Section 5 The Context of Postsecondary Education



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Summary: The Context of Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education takes place in a variety of types of public and private institutions, including less-than-2-year institutions that provide short-term vocational training, 2-year institutions that offer associate's degrees and vocational certificates, and 4-year colleges and universities that offer bachelor's degrees or higher. Postsecondary education serves adults of all ages, and these individuals enroll with a wide range of educational objectives. Issues such as access and attainment (addressed in Section 3) have been prominent, but various aspects of the context in which postsecondary education is delivered have been the focus of concern as well. Some of these include the content of the curriculum, student access to courses and faculty, and the availability of student support services. The national data available on these topics and, in particular, change over time, are limited. Nevertheless, the data that are available provide some important insights into the contexts in which postsecondary education takes place.

COURSETAKING AND STANDARDS

Many students arrive at postsecondary institutions without adequate preparation in reading, writing, or mathematics to succeed in college-level work. To address the needs of these students, all public 2-year institutions, 81 percent of public 4-year institutions, and 63 percent of private 4-year institutions offered remedial courses in reading, writing, or mathematics in 1995 (*Indicator 50*).

The debate about whether postsecondary institutions should offer this instruction is ongoing. Some maintain that remedial courses expand opportunities for students with academic deficiencies. Others believe that precollege-level courses do not belong in the college curriculum and compromise the quality of postsecondary education because they divert resources from college-level activities. The debate also concerns which types of

postsecondary institutions are the most appropriate locations for remedial work (Breneman 1998).

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Students' learning opportunities are influenced by the range of courses from which they can choose, the size of their classes, and the teaching skills of the faculty.

Students' perceptions provide a useful perspective on the quality of learning opportunities at their institutions (although the views of others would also be needed for a complete assessment). Large majorities of students enrolling in postsecondary education for the first time in 1995–96 reported being satisfied with course availability, class size, and their instructors' ability to teach (Indicator 51). At the 4-year level, beginning students at private, not-forprofit institutions were more likely than those at public institutions to be satisfied with course availability (81 versus 73 percent), class size (97 versus 88 percent), and instructors' ability to teach (93 versus 87 percent). Within the public sector, beginning students at 2-year institutions were more likely than those at 4-year institutions to be satisfied with each of these aspects of instruction.

Despite beginning students' high level of satisfaction with learning opportunities, concern exists about the extent to which undergraduates interact directly with full-time senior faculty (Boyer Commission 1998). In fact, however, most full-time senior faculty (professors and associate professors) with instructional responsibilities at 4-year institutions do some undergraduate teaching. In fall 1992, 61 percent of full professors and 64 percent of associate professors at doctoral institutions taught at least one undergraduate course for credit (*Indicator 52*). At nondoctoral institutions, at least 90 percent did so. From the students' perspective, both upper- and lower-division under-



Summary: The Context of Postsecondary Education

Continued

graduates at 4-year colleges and universities spent about 30 percent of their classroom hours with full professors and another 26 percent with associate professors in fall 1987 (*Indicator 50, The Condition of Education 1996*). No significant change occurred in the percentage of hours spent between 1987 and 1992.

Institutions offer distance education courses for a variety of reasons, including increasing students' access to and improving the quality of course offerings (NCES 98-062). A growing number of institutions are offering such courses. In just 2 years (between fall 1995 and the 1997-98 academic year), the proportion of institutions offering distance learning courses grew from 62 to 79 percent among public 4year institutions, and from 58 to 72 percent among public 2-year institutions (*Indicator 53*). All but nine percent of each type of institution already offered or planned to offer them in the next three years. To date, public institutions have been more active in this area than have private institutions. In 1997–98, 53 percent of private 4-year institutions neither offered nor planned to offer distance learning courses. A total of 1.6 million students were enrolled in distance education courses in 1997-98 (double the number enrolled in fall 1995). As institutions employ new technologies to broaden access to postsecondary education, this strategy refocuses attention on who has access to computers and the Internet.

Special Programs

By law, education institutions must provide access and reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. In 1996–97 or 1997–98, about three-quarters of all 2-and 4-year postsecondary institutions enrolled students with disabilities, and nearly all institutions with such students (98 percent) provided at least one support service or accommodation (*Indicator 54*). Among the most com-

mon services were alternative exam formats or additional time to complete exams (88 percent) and tutors (77 percent).

FACULTY CHARACTERISTICS

As the student population in the United States has become more diverse, many institutions have attempted to increase the diversity of their faculties as well. There is evidence of success. A study (NCES 98–252) comparing new full-time faculty (those in the first seven years of their academic careers) with senior faculty (those with eight or more years of full-time college experience) found that in fall 1992 new faculty (about one-third of all faculty) were more likely than senior faculty to be female (41 versus 27 percent) and racial-ethnic minorities (17 versus 12 percent).

Adequate salaries are necessary to attract and retain highly qualified faculty. Adjusting for inflation, the salaries of full-time instructional faculty declined from the early 1970s through the early 1980s (*Indicator 55*). Since then, average pay across the ranks as a whole has risen, but the purchasing power of salaries within each rank has not been fully recovered. For example, in constant 1997–98 dollars, the average salary for a full professor was \$72,500 in 1972–73, \$57,400 in 1980–81, and \$68,700 in 1997–98.

COLLEGE RESOURCES

Decisions that colleges and universities make in areas such as faculty workload, tenure, and instructional time have important implications. Across all types of degree-granting postsecondary education institutions, full-time faculty members with any instructional responsibilities worked an average of 53 hours per week in fall 1992. Of this time, 55 percent was spent performing teaching-related activities, and 18 percent was spent conducting research (*Indicator 56*). The time allocated to teaching and

Summary: The Context of Postsecondary Education

Continued

research varied by institutional type and faculty rank, with junior faculty (assistant professors, instructors, and lecturers) spending proportionately more time than full professors on teaching-related activities.

Part-time faculty provide institutions with a flexible work force that allows them to adjust to enrollment changes, fill temporary vacancies, teach specialized courses, and reduce faculty costs. Some faculty teach part time by choice, but others do not, and may spread their time among a number of different institutions to support themselves (Gappa and Leslie 1993). In fall 1992, 42 percent of all instructional faculty and staff worked part time, and part-timers constituted a majority of instructional faculty and staff at 2-year institutions (60 percent; *Indicator 57*).



Coursetaking and Standards

Undergraduate Remedial Education

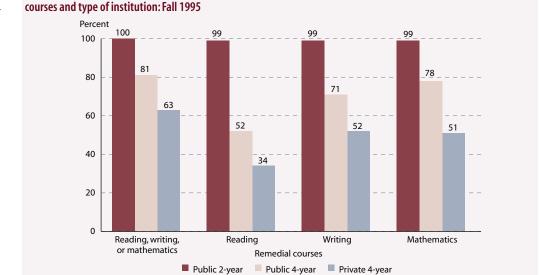
All public 2-year institutions and most public and private 4-year institutions offer remedial courses in reading, writing, or mathematics.

Many students enter postsecondary education institutions lacking the reading, writing, or mathematics skills necessary to perform college-level work. Therefore, most institutions enrolling freshmen offer remedial courses to bring these students' skills up to the college level. While some consider remedial courses as one way to expand educational opportunities for students with academic deficiencies, others feel that precollege-level instruction should be eliminated or strictly limited in 4-year institutions.

In 1995, all public 2-year and 81 percent of public 4-year institutions offered remedial reading, writing, or mathematics courses. Fewer private 4-year institutions (63 percent) offered remedial courses in one or more of these sub-

Public 2-year institutions were more likely than either public or private 4-year institutions to offer remedial courses because of their particular mission and the types of students they serve. About one-half of public 2-year institutions had open admissions in 1995, compared with less than 10 percent of public and private 4-year institutions (NCES 97-584). Moreover, freshmen at public 2-year institutions were almost twice as likely as their peers at public 4-year institutions to enroll in remedial courses in reading, writing, or mathematics (41 versus 22 percent; NCES 97-584).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. Postsecondary Education Quick Information System, "Survey on Remedial Education in Higher Education Institutions " 1995



REMEDIAL COURSES OFFERED: Percentage of postsecondary education institutions offering remedial courses, by type of





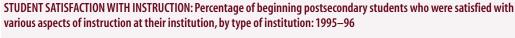
Learning Opportunities

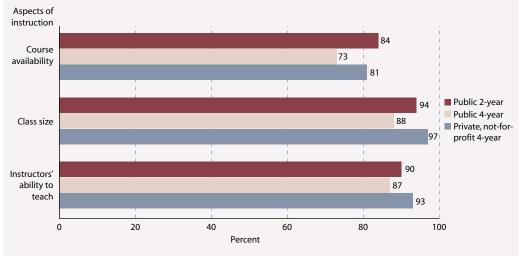
Student Satisfaction with Instruction

Beginning postsecondary students in 1995–96 were very satisfied with course availability, class size, and their instructors' ability to teach.

Students' learning opportunities are influenced by the range of courses from which they can choose, the size of their classes, and the teaching skills of the faculty. While the assessments of faculty and administrators as well as students would be necessary to provide a complete picture of perceived instructional quality, it is still useful to know what students think and how their satisfaction varies across types of institutions. When asked if satisfied with various aspects of instruction at their institution, a large majority of beginning students at both 2- and 4-year institutions in 1995–96 responded affirmatively.

At the 4-year level, however, beginning students at private, not-for-profit institutions were more likely than those at public institutions to be satisfied with course availability (81 versus 73 percent), class size (97 versus 88 percent), and the instructors' ability to teach (93 versus 87 percent). In the public sector, beginning students at 2-year institutions were more likely than those at 4-year institutions to be satisfied with each of these aspects of instruction.





SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:1996), Undergraduate Data Analysis System.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: NCES 98-080





Learning Opportunities

Instructional Faculty and Staff Who Teach Undergraduates

Most instructional faculty and staff at 4-year institutions taught undergraduates in fall 1992, but the percentage doing so declined as academic rank increased.

Although faculty in postsecondary institutions perform a wide range of activities, teaching undergraduates is one of their most important responsibilities. The percentage of instructional faculty and staff, particularly full and associate professors, who teach undergraduate classes provides a measure of the scope of faculty involvement in undergraduate education.

Among full-time instructional faculty and staff who taught classes for credit at 4-year institutions in fall 1992, 79 percent reported teaching at least one class for credit to undergraduates, and 61 percent reported teaching undergraduate classes exclusively.

Most full professors and associate professors at 4-year institutions who taught classes for credit did some undergraduate teaching. For example, at 4-year doctoral institutions, 61 percent of full professors and 64 percent of associate professors taught at least one undergraduate class for credit, as did at least 90 percent of their colleagues at 4-year nondoctoral institutions.

Reflecting the broader missions of their institutions and the greater number of graduate students, full-time instructional faculty and staff at doctoral institutions were less likely than their colleagues at nondoctoral institutions to teach undergraduate classes.

At each type of 4-year institution, the percentage of full-time instructional faculty and staff who taught undergraduate classes and who taught these classes exclusively declined as their academic rank increased.

* Included in the total but not shown separately are those with other academic ranks or no academic rank.

NOTE: The data are based on full-time instructional faculty and staff who reported teaching at least one class for credit at 4-year institutions in fall 1992. Instructional faculty and staff at 2-year institutions were excluded because all of them reported teaching undergraduate classes for credit in fall 1992.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF: 1993).



UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING: Percentage of full-time instructional faculty and staff in 4-year institutions who taught at least one undergraduate class or who taught only undergraduate classes for credit, by academic rank: Fall 1992

	Taught at least one undergraduate class for credit			Та	Taught only undergraduate classes for credit			
	All	4-year	4-year non-	All	All 4-year 4-year non			
Academic rank	4-year	doctoral	doctoral	4-year	doctoral	doctoral		
Total*	79.0	66.0	91.9	61.3	44.2	78.2		
Full professor	74.6	61.0	90.5	54.1	38.2	72.9		
Associate professor	77.6	64.4	90.3	58.0	39.7	75.6		
Assistant professor	82.2	70.7	92.9	65.1	47.3	81.5		
Instructor or lecturer	89.3	79.7	97.1	83.4	73.8	91.3		



Learning Opportunities

Distance Learning in Postsecondary Education

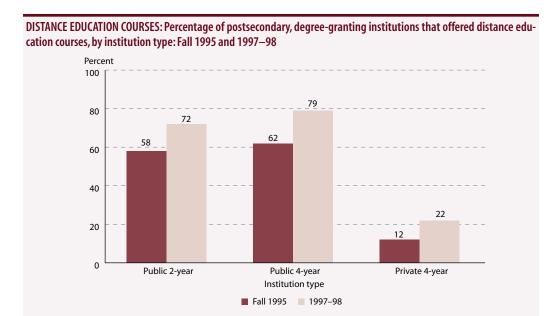
An increasing number of postsecondary, degree-granting institutions are offering distance education courses.

Institutions cite various reasons for offering distance education courses delivered through the Internet or other audio/video media (interactive or one-way). Among the goals are increasing students' access, increasing enrollments and the institution's access to new audiences, and improving the quality of course offerings (NCES 98–062). Because distance education can eliminate travel and scheduling constraints, it can increase access to higher education. As the costs of computers and other electronic devices decrease, more students will be able to take advantage of these courses.

Although there is limited evidence on whether these goals are being met, increasing numbers of institutions, particularly in the public sector, have begun offering distance learning. Among public 4-year institutions, the percentage offering such courses grew from 62 percent in fall 1995 to 79 percent in 1997–98, and in public 2-year institutions, rising from

58 to 72 percent. In 1997–98, an additional 12 percent of public 4-year and 19 percent of public 2-year institutions planned to offer them in the next 3 years (NCES 2000–013). Consequently, all but nine percent of both public 2-and 4-year institutions either offered or planned to offer distance education courses in the next three years. Private 4-year institutions were much less likely than public institutions to offer such courses in either year, and in 1997–98, 53 percent neither offered them nor had plans to do so in the next three years.

Total enrollment in distance education courses across all postsecondary degree-granting institutions approximately doubled from 1995 to 1997–98, from 754,000 to 1.6 million (NCES 2000–013). The number of students participating is likely to be smaller because some students might be enrolled in more than one course.



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. Postsecondary Education Quick Information System, "Survey on Distance Education Courses Offered by Higher Education Institutions," 1995; and "Survey on Distance Education at Postsecondary Institutions," 1997—98.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Supplemental Note 5 NCES 98–062, NCES 2000–013



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Special Programs

Services for Disabled Postsecondary Students

Nearly all institutions that enrolled students with disabilities provided at least one support service or accommodation for these students.

Congress has passed major legislation—including the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guaranteeing Americans with disabilities access to public buildings and services. Under these laws, educational institutions must provide access and reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities.

In 1995-96, about six percent of undergraduates reported that they had a disability (NCES 1999-187). Of those with disabilities, 29 percent had a learning disability, 23 percent an orthopedic impairment, 16 percent a noncorrectable vision impairment, 16 percent a hearing impairment, and 3 percent a speech impairment. In addition, about one-fifth reported that they had an "other health-related" disability. Compared with other students, students with disabilities were less likely to attend public 4-year institutions and more likely to attend for-profit or less-than-4-year institutions (NCES 1999-187).

In 1996-97 or 1997-98, about three-quarters of 2- and 4-year postsecondary education institutions enrolled students with disabilities, and nearly all (98 percent) of these institutions provided at least one support service or accommodation for students with disabilities (NCES 1999-046). Public 4-year institutions were more likely than private 4-year institutions to provide each of the services or accommodations shown below with the exception of tutoring, where the apparent difference was not significant.

Although students with disabilities were more likely to attend public 2-year institutions than public 4-year institutions, public 4-year institutions were more likely than public 2-year institutions to provide alternative examination formats or more time to complete exams and to provide readers, notetakers, or scribes and textbooks on tape.

NOTE: Institutions were asked whether they provided each service in 1996-97 or 1997-98.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. Postsecondary Education Quick Information System, "Survey on Students with Disabilities at Postsecondary Education Institutions," 1998.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED STUDENTS: Percentage of 2-year and 4-year postsecondary education institutions that enrolled students with disabilities that offered selected services or accommodations to students with disabilities, by type of service or accommodation: 1996-97 or 1997-98

Selected service		Pu	Public		Private	
or accommodation	Total	2-year	4-year	2-year	4-year	
Alternative exam formats or more time	88	94	100	55	90	
Tutors to assist with ongoing coursework	77	87	82	51	75	
Readers, notetakers, scribes	69	82	93	18	66	
Registration assistance or priority registration	62	77	83	26	53	
Adaptive equipment/technology	58	81	80	30	39	
Textbooks on tape	55	66	85	11	49	





Faculty Characteristics

Faculty Salaries

Although the salary of the average faculty member has risen in constant dollars since 1980–81, the purchasing power of salaries within each academic rank in 1972–73 has not been fully recovered.

Adequate salaries are necessary to attract and retain highly qualified faculty in colleges and universities. Full-time instructional faculty generally experienced declines in the purchasing power of their salaries from 1972–73 to 1980–81, during which time the salary of the average faculty member fell 17 percent after adjusting for inflation. By 1997–98, average pay had risen to recover most of these losses.

The distribution of faculty across ranks has shifted over time (NCES 76–211; NCES 1999–193), so the average overall salary in 1997–98 was about the same as that in 1972–73. However, after adjusting for inflation, average salaries of full-time instructional faculty in each rank remained below their 1972–73 values.

In 1997–98, average salaries of full-time faculty were similar in public and private 4-year institutions for all ranks combined and for associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, and those with no academic rank. Salaries for professors and lecturers were higher in private 4-year institutions than in public institutions (supplemental table 55-1).

Within the public sector, average salaries were \$8,000 higher in 4-year than in 2-year public institutions. Professors, associate professors, and assistant professors had higher average salaries in 4-year than in 2-year public institutions. In contrast, instructors, lecturers, and those with no academic rank had higher average salaries in 2-year public institutions (supplemental table 55-1).

FACULTY SALARIES: Average salaries (in constant 1997–98 dollars) of full-time instructional faculty on 9- or 10-month contracts at degree-granting 2- and 4-year institutions, by academic rank and institutional control: 1972–73, 1980–81, 1996–97, and 1997–98

Academic rank and		Acadeı	nic year					
institutional control	1972-73	1980-81	1996-97	1997-98				
All faculty	\$52,341	\$43,499	\$51,725	\$52,335				
Academic rank								
Professor	72,493	57,408	67,834	68,731				
Associate professor	55,077	43,335	50,176	50,828				
Assistant professor	45,450	35,284	41,404	41,830				
Instructor	40,558	28,334	31,743	32,449				
Lecturer	43,957	32,297	35,578	35,484				
No rank	47,883	41,692	44,979	45,268				
Institutional control								
Public	52,945	44,327	51,189	51,638				
Private*	50,815	41,242	53,030	54,169				

^{*} Includes only private, not-for-profit institutions in 1997–98 and both not-for-profit and for-profit institutions in earlier years.

NOTE: The Consumer Price Index (CPI) was used to adjust salaries to constant 1997–98 dollars. See *Supplemental Note 3* for more information. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. In-

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Salaries, Tenure, and Fringe Benefits of Full-Time Instructional Faculty Survey" (IPEDS-SA), selected years

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Supplemental Notes 3 and 5 Supplemental Table 55-1 NCES 76–211, NCES 1999–036, NCES 1999–193



College Resources

Time Allocation of Full-Time Faculty

Full-time instructional faculty at postsecondary, degree-granting institutions worked 53 hours weekly in fall 1992, devoting most of their time to teaching. The time allocated to teaching and research varied considerably by institution and academic rank.

Teaching students is only one aspect of a faculty member's job. Faculty also devote time to research, administrative tasks, and other professional activities. Issues such as the length of the faculty work week, the amount of time faculty spend in the classroom, and the allocation of time among work activities may inform debates about workload, tenure, instructional time, and the overall quality of undergraduate education.

Across all types of postsecondary, degree-granting institutions, the average full-time faculty member with any instructional responsibilities worked 53 hours per week in fall 1992. On average, full, associate, and assistant professors worked longer hours than instructors and lecturers. In addition, faculty at research and doctoral institutions typically worked longer hours than their colleagues at other types of institutions.

Full-time instructional faculty spent 55 percent of their work hours performing teaching activities, 18 percent conducting research, and 13 percent performing administrative tasks. (See Supplemental Note 14 for a detailed description of what is included in each type of activity.)

Full, associate, and assistant professors tended to spend a higher percentage of their work time conducting research than did other types of faculty. Assistant professors, instructors, and lecturers spent a higher proportion of their time performing teaching activities than did full professors.

Overall, faculty at research and doctoral institutions spent more time doing research and less time teaching than did faculty at other types of institutions.

NOTE: The data are based on full-time faculty who have some instructional duties for credit and who have faculty status in fall 1992. Instructional duties include teaching one or more classes for credit or advising or supervising students for

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF-1993)



FACULTY TIME ALLOCATION: Average number of hours worked per week and percentage distribution of time spent on various work activities by full-time instructional faculty, by type of institution and academic rank: Fall 1992

worked per week	To a slate as		Percentage of time spent ¹				
•	Teaching	Research	Administration	Other			
52.6	55.0	17.8	12.5	14.6			
56.9	39.4	32.2	12.7	15.5			
54.6	45.9	23.2	14.0	16.8			
52.3	60.5	13.6	12.3	13.6			
52.3	64.3	9.8	14.3	11.4			
46.9	70.5	4.5	10.6	14.3			
54.3	50.2	21.6	15.0	13.0			
53.6	52.4	19.5	13.5	14.4			
53.4	55.3	19.8	9.2	15.5			
47.7	69.1	5.9	9.4	15.5			
49.0	61.3	10.7	12.0	16.0			
	56.9 54.6 52.3 52.3 46.9 54.3 53.6 53.4 47.7	56.9 39.4 54.6 45.9 52.3 60.5 52.3 64.3 46.9 70.5 54.3 50.2 53.6 52.4 53.4 55.3 47.7 69.1	56.9 39.4 32.2 54.6 45.9 23.2 52.3 60.5 13.6 52.3 64.3 9.8 46.9 70.5 4.5 54.3 50.2 21.6 53.6 52.4 19.5 53.4 55.3 19.8 47.7 69.1 5.9	56.9 39.4 32.2 12.7 54.6 45.9 23.2 14.0 52.3 60.5 13.6 12.3 52.3 64.3 9.8 14.3 46.9 70.5 4.5 10.6 54.3 50.2 21.6 15.0 53.6 52.4 19.5 13.5 53.4 55.3 19.8 9.2 47.7 69.1 5.9 9.4			

¹Percentages may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

² Included in the total but not shown separately are those with other academic ranks no academic rank, or at other types of postsecondary institu-



Other College Resources

Part-Time Instructional Faculty and Staff

Postsecondary institutions rely heavily on part-time faculty. In 1992, 4 out of 10 instructional faculty and staff worked part time.

Part-time faculty provide institutions with a flexible work force that allows them to adjust to enrollment changes, fill temporary vacancies, teach specialized courses, and reduce faculty costs. However, part-time faculty are less likely to have tenure and lack the job benefits provided to full-time faculty (NCES 97–470).

Some faculty teach part time by choice, such as parents who care for children, but others do not. Those who teach part time but desire full-time work sometimes teach at several institutions in order to support themselves (Gappa and Leslie 1993). Consequently, they may be less available to students and less able to participate in the activities of any one institution.

In fall 1992, 42 percent of postsecondary instructional faculty and staff worked part time. Instructional faculty and staff at 2-year institutions were the most likely to be employed part time (60 percent compared with 23 to 39 percent at other types of institutions).

In each type of postsecondary institution, instructors and lecturers were more likely than faculty of higher academic rank to be employed part time.

Women were more likely than men to work part time at each type of 4-year postsecondary institution.

USE OF PART-TIMERS: Percentage of postsecondary instructional faculty and staff who were employed part time, by sex and academic rank: Fall 1992

	Type of institution						
Sex and	_			Compre-	Liberal		
academic rank	Total	Research	Doctoral	hensive	arts	2-year	Other
Total*	41.6	23.4	32.6	38.6	35.7	60.2	37.8
Sex							
Male	37.2	19.0	27.4	33.3	29.8	60.8	35.0
Female	48.9	34.1	43.2	46.7	43.3	59.4	45.0
Academic rank							
Full professor	16.7	10.3	13.9	16.9	17.8	25.1	29.1
Associate professor	15.4	16.6	11.0	9.5	9.4	22.2	28.9
Assistant professor	16.3	14.8	13.0	11.2	17.0	24.5	27.2
Instructor	74.5	65.9	73.8	78.2	75.8	74.7	66.2
Lecturer	79.3	59.6	81.6	85.6	80.4	95.1	82.2

* Included in the total but not shown separately are those with other or no academic rank and those at other types of postsecondary institutions.

NOTE: Percentages based on faculty and staff who had some instructional duties for credit in fall 1992. Instructional duties include teaching one or more classes for credit or advising or supervising students' academic activities.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES. 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:1993).

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Supplemental Note 5 NCES 97—470



