In 1975, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) surveyed community college Humanities faculty nationwide. This study, conducted at the end of a period of a rapid expansion and maturation of the community college system, questioned community college instructors on a wide array of professional practices and attitudes (Cohen and Brawer, 1977). Twenty-five years later, the CSCC updated this study, broadening the sample, to develop a current profile of the community college professoriate, and to analyze changes in the profession since 1975¹.

Method

The method for this study paralleled that used in 1975. A random national sample of community college faculty were chosen from the Fall 2000 course schedules of 114 institutions. The use of local facilitators and vigorous follow-up procedures led to the return of 153 1 of 1993 valid surveys, for a response rate of 76.8%. Survey items were assigned to analytical categories, or constructs. These constructs allowed a more probing interpretation of survey responses than would be possible with single item analyses. Constructs included Satisfaction, Curriculum and Instruction, Institutional Orientation, Professional Involvement, the Use of the University as a Reference Group, Concern for Students and Concern for the Discipline. Results for each of these constructs save the last two are reported in brief form below.

Results

Demographics

Men and women were found to comprise the faculty in nearly equal measure for all faculty surveyed. This result is slightly different from figures reported by the National Center for Education statistics, which reported that just over half (54.7%) of community college faculty are male (Digest, 1997, Table 227).

White instructors, at 86.6%, formed a majority of respondents, with African Americans, at 4.8%, forming the next largest racial/ethnic group. These findings are consistent with those of Palmer & Zimbler (2000), whose analysis of 1992 data showed that 86.1% of the community college professoriate is White/Caucasian.

Respondent ages fell into a nearly bell-shaped distribution around the 45-54 year range. Over one-third (38.2%) of instructors were between 45 and 54 years of age, with the vast majority (83.4%) between 35 and 64 years old. These figures represent a significant aging of the community college professoriate. The vast majority of respondents had not served in an administrative role for any length of time. Most (68.3%) respondents reported that they had never taught in a four-year college or university. A sizable minority of respondents (37.9%) reported having taught in a secondary school. However, as noted below, this figure is substantially lower than in the past, demonstrating the decreasing significance of the high schools as sources for community college instructors.

¹The 2000 CSCC study was supported by a generous grant from the Spencer Foundation.
Full-timers constituted 69.5% of the total sample for the current study. These figures demonstrate a clear over-representation of full-timers. (Palmer & Zimbler, 2000, found that full-timers formed only 38% of the community college professoriate in 1992). The over-representation in this sample is undoubtedly attributable to the sampling procedure followed in this study. As noted above, respondents were chosen through course schedules, rather than via faculty rosters. Although part-time faculty do comprise a larger proportion of the number of community college faculty, full-timers, by virtue of their full-time status, teach more courses. Because respondents were chosen from a list of courses taught, it is only logical that full-timers would be more highly represented in the current sample.

Most instructors in this sample neither had nor sought the doctorate. Only 15.6% reported holding a doctorate, and an even smaller percentage (8.8%) was pursuing this type of degree. The sample was not quite evenly divided between Liberal Arts and Non-Liberal Arts instructors, with members of the former group holding a majority.

Results by Construct

For the purposes of the analyses presented below, instructors were compared by employment status, doctoral attainment and aspiration, and teaching realm (i.e., Liberal Arts vs. Non-Liberal Arts).

Satisfaction

The only statistically significant difference in the satisfaction construct was between full-timers and part-timers, with the former group expressing a higher degree of satisfaction. Respondents did not differ in overall satisfaction by their educational attainment or aspiration, or by their status as Liberal Arts/non-Liberal Arts instructors. Of all groups considered in this report, doctoral seekers reported the highest level of satisfaction, and part-timers the lowest.

Although nearly half the entire sample agreed with the statement that they felt considerable stress in their personal lives from their jobs, these aggregated results obscure significant, and substantial, differences between full- and part-timers. Full-timers were nearly twice as likely as part-timers (52.5%, versus 27.2%) to agree with this statement. This finding contradicts the popular wisdom that part-timers, with their sometimes make-shift and patched-together schedules, inevitably suffer from more work-place stress than their full-time counterparts.

Most respondents in each group stated that they projected they would find their current positions attractive in five years. Part-timers were only slightly less likely than full-timers to agree with this statement, thus countering the popular notion that part-timers are likely to find their employment circumstances to be untenable. In its simplicity, this measure is perhaps the most important single indicator of satisfaction, since it allows us to gauge whether respondents were committed to pursuing their current positions, or whether they were hoping to be doing something else in five years. Overall, then it seems that respondents were, on the whole, satisfied with their teaching positions.

Curriculum and Instruction

Teaching, above all other forms of professional practice, is critical within the responsibilities of the community college professoriate. Accordingly, this study has been particularly attentive to survey results related to instructional practice. Three statistically significant differences in scores for this construct were found: full-timers scored higher than part-timers; doctoral seekers scored higher than their non-doctoral seeking counterparts, and non-
doctoral seeking part-timers scored lower than their doctoral seeking counterparts. Indeed, those in pursuit of the doctorate showed the highest scores of any sample group. In conclusion, employment status and educational aspirations had a significant relationship with this construct, but educational attainment (at least in regard to reported acquisition of the doctorate) and educational realm did not.

Lecture and discussion continued to be the most prevalent forms of instructional methods for all instructors, with lecture claiming 37% of class time overall, and discussion 14%. Joint teaching was fairly common for full-timers and those who held or were working toward the doctorate, but members of other groups were much less likely to report having taught with an instructor outside their department. Nearly all faculty, in all categories, reported they had revised their syllabi within the three years before completing the survey. Doctoral seekers were the most likely to report having received a teaching award, at 44.4%. Interestingly, doctoral aspirations were more closely linked to the receipt of such an award than was any other respondent characteristic analyzed here. Doctoral holders, doctoral seekers and Liberal Arts instructors are the most likely to report having taught honors courses. Full-timers and doctoral seekers were much more likely than their counterparts to report having traveled off campus for a conference of symposium. Similarly, full-timers and doctoral seekers were more likely than their counterparts to have organized extra-curricular activities for their students. Once again, part-time non-doctoral seekers were the least likely to report they had organized such activities.

In summary, full-timers demonstrated higher scores than their part-time colleagues on many measures related to instructional practice. Their overall values on this construct were higher, and so, logically, were their scores on individual measures used to build this construct. Less expectedly, the doctorate bore a very strong relationship to instructional practice. Not only did those who held the doctorate score significantly higher on many measures reported above, but those seeking the doctorate demonstrated higher scores as well.

These results portray a community college professoriate that is, by and large, highly committed to instructional practice. While substantial between-group differences are observable, the professoriate as a whole seems remarkably oriented toward the thoughtful and diligent discharge of their instructional responsibilities.

Institutional Orientation

Full-timers were more involved on their campuses, as might be anticipated. However, unexpected differences between respondent categories in regard to this construct surfaced. In particular, doctoral seekers posted much higher scores than members of any other group. In contrast to other findings, part-time doctoral seekers scored even higher than doctoral seekers in general. For example, part-time doctoral seekers were most likely to rate their relations with colleagues highly, while doctoral seekers in general were more likely than other respondents to report that they would prefer to spend more time with colleagues. Similarly, part-time doctoral seekers were far more likely than other respondents to state that more interaction with colleagues would improve their courses. In another indication of the positive relationship doctoral seekers enjoyed with colleagues, nearly all (97.0%) of doctoral seekers stated that fellow instructors were helpful sources of advice on teaching.

Professional Involvement

Faculty differed greatly in their expressed degree of involvement with their professions. Full-timers were more involved than part-timers and those holding or seeking the doctorate were more involved than those without (these results were statistically significant at the $p \leq .001$ level). Overall, doctoral seekers posted the highest value on this construct, and part-time non-
doctoral seekers the lowest. For example, doctoral seekers were most likely to belong to professional associations, read the greatest number of education journals, were most likely to report wanting to spend more time in professional association work, and favored continuing education most strongly.

The Use of Reference Groups

Those who were seeking the doctorate achieved a higher value on the University as a Reference Group construct than those who were not. As might be expected, those in the Liberal Arts showed a higher score on this construct than those in Non-Liberal Arts disciplines. Interestingly, the difference between Liberal Arts and Non-Liberal Arts instructors was much less than that between doctoral seekers and non-doctoral seekers, indicating the enduring impact of the search for the doctorate. Doctoral holders and doctoral seekers were much more likely than members of other respondent categories to believe that the most important ideas in their discipline originate at the university. Non-Liberal Arts instructors were the least likely to agree with this statement. Respondent projections of the attractiveness of various professional positions in the year 2005 (that is, five years after taking the survey) provided insight into their professional goals and aspirations. The majority of part-time doctoral seekers (68.4%) reported that they expected to find a teaching position at a four-year college or university attractive in five years’ time. In no other respondent category did a majority of statements express this sentiment, although part-timers, at 47.1%, were much more likely to agree with it than full-timers, at 29.9%. In addition, doctoral seekers, at 48.1%, were much more likely to express this opinion than were non-doctoral seekers, at 33.9%. Most respondents, in all categories, stated that they found university professors to be “quite useful” or “useful” sources of teaching advice.

Longitudinal Comparisons

As noted above, approximately 75% of the items used for the 2000 survey were taken from the 1975 study, making possible longitudinal comparisons on a wide variety of measures. Faculty teaching Humanities were surveyed in 1975; consequently, the following comparisons are based on the 172 respondents who listed a discipline in the Humanities as their primary teaching field on the 2000 survey.

Overall, community college faculty were a more diverse group than in 1975, and, indeed, were closer to being representative of the United States population in general. Women in particular made gains since the 1975 survey, and, at least according to the results of the current survey, have achieved parity with men. The faculty were in general older than they were in 1975, most probably because of hiring patterns within the community college system. In addition, they were a more experienced group, with longer periods of service to their profession. The high schools were much less important sources of community college faculty than they were in 1975, and the colleges and universities were more important.

Humanities faculty rated some overall measures of satisfaction remarkably consistently in 1975 and 2000. For example, nearly the same majority rated their feelings about living up to their greatest potential and their working environments in general to be “Excellent” or “Good,” and a very similar portion of Humanities faculty in 1975 and 2000 reported that they expected to find their current positions attractive in five years. However, substantially fewer respondents reported being satisfied with other aspects of their work lives, most notably their salaries and levels of job security.

Comparisons between Humanities faculty in 1975 and 2000 showed a few differences in the use of practices related to instruction. While roughly the same proportion of faculty reported revising their syllabus, preparing multimedia presentations, and submitting written evidence of
student learning other than grades, significantly fewer reported having taught jointly, while substantially more faculty in 2000 reported having received awards for teaching.

Humanities instructors demonstrated a clear decline on many measures of professional involvement between 1975 and 2000. The proportion that reported readership of more than one general education journal shrank by nearly 50%, from 13.5% to 7.1%. Other measures of Professional Involvement showed remarkable drop-offs between 1975 and 2000 as well. The proportion who desired more time in research and/or professional writing declined precipitously, from 61.0% to 36.6%. More respondents found the university the most important source of ideas in their disciplines in 2000 than in 1975. Roughly the same proportion of Humanities respondents in 1975 and 2000 believed that university professors were useful sources of advice on teaching, with slightly fewer non-Humanities instructors believing this. The most striking finding in regard to the use of the university as a reference group concerned the desirability of a faculty position in a four-year college or university. While just over three-fourths of Humanities instructors (75.2%) rated such a position as attractive in 1975, only half the Humanities instructors (50.6%) stated this in 2000.

The data showed remarkable consistency among instructors in 1975 and 2000 in ratings of relations with respondents’ colleagues, students and administrators. The vast majority of respondents in 1975 and 2000 rated these relations to be “Good” or “Excellent” at both time points.

Summary

To conclude, the current study revealed a community college professoriate that was, on the whole, satisfied, although part-timers were much less likely to be so than their full-time colleagues. The faculty were remarkably committed to teaching, and, by self-report, fulfilled their instructional responsibilities conscientiously. Doctoral seekers in particular reported a very strong engagement with the instructional aspects of their positions. As might be expected, full-timers reported greater involvement on their campuses and in their professions. Less expectedly, those seeking the doctorate scored extremely highly on measures of institutional and professional involvement as well. Doctoral seekers made very strong use of four-year college and university faculty as a professional reference and, indeed, were most likely to report desiring a teaching position at a four-year institution.

Since 1975, the faculty have grown both more diverse and more disparate, with the increasing prevalence of part-timers in particular contributing to greater differentiation between respondent categories. Respondents were more concerned about their job security and salary than before. At the same time, the overall level of professional involvement has declined. As the influence of secondary schools has waned, that of four-year colleges has waxed, with respondents less likely to have high school teaching experience and more likely to believe that four-year schools are the source of important ideas in their disciplines,
Works Cited


For more detailed information regarding the findings of the study described in this report, please email at charleso@ucla.edu.