- For insights to assist institutions, pension funds, and faculty members with financial planning for retirement.
- For insights regarding policies and practices that will further effective higher education strategic planning for the next generation of faculty.
- For insights regarding policies and opportunities for institutions and faculty members to build vibrant, productive, and mutually beneficial academic communities that include faculty retirees as valued participants.

What follows is a fairly straightforward summary presentation of the data, the specific findings chosen somewhat to address topics of the TIAA-CREF Institute Three R's conference, along with some tentative commentary reflective of the preliminary state of our analysis at this time. Most of the data is either in the form of sector (ANAC, UNC,

and UMN) or overall response means. The mean agreement percentages are derived from summing the “strongly agree” and “agree” responses on a four-point scale of disagreement/agreement with survey statements asking for an opinion. Although response rates varied considerably, both the universities of North Carolina and Minnesota did follow-up analyses revealing that actual respondents reflect the profile of the pool of potential respondents as a whole.

Demographic, Academic, and Financial Profile of Respondents

A perhaps surprising finding is the similarity of the demographic characteristics of senior faculty members in the three sectors, e.g., age, ethnicity, and marital status.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
# Respondents	554	835	560	1949
% Response Rate	28.4%	15.6%	38.8%	21.8
Mean Age	57	58	58	58
Gender (% Women)	36%	33%	25%	32%
Racial/Ethnic Identity (% White)	94%	91%	94%	93%
Marital Status (% Married)	79%	79%	83%	80%

Respondents had similarly lengthy service at their current institutions and were overwhelmingly full-time, but notable differences are evident in percentages of tenured faculty and non-tenure track appointments across the sectors. Uniformly, respondents perform a significant amount of the administrative work at their institutions.

Academic Profile of Respondents	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Mean Years in Higher Education	24	25	28	26
Mean Years at Current Institution	18	19	23	20
% Full-time	97%	96%	96%	96%
% Tenured	77%	87%	96%	84%
% Not on Tenure Track (No Tenure Track 1%)	14%	14%	2%	11%
% Full Professor	53%	61%	74%	62%
% Associate Professor	31%	23%	22%	25%
% with Administrative Appointments	38%	35%	32%	35%
% Time Allocated to Administration	41%	57%	44%	49%

The financial profile contains the intriguing finding that in spite of fairly wide disparity of income levels across the three sectors, respondents on average believe they will need 76-77% of their current income for retirement. Obviously, such a constant percentage projects to wide variance in retirement incomes. It should be noted that a quarter of respondents profess not to know how much income they will need in retirement. The higher income levels of University of Minnesota respondents appear to be influenced by the fact that nearly a quarter of UM respondents are in medical and health science fields. Moreover, many of these and other UM faculty members are on 11 month, rather than 9 month appointments.

Financial Profile of Respondents	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Base Salary \$	64,514	84,362	95,465	81,767
Other Institutional Income \$	3,077	5,041	9,677	5,790
Income from other Sources \$	7,527	10,143	12,311	10,001
Total Income from above Sources \$	76,922	98,688	116,944	97,712
% Current Income Needed to Retire	76%	76%	77%	76%
Income Needed for Retirement	60,724	74,940	89,732	75,114
% Don't Know Income Needed to Retire	25%	24%	24%	24%

Retirement Perspectives and Plans

Specific survey questions regarding retirement plans resulted in an almost uniform mean of age 66 as the planned retirement year and an equally uniform one-third who indicated they don't know when they will retire. Notably, the mean planned retirement age increases to 68 in the age 60 and older respondent cohort and only 13 % (250 respondents) say they are likely to retire in the next three years. Phased retirement programs are more widely in place at the universities of North Carolina and Minnesota than at ANAC member institutions, but are popular in all three sectors and approximately one-third of respondents indicate they plan to take advantage of phased retirement where available.

Retirement Plans	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Mean Planned Retirement Age	66	66	67	66
Planned Retirement Age (Age 60 and Older Cohort)	67	68	68	68
% Don't Know When Retire	31%	33%	33%	32%
Mean Years to Planned Retirement	9	8	9	9
% Likely to Retire in Next Three Years	13%	15%	10%	13%
% Institution Offers Phases Retirement Plan	40%	95%	83%	76%
% If not, Would Like Phased Retirement Availability	53%	18%	31%	32%
% Plan to Enter Phased Retirement Program	16%	32%	38%	29%

A major aim of the survey was to discover factors that might trigger faculty member decisions to retire earlier than planned or to delay retirement. The findings are not startling, but they do suggest personal and professional circumstances that institutions can influence to institutional benefit. High work satisfaction, health care considerations, and financial incentives stand out as powerful drivers of faculty behavior regarding retirement. Perhaps noteworthy, two-thirds of respondents indicate that faculty development support and opportunities to assist their institution to achieve institutionally-beneficial retirement transitions could influence them to delay retirement. Two-thirds of respondents would find early retirement programs a reason to retire earlier. Conspicuously, only 28% indicate that financial pressures facing their institution might cause them to retire earlier.

Retirement Planning Issues (% Agreeing)	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
<i>Reasons to Delay Retirement</i>				
High work satisfaction	88%	90%	89%	90%
Financial/Other Incentives (e.g., phased retirement plan)	88%	80%	83%	83%
Rising cost of health care	87%	80%	83%	83%
Anxieties about State of the Economy	76%	74%	74%	75%
Institutional Support for Professional Development	69%	66%	63%	66%
Opportunity to assist institution in planning to replacing me	65%	64%	66%	65%
New institutional opportunities	40%	46%	42%	43%

<i>Reasons to Retire Earlier</i>	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Having Sufficient Income to Retire	84%	84%	84%	84%
Feeling “burned out”	75%	75%	68%	73%
Work environment dissatisfaction	64%	74%	67%	69%
Not Performing Job to My Expectations	65%	64%	72%	66%
Availability of an Early Retirement Program	70%	61%	70%	66%
Financial pressures facing institution	29%	29%	25%	28%

The concern about health care carries over as the highest priority of faculty members in thinking about the relationship they would like to have with their institutions in retirement. Indeed, health care benefits in retirement equaled intellectual stimulation as a source of motivation as the strongest agreement responses of the entire survey. At the same time, faculty views suggest a wish to continue a connection with their institution in retirement, whether in desiring opportunities for part-time teaching or for maintaining library, office, and computer access. An area of potential institutional benefit may lie in the fact that a full one-third of respondents express interest in various institutional volunteer roles, including 18% who express a willingness to volunteer for institutional fundraising roles.

Institutional Relationships in Retirement (% Agreeing)	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Health care benefits from institution	97%	99%	98%	98%
Library Privileges	79%	82%	86%	82%
Opportunities for part-time teaching or other paid activities	72%	72%	69%	71%
Access to office space, computers, photocopying, etc.	68%	72%	83%	74%
Parking privileges	53%	68%	55%	60%
Retired faculty association amenities, e.g., campus space to meet	40%	38%	38%	38%
Volunteer in areas such as student recruitment, tutoring, mentoring	35%	35%	35%	35%
Volunteer as speaker/liaison to alumni/community groups	34%	30%	30%	31%
Volunteer in institutional fundraising roles	18%	15%	21%	18%

Faculty Professional Lives and Institutional Relationships

As is true of other professions, the faculty profession has strong critics and stout defenders, a phenomenon that can lead to stereotypes and caricatures regarding what faculty members do, what they care about, and what their needs are. Our survey probed these topics and elicited a strongly positive profile of the faculty member as a productive professional person and responsible citizen of an academic institutional community. This profile challenges negative stereotypes of older faculty members as self-centered, unproductive, and embittered. Yet, it also suggests that, while there is clear evidence of institutional commitment, there are issues in governance, management, workload flexibility, professional development support, and rewards that institutions could address in order to strengthen relationships with their faculty and enhance faculty satisfaction.

The first table in this section of our report provides self-reported evidence that senior faculty work hard, a mean overall of 57 hours per week. Our analysis of responses by age cohort reveals that this pattern of work holds up even into their sixties where the age 60 and older respondent cohort reported working a mean of 56 hours per week. The survey also asked faculty members to assess the extent that their work patterns are aligned with how they believe their institution expects them to allocate their work time. In the main, there is high correlation within the ANAC cohort, although respondents say they spend slightly less time in research and creative (e.g., fine arts) endeavors than they believe their institutions expect. Faculty members at the universities of North Carolina and Minnesota spend a larger number of hours teaching and in institutional and community service than their perceptions of institutional expectations and a smaller number of hours in research and creative activities. In fact, the number of papers and publications faculty report in all three sectors reveal a record of substantial scholarly productivity, perhaps supporting a conclusion that faculty, on balance, appear to allocate their time well among all three of their primary endeavors.

Our alignment findings may suggest that actual faculty work patterns are more alike in various types of institutions than commonly believed. It is tempting to ask whether there may be some stereotyping of institutional expectations among faculty members.

Although ANAC faculty members spend more time in teaching-related activities, the teaching commitment of UNC and UM faculty members is also impressive. Likewise, although UNC and UM faculty members spend more time on research and creative activity and publish more, ANAC faculty members are also active scholars. Considering that faculty members in all three sectors also work more service hours than they believe their institutions expect and that faculty feel their service work is inadequately rewarded, it would be interesting to determine if institutions do in fact have greater research expectations and lesser teaching and service expectations, as many of their senior faculty members believe.

Faculty Work Patterns	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Hours Worked Per Week	54	57	57	57
Hours Teaching	31	24	22	26
Hours Research/Creative Activities	7	13	17	12
Hours Institutional and Community Service	11	14	12	13
Hours Professional Development	3	3	2	3
Other	2	3	3	3
Papers and Publications Last Three Years	3	6	9	6

Work Allocation v. Perception of Institutional Expectations	ANAC		UNC		UM	
	Actual %	Exp. %	Actual %	Exp. %	Actual %	Exp. %
Hours Teaching	59%	56%	46%	42%	40%	34%
Hours Research/Creative Activities	13%	17%	20%	29%	29%	39%
Hours Institutional and Community Service	20%	18%	26%	19%	24%	19%
Hours Professional Development	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	4%

So, what are the incentives to work this hard? The table below on faculty motivation and satisfaction provides important clues. The responses to intellectual stimulation of one's field and the opportunity to have institutional impact are among the highest agreement responses in the entire survey, with favorable student evaluations close behind.

Interestingly, the influence of merit pay for performance receives sector responses that

are among the most divergent in the survey. (The higher UNC response on this item may reflect the absence of significant salary increases from the state in the last three years.)

Sources of Motivation and Satisfaction (% Agreeing)	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Intellectual stimulation of my field	98%	98%	99%	98%
My contributions have a positive impact at my institution	93%	95%	93%	94%
Favorable student evaluations	90%	87%	88%	88%
Merit pay based on performance	74%	92%	88%	86%

The next table provides data that may be particularly germane to the late stage of the faculty career. Senior faculty members express a strong commitment to the faculty career and to civic responsibilities to society. At the same time their interests are becoming more interdisciplinary and they are interested in flexible workload policies that allow them to pursue areas of their strongest interests. It is difficult to interpret their responses to time pressures and job strain in ways unique to the late career because there is evidence that faculty members feel these pressures at all stages of their careers.

Views on Work and Career Topics (% Agreeing)	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Looking back, I would still choose a faculty career.	95%	92%	94%	93%
Faculty have important civic responsibilities to society.	92%	95%	96%	94%
My interests have become more interdisciplinary in recent years.	81%	81%	82%	81%
Time pressures as a significant source of stress	86%	84%	89%	86%
Interest in flexible workload policies to pursue interests	85%	84%	86%	85%
Having a lot to offer in mentoring new faculty	84%	84%	82%	83%
My job is a source of considerable personal strain.	53%	52%	51%	52%

The table that follows suggests that evidences of faculty restlessness and desire to try new things noted in the table above are rooted to some extent in their perceptions of institutional functions that affect them in major ways. The table below also reveals that more than a third of respondents feel that their interests are less focused on their institutions currently than they were at earlier stages of their careers, although this item has the largest variance across sectors. Part of the issue may be the feeling of nearly one-

half of the respondents that their institution doesn't adequately use their expertise and leadership abilities.

Institutional Relationships (% agreeing)	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Institutions often inadequately reward service.	84%	85%	82%	84%
Satisfied with faculty governance	56%	51%	61%	55%
Satisfied with institutional management	55%	43%	57%	50%
Institution doesn't adequately use my expertise/leadership.	47%	50%	45%	48%
Interests less focused on institution at this career stage	42%	39%	33%	38%

Part of the solution may lie in professional development support targeted to senior faculty areas of interest. Although in prioritizing their professional development support needs, respondents put the usual bread and butter items such as sabbatical leaves and travel funds at the top of the list, the responses also suggest that many senior faculty members (in proportions similar to those dissatisfied with and becoming less focused on their institution) would find attractive on- and off-campus internships to try out new roles.

Professional Development Needs (% Agreeing):	ANAC	UNC	UM	All
Funds for professional travel to improve teaching	84%	75%	68%	75%
Funds to present work at scholarly conferences	83%	81%	81%	82%
More opportunities for sabbaticals and other leaves	81%	84%	79%	81%
Opportunities for off-campus internships	46%	51%	39%	46%
Opportunities for on-campus internships re new roles	37%	42%	31%	38%

Men and Women Faculty

Analyzing the data for the responses of men and women faculty cohorts has just begun. Because of the importance of gender comparisons, we have provided a sample of these responses to suggest both similarities and differences in gender perceptions, perhaps not surprising given the professional status differences in the male/female professional demographic. The survey documents the well-known and significantly lower percentages of women who are tenured and who are full professors, for example, while demonstrating

that women work almost an identical number of hours per week as men and plan to retire at almost the same age.

Some Male/Female Patterns	ANAC			UNC			UM		
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>All</u>
<i>(% Agreeing)</i>									
% Full professors	66%	32%	53%	70%	42%	61%	79%	58%	74%
% Tenured	84%	65%	77%	89%	67%	82%	97%	93%	96%
Work hours per week	55	54	54	56	58	57	57	58	57
Planned Retirement Age	66	65	66	66	65	66	67	66	67

Our preliminary analysis reveals that men and women agree in similar percentages with many survey statements. On others, however, women’s responses diverge from those of men in interesting and sometimes provocative ways, as the following table illustrates. Women across the board appear to feel time pressures more greatly than men, although our preliminary analysis does not address whether family responsibilities, certainly a factor for younger faculty women with children, are as important in the careers of senior women faculty. Further analysis may provide insights to the survey finding that women seem more open than men to new campus roles, as suggested in their greater interest than their male counterparts in on-campus internships and their willingness to delay retirement if new campus roles become available. Perhaps in light of their professional status relationship with men, more than twice the percentage of women agree that they have experienced stress as a result of perceived discrimination in their professional lives.

Divergent Male/Female Views	ANAC			UNC			UM		
	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>All</u>
<i>(% Agreeing)</i>									
Time pressures	82%	92%	86%	80%	93%	84%	88%	92%	89%
On-campus internships	30%	50%	37%	35%	57%	42%	27%	43%	31%
Retire Earlier—Outside Possibilities	43%	52%	47%	45%	58%	48%	40%	54%	46%
Retire Later—New Campus Roles	38%	42%	40%	42%	54%	46%	41%	49%	42%
Presence of discrimination	16%	33%	22%	14%	40%	22%	14%	30%	18%

Conclusions

This preliminary analysis of survey results suggests positive opportunities, as well as areas of caution, for colleges and universities, as they approach a period of faculty retirements in large numbers. The apparent profile from the survey of a hard-working, institutionally-motivated, and flexible professoriate suggests that institutions could benefit from taking advantage of faculty interests in new roles and their seeming willingness to cooperate in retirement transitions beneficial both to institutions and to faculty members. This senior faculty work ethic and well of good will may be invaluable if concerns about the adequacy of the new faculty replacement pool materialize.

In considering their policies and practices regarding the late faculty career and retirement, survey results suggest that institutions might be well-advised to pay particular attention to influences on senior faculty perceptions and behavior such as these:

- Sources of faculty motivation and frustration in the late career
- Need to stay engaged with late career faculty members and their interests, or risk losing their engagement with the institution
- Potential of new roles to safeguard senior faculty productivity and satisfaction and provide new institutional benefits
- Role of health benefits in causing faculty to retire or delay retirement
- Potential of phased retirement as a hedge against uncertainties regarding the new faculty replacement pool.
- Potential institutional roles faculty might play in retirement

Related Works

Bland, Carole J., and William H. Bergquist. 1997. *The Vitality of Senior Faculty Members: Snow on the Roof—Fire in the Furnace*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, Volume 25, #7. George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

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