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Martin Finkelstein
Seton Hall University

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Recruiting and Retaining the Next Academic Generation

Martin Finkelstein
Professor of Education
Seton Hall University
The last time we focused our attention this much...

Was in the late 1950s and early 1960s when U.S. higher education was scrambling to staff its great post-World War II expansion

What did we learn from that decade of intensive research on faculty recruitment and retention?
The “Old” Rules

• Academics are a “special breed”: strong intellectual interests, did well in school, value autonomy,
• Once in the saddle, academics stay put (even if they test the market): mobility is a complex resultant of push and pull factors ($ is of modest import)
• Academic career is an “exclusive” one, i.e. at any one point in time and “sustained” over the lifespan
• The labor market is shaped by career stage, institutional type and discipline – and modestly predictable
Challenges to the Old Rules

• Feminization: women are nearly one-half of new entrants
• New Appointments, i.e. functionally specialized, non-tenure eligible, full-time term contracts in addition to increased part-timers
• The liberal arts/professional balance
• Institutional and mission diversification & shifting center of institutional gravity
• Re-alignment of faculty supply and demand, i.e. increasing demand and declining supply
How do we characterize these challenges?

- Temporary dislocations? Permanent structural reconfigurations?
- Most fundamentally, these developments undermine the basic underlying assumption of the “old rules,” i.e., that there is, in some meaningful sense, a corporate faculty that has a fundamental unity of mission, background, motivation, and talent level. In that sense, the “old-line” faculty no longer exists. We have rather a highly differentiated academic workforce (including an exploding number of non-faculty professionals – the fastest growing segment of the academic workforce).
The “New” Topography of New Faculty Hires

Part-time

Full-time Contract

Full-time tenured or tenureable
Prospects for Traditional Tenureable Faculty

- The most basic of the “old rules” – that academic careerists are a “special breed” willing to forego pecuniary rewards – still holds (faculty slots continue to be filled with terrific new recruits)

- What may be changing is the value orientation that mediates how these tenure-trackers fulfill these deep personal needs – and at what price. Academic women, more sensitive to achieving a reasonable work-life balance – are attriting at a higher rate than men (although still not high)
Prospects for Traditional Tenureable Faculty (cont’d)

- Tenureable appointments are a shrinking proportion of full-time vacancies (about half) and show little growth over the past 15 years
- Large disciplinary variation in market conditions
  - Natural sciences only area of growth in tenure-track positions
  - Other areas: growth chiefly in non-tenure track positions

Global competition for foreign-born scholars is increasing (globalization of buyers)
The New Contingent Majority

- Subgroups including “aspiring tenure trackers,” life balancers, second careerists, professionals in temp gig (accidentals), a further variety of part-timers

- “recruit nationally, but hire locally or regionally” (Twombley, 2005)
The Road Ahead

• Equity issues for women and minorities –
  – Will there be opportunities on the tenure-track? Will new kinds of appointments be exploitative?

• Recruitment and retention in a few “competitive” fields--the natural sciences, engineering, selected professions

• The increasing importance of on-the-job socialization for the non-traditionally trained
Old Rules, New Rules?

• Differentiated workforce segmented by diverse backgrounds, career trajectories, work roles, motivations and talents
• Shrinking tenured/tenure-track core
• Second-order differentiation of the labor market by discipline
• New questions to be addressed institutionally:
  – Accomodate new populations by modifying old roles or designing new ones?
  – What is the appropriate staffing mix for institutional mission?