

Taking the measure of faculty diversity

Just when the doors of academe have opened more widely to underrepresented minorities, **the opportunity for academic careers has been turned on its head, with far fewer “good” tenure-track jobs.**

Women and underrepresented minorities make up a larger share of U.S. faculty today, but they still lag behind white men in full-time tenured positions.

A TIAA Institute report finds U.S. colleges and universities have increased faculty diversity over the past 20 years, but most gains have been off the tenure track. The report, “Taking the Measure of Faculty Diversity,” by TIAA Institute Fellows Martin J. Finkelstein, Valerie Martin Conley and Jack H. Schuster, breaks down the proportion of women, African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans in U.S. faculty positions by appointment type.

Key insights

The researchers concluded that:

- The American faculty has evolved from a largely white male enclave to an increasingly diverse workforce, but the actual number of underrepresented minorities in tenured and tenure-track positions remains small.
- Women have been doing relatively better than men over the past two decades in securing full-time, tenure-track positions. But most of the infusion of women in academic roles has been in part-time and nontenure-track appointments.
- The decreasing availability of tenure-track positions in general, along with the wider prevalence of part-time roles, has complicated efforts to increase faculty diversity.

While underrepresented minorities held 12.7% of faculty positions in 2013, up from 8.6% in 1993, they held only 10.2% of tenured positions. Similarly, women in 2013 held 49.2% of all faculty positions, up from 38.6% in 1993, but just 37.6% of tenured positions (see charts below).

Underrepresented minorities as a percent of various U.S. faculty appointment types

	1993	2003	2013
All faculty	8.6%	10.5%	12.7%
Full-time faculty	8.2%	9.9%	11.1%
Tenured	7.1%	9.2%	10.2%
Tenure Track	10.0%	11.3%	11.7%
Nontenure Track	9.1%	10.0%	12.0%
Part-time faculty	9.2%	11.2%	14.2%

“Underrepresented minorities” consist of faculty of color born and educated in the United States, as opposed to foreign-born citizens who come to the United States to study or work and who often arrive well-educated and socio-economically advantaged.

Fewer than one in ten women faculty are full professors.

Women as a percent of various U.S. faculty appointment types

	1993	2003	2013
All faculty	38.6%	43.4%	49.2%
Full-time faculty	33.4%	39.4%	45.2%
Tenured	24.9%	32.0%	37.6%
Tenure Track	41.1%	43.9%	48.4%
Nontenure Track	43.7%	46.5%	52.6%
Part-time faculty	46.4%	48.1%	52.9%

Between 1993 and 2013, the proportionate representation of women among all full-time faculty members who hold the full professor rank has more than doubled from 14.8% to 36.1%. At the same time, however, the size of this elite group relative to all women faculty has changed only modestly— rising from 6.1% to just 9.1% of all academic women.

Women full professors

	1993	2003	2013
% of all full professors who are women	14.8%	23.7%	36.1%
% of all women faculty who are full professors	6.1%	7.8%	9.1%

Concluding thoughts

The broad societal movement to diversify the American faculty over the past quarter century continues to reshape the academic profession in many ways. While there has been striking progress toward diversification, much more work remains to be done. Further intensification of efforts to diversify the faculty remains an imperative for American higher education.

About the research

Researchers charted the number and proportion of faculty holding various academic appointments in 1993, 2003 and 2013 based on data in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDs).

To read the full report, click here or go to: www.tiaainstitute.org > Audiences > Higher Education

Click here to read about “The Faculty Factor: Reassessing the American Academy in a Turbulent Era,” a book supported by the TIAA Institute published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

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