

because it was concerned about its position in the rankings. This experience is not unique. At a time when universities seek to promote and protect academic autonomy from all kinds of interference, it is remarkable that some universities willingly allow their decisions to become vulnerable to an agenda set by others.

Prestige and reputation have become dominant drivers rather than pursuance of quality and student achievement, intensifying social stratification and reputational differentiation. There is a big assumption that the choice of indicators and associated weightings are meaningful measures, but there is no international research evidence that this is true.

The problem is particularly acute—and concerning—for the overwhelming majority of middle- and lower-ranked universities and colleges that have got caught up in the rankings maelstrom. To these universities, and their governments, we say: concentrate on what matters—helping the majority of students earn credentials for sustainable living and employment, rather than ensuring that your institution matches criteria established by different rankings. Even if much attention and resources are so expended, the results will not be favorable. ■

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The American Academic Profession at Risk

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Over the past half century, the United States emerged arguably as the world's premier national system of higher education in terms of both size and quality. China, of course, now surpasses the United States in total student enrollments and produces more PhDs annually. It counts as well a larger number of instructional staff than the United States. India is on the verge of surpassing the United States in size, at least in terms of total student enrollments. American claims to quality remain—claims, however, that are increasingly at risk.

A NEW APPRAISAL

That is the argument of a new, elaborately detailed analysis of the status and prospects of the American academic profession: *The Faculty Factor*, by Martin Finkelstein, Valerie

Conley, and Jack Schuster (Johns Hopkins University Press, October 2016). Building on already disturbing indicators of deterioration reported in our earlier book in the first years of the twenty-first century (Schuster and Finkelstein, *The American Faculty*, 2006), our new book creatively mines fresh—and heretofore unavailable—data sources to follow the fortunes of the American faculty through the lingering Great Global Recession of 2008.

For those who are not experiencing the American system on a daily basis, it provides a sharp, albeit nuanced, corrective to perceptions of the ideal, typical American model of academic work and careers that emerged from Christopher Jencks and David Reisman's *The Academic Revolution* (1968), Bowen and Schuster's *American Professors* (1986), and even Burton Clark's *Academic Life* (1987). That model was built on the concept of *shared governance*, stewardship of the institutions' academic mission, including supreme faculty authority in academic matters, especially personnel issues of hiring and promotion; on the concept of *tenure*, which protected academic freedom, served as a magnet for scholars around the world, and regularized the structure of an academic career (including a six-to-seven year probationary period, followed by a high stakes "up or out" evaluation, leading to a continuous appointment and a relatively stable career); and the concept of an *integrated academic role*, that included teaching, research (often broadly defined), and service in a mutually reinforcing, synergistic dynamic, with each functional role seen as strengthening the others.

BY THE NUMBERS: A NEW MODEL

The "new" model of academic work and careers in the United States is built on an increasingly contingent, stratified academic workforce; the unbundling of the traditionally integrated role into specialist teaching, research, and administrative roles; and the progressive yielding of faculty authority on campus, even in academic matters, to a growing core of full-time professional administrators. About 35 percent of the headcount of instructional staff are full-time, tenured faculty, or faculty on tenure tracks; about 50 percent now work part-time (predominantly teaching one to two courses on an *ad hoc* basis); and the remaining 15 percent are in full-time fixed contract positions, which are focused on teaching only, research only, or program administration only (with no expectation of service, including participation in governance). With explosive growth in the general, but also academic, administrative ranks, decisions about academic programs and policies are increasingly made by administrators rather than faculty, and faculty's sphere of influence has progressively shrunk down to the department and even program levels.

Our major findings reveal that for the past generation, nearly three-fifths of new hires into faculty positions have

been off the tenure track. Half of all graduating PhDs in the natural and social sciences begin their careers in temporary, postdoctoral positions, and only the fortunate few move into appointments with faculty status. Perhaps one-quarter of newly entering faculty change jobs and employment status in the first three years following their first employment. And two-fifths of full-time faculty who begin off the tenure track leave the higher education sector in the first career decade. The type of contract upon which you enter academe—be it full or part-time, tenure-track or fixed—circumscribes your likely career trajectory. There is minimal permeability across career tracks. And there is relatively little in-migration to the academic profession from industry and government.

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Across the system, American academics—like those in other nations—have experienced increasing workload demands for teaching more courses, more students, and concurrently for producing more research publications (preferably with competitively secured external research funds), while being increasingly subject to new demands for accountability. All in all, a much less attractive working situation and much less promising career prospects—a situation reflected in declining, albeit still high by most standards, job and career satisfaction. Following a brief period of real growth beginning in the mid-1990s, academic salaries have stabilized and are only just now beginning to recover from the Great Global Recession. Salaries for the very best entry-level jobs (tenure track assistant professorships) do not bring incumbents to the level of median family income. New faculty, even those employed full-time, find themselves increasingly economically marginalized.

INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS

As a bonus for IHE readers, this volume includes two chapters that explicitly place the US faculty in an international perspective, based largely on the results of the 2007–2008 Changing Academic Profession survey. The first examines trends in the internalization of the teaching and research/

publication activity of American faculty. The second explicitly compares the profile of teaching, research, and governance of academic staff in the United States with those in other English-speaking countries, in Western Europe, and East Asia. What did we learn? To begin with, the American faculty emerged largely as insular and inward looking as they did in the original Carnegie Foundation Advancement of Teaching 1991–1992 International Survey. Only about one-quarter integrated international perspectives into their teaching and research; and only about one-third collaborated with international colleagues. What distinguished the American faculty “internationalists,” was their overall research productivity and their extended, professional border-crossing experience. Compared to faculty in other English-speaking countries, in Europe, and East Asia, American academic staff tended to be less oriented to research, to spend more time in teaching, to publish less, to be less influential in institutional governance outside of their own home academic unit and in education public policy, and to be relatively well compensated and relatively satisfied—in the middle of the pack, rather than firmly at the top.

What emerges is a picture of an increasingly fragmented and weakened profession that threatens the future preeminence of US higher education. In a cruel irony—at least for Americans, as many nations across the globe explicitly seek to emulate the American model as part of their strategy to increase their global competitiveness in the knowledge economy, the United States is watching the foundation of its preeminence erode. ■

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Tajikistan: University Challenges and the Professoriate

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Tajikistan’s higher education is going through a difficult and challenging period. Tajikistan is a small, landlocked, and isolated country with a population of 8.5 million. The country borders with Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. Ninety-three percent of its territory is covered by mountains. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, secondary and higher education were deeply af-