Recruiting and Retaining the Next Academic Generation

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Recruiting and Retaining the Next Academic Generation

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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 Traditonal 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?