

# The changing academic workforce

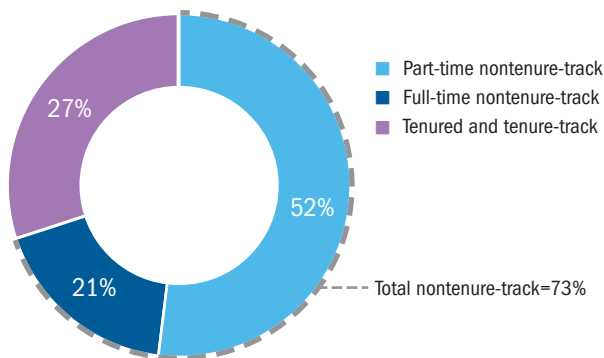
## Drivers of change

TIAA Institute research delves into what's behind dramatic changes in the academic workforce over the past several decades.

As enrollments have risen, the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty has increased too. The number of nontenure-track positions, however, has grown far more rapidly: that group now comprises 73% of faculty and instructors at two- and four-year colleges and universities.

### Composition of the academic workforce

Faculty and instructors in part-time nontenure-track positions in 2016 comprised more than half the U.S. academic workforce.



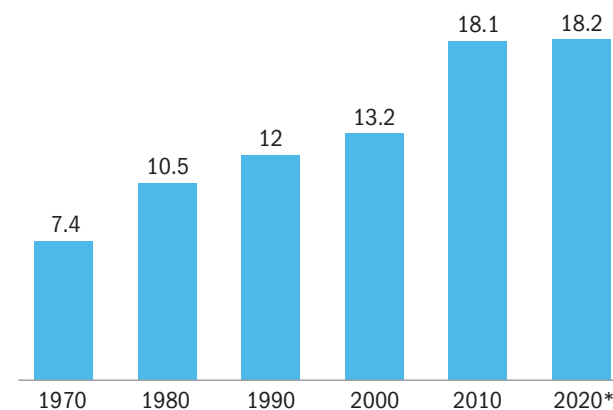
Source: The American Association of University Professors.  
Data Snapshot: *Contingent Faculty in US Higher Ed* (Oct. 2018)

Today, part-time nontenure-track instructors comprise the largest segment of the faculty (52%).

Undergraduate enrollment increased nearly 60% between 1970 and 2010. Since then, growth has slowed.

### Total undergraduate enrollment

Degree-granting post-secondary U.S. institutions (millions)



\*Projected

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

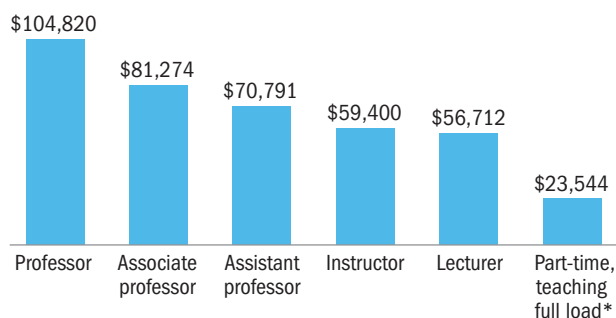
## Drivers of change



**Cost control.** In the wake of the Great Recession, public funding for higher education has come under intense pressure, while demand to serve more students—particularly low-income and first-generation students—has increased.

### Faculty pay 2017–2018

Two- and four-year colleges and universities



\*Eight courses.

Sources: 2017-18 AAUP Faculty Compensation Survey (full-time data), and The Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2012 (part-time data), updated via Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI multiplier to 2017-18.

On average, adjuncts teaching a full course load earn less than 25% of full professors' salaries.



### Professional experience in the classroom.

Given expectations that higher education serve as a vehicle for workforce development, faculty with professional experience, i.e., professors of practice, are desirable. Further, in some highly specialized courses, tenure-track faculty may not be the best-qualified teachers.



**Institutional flexibility.** Part-time nontenure-track instructors can fill short-term labor gaps due to enrollment surges and other circumstances, such as course buy-outs for tenure-track faculty, sabbatical and phased retirements. Long-term budget uncertainty may also prevent institutions from filling open tenure-track positions.



**Demand for diverse roles.** Distance learning, continuing education and job training have become more prevalent and are spurring the need for people who can provide such instructional functions within limited budgets.



### Declining support for the tenure model.

In response to pressures to operate more efficiently, higher education leaders and trustees have shown somewhat diminished support for tenure and an increased willingness to consider alternative faculty models.

## Read more

about the changing composition of the academic workforce:

### [Taking the Measure of Faculty Diversity](#)

drivers of change:

### [Strategic Utilization of Adjunct and Other Contingent Faculty](#)

### [Changing Faculty Workforce Models](#)