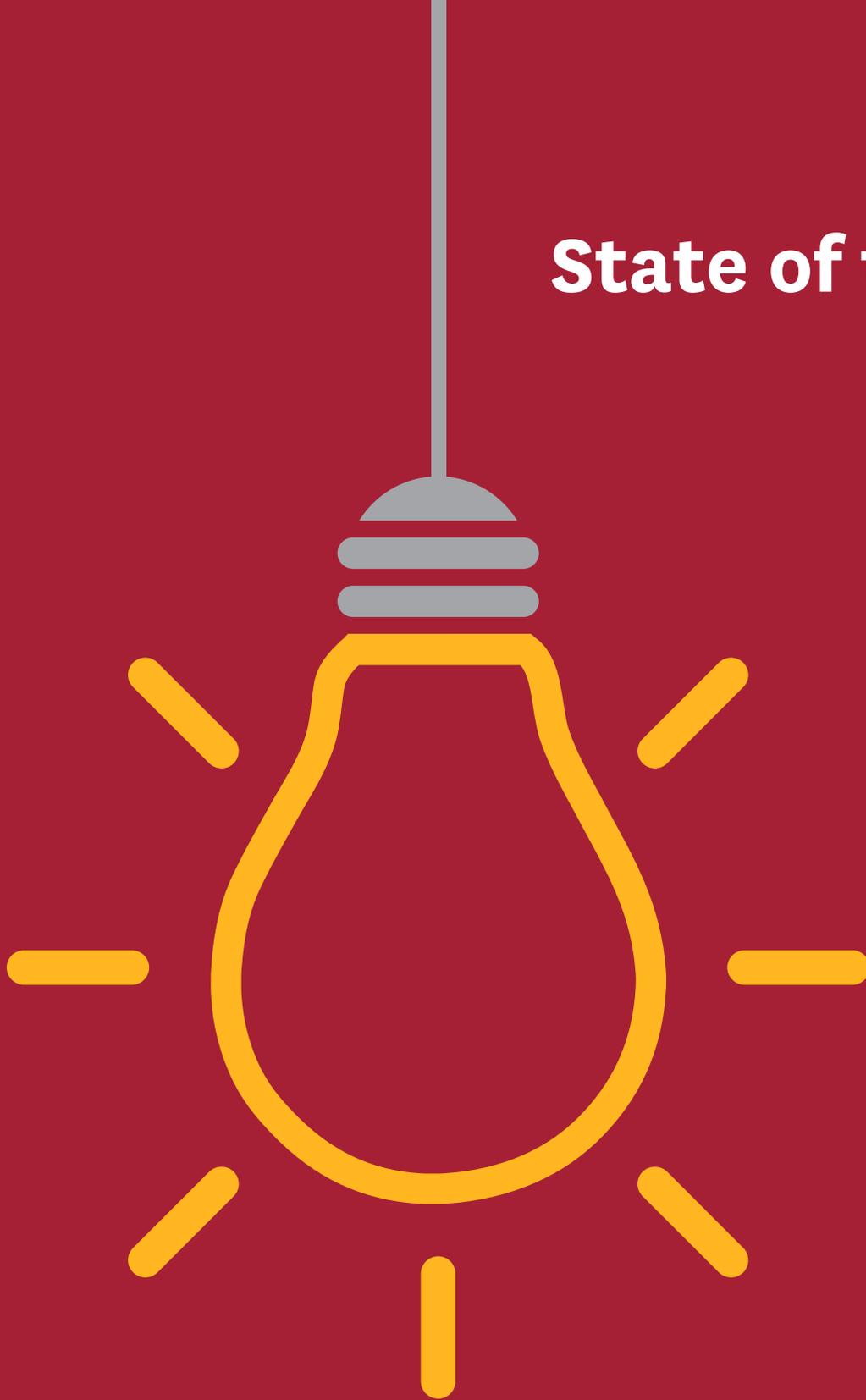


# State of the Faculty



*By Daniel Scott, Jude Paul Matias Dizon and Adrianna Kezar*

A resource created by The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success  
[pullias.usc.edu/delphi](http://pullias.usc.edu/delphi)

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# Introduction

We are at a critical juncture in higher education, with the faculty profession in great flux. At such a moment, it is important to examine relevant trends to develop better policies and practices that help drive collective action which improves the professional landscape for faculty. This report builds on work of the **Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success**, initiated in 2012, that has documented changes in the academic profession and its implications for higher education. While the Delphi Project has aimed to address specific issues—for example, by conducting and disseminating research on how faculty working conditions shape their ability to perform as teachers—this report takes a look at how broader trends and issues affecting faculty are reshaping the profession.

In this report, the authors explore the issues and trends that have affected faculty in the United States over the past year. Our goal in developing this annual report is to provide a snapshot from varied sources about the state of the profession. We hope to complement important sources of data like the **National Education Association (NEA) Almanac of Higher Education** and the American Association of University Professors' **(AAUP) Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession** that present regular data about the academic profession. With our State of the Faculty Report, we bring in a wider set of sources and explore issues that have not been reviewed together to provide a unique insight into the faculty profession.

Our sources include both quantitative and qualitative data. For quantitative data, we also draw from the AAUP's Annual Report, the **National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System**, the annual **Higher Education Research Institute's (HERI) Faculty Survey**, the faculty surveys conducted by the **Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE)**, the work of the **TIAA Institute**, and the **National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions**. For our qualitative research, we additionally draw on sources such as NEA's journal *Thought and Action* and on more mainstream literature such as articles and op-eds from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* which regularly profile faculty and address faculty issues (The *NEA Almanac* and research literature by individual scholars provide both forms of data). While our data focuses primarily on 2018, we include a few key sources from late 2017 and early 2019.

In recent years, we have seen a decline in data available to understand faculty. The National Center for Education Statistics, for one, ended its National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty with its 2003-2004 publication. This comprehensive survey explored faculty backgrounds, workloads, employment history, fields of instruction, job satisfaction and attitudes, and career plans, among other demographic, behavioral and attitudinal information. No data source has since replaced this key survey, so the data we have at present are incomplete. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System continues to collect data about numbers of faculty, type, institutional type, salary, fringe benefits, rank, gender, tenure status and length of contract. The HERI Faculty Survey is still published annually but does not have a representative sample by institution or faculty contract type. In 2017, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report on adjunct and non-tenure-track faculty, the first study of its kind. But there are no plans to update or continue to collect data on adjunct faculty. We lack ongoing, representative data about the experience of faculty that can meaningfully shape policy and practice. Institutions are left to their own data collection and do not have national norms or information to compare and make sense of their data outside a few areas such as salary. One of the main takeaways from collecting data on the academic profession is that while several data sources exist, the lack of comprehensive national data to draw from is problematic and represents an ongoing deficit that will continue to hinder policymaking in higher education into the future.

# A Profession in Peril and Resistance

Looking across the data and literature about the academic profession, there are two competing trends. On the one hand, there is a rapid and intensive disintegration of the profession and attacks on academics from right wing conservative groups and conservative legislatures. Yet on the other hand, there is growing momentum among faculty to fight these trends in ways we have not seen in the past few decades—through organizing and unionization. Faculty are engaging in more collective action than in past decades. Similar to the recent strikes among K-12 teachers in Kentucky, and the historic strike in Los Angeles among teachers, educators in higher education are recognizing the need to resist current trends that are working to dismantle the profession.

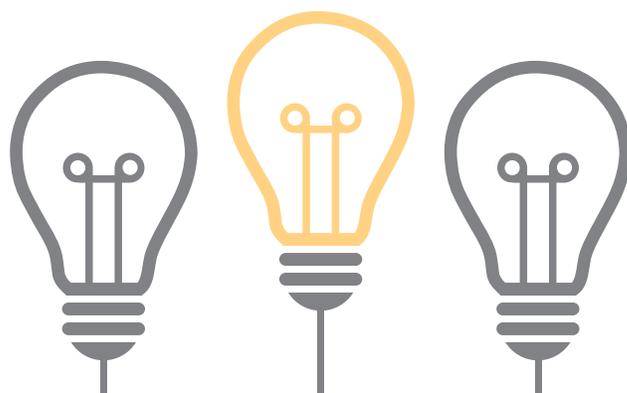
## The Profession in Peril

Many reports and studies throughout the year suggest a profession in peril with poor job prospects, attacks by conservative groups, surveillance and punitive evaluation systems, and efforts to dismantle tenure, academic freedom, shared governance and autonomy. Not surprisingly, there are also efforts to blunt unionization— faculty’s only outlet to fight back against these various attacks on the profession. These various forces at multiple levels leave faculty feeling lost, giving rise to a wide panoply of stories about a weakening profession and confusion over the definition of an academic career these days.

### Concerns Over the Future Job Market

Doctoral students graduating in 2018 faced a poor job market in higher education, with most opportunities being contingent roles. In looking back over hiring trends, the recent GAO report analyzing data from 2007 to 2011 identified that part-time faculty hiring far outpaced the growth of full-time faculty, with institutions adding nearly nine times as many contingent positions compared to tenure-track ones (GAO, 2017). While this study examined older data, sources suggest these same trends have continued in recent years with various stories from disciplinary societies noting declines in job postings for tenure-track positions (Ellis, 2018).

The poor job market has been a focus of research, professional dialogue and policymaking. Articles that describe frustrated graduate students trying to navigate an increasingly less standard and more challenging job market have proliferated. One professor who is part of hiring processes described how different hiring is today from in the past: “Today, there are fewer tenure-track jobs available, they appear in a scattershot way over the course of the entire year, and they are advertised and filled in a manner that is poorly understood and has few agreed-upon norms” (Kramnick, 2018).



The cumulative effect of the poor job market is finally impacting the choices of students. In past decades, poor job markets had not resulted in shifts in student aspirations. The current prolonged poor job market is different. A recent study by Etmanski (2019) demonstrates that PhD students attending US institutions have shifted their career aspirations in recent years. The study uses the U.S. National Research Council's 2006 Assessment of Research Doctoral Programs to examine aspirations for academic careers. While there was a general decline in aspirations, women and students in engineering as well as the physical and mathematical sciences were most likely to have shifted their career aspirations away from academia.

In the sciences, graduate students in STEM in particular have alternative options and are pursuing those, which may become a brain drain on higher education in the coming years. Other careers in the social sciences such as history have also been pushing for alternative career paths, hoping this will continue to stimulate a desire for doctoral degrees in these areas as the job market within higher education continues to decline.

## **A recent study by Etmanski (2019) demonstrates that PhD students attending US institutions have shifted their career aspirations in recent years.**

### **A Chilly Climate: Surveillance and Attacks on Individual Faculty and Graduate Students**

Faculty are increasingly being surveilled in the classroom and out (Dougherty, Rhoades, & Smith, 2018). Part of the surveillance involves political activists who, in the hyper-charged ideological arena that is American public discourse on education, harassed faculty members through 2018, typically via websites and social media (Greyson, Cooke, Gibson, & Julien, 2018). Professor Watchlist, a website that lists professors accused of discriminating against conservative students, and Campus Reform, a conservative website focused on higher education, are two organizations providing a foundation for this trend (Fucci & Catalano, 2019; Greyson et al., 2018). In one incident, a graduate student was suspended from teaching at University of Nebraska-Lincoln for protesting Turning Point USA, the organization behind Professor Watchlist. She was filmed protesting the organization while representatives were tabling at the campus to recruit students. The video was then posted widely online by remote supporters of Turning Point USA who called for her suspension (Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, 2018). The University of Nebraska-Lincoln then suspended the student without a hearing or any other type of procedure. As a result of this action, which threatens academic freedom, the AAUP has added the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to their censure list (Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, 2018).

In a similar vein, An NEA Almanac chapter reported on the increasing oversight and surveillance of faculty by administrators and government officials through policies aimed to increase student success (Dougherty et al., 2018). The authors point to how the overriding emphasis on student completion as a measure of productivity threatens educational quality and impinge on the academic freedom of faculty to ensure certain quality standards. Faculty are being pressured to not grade as hard and to make courses easier so that more students complete classes. The authors call for more dialogue about how to balance student success with faculty autonomy and academic freedom.

### **Problematic Accountability Policies**

Evaluation policies for faculty have become more controversial. Increasingly, faculty are subjected to evaluation by external parties with a punitive rather than developmental focus. Growing government policies and regulations around accountability and productivity are “important and legitimate, but can also compromise or even violate academic freedom and the role of professional peers in evaluation (as well as in curriculum decision making and governance)” (Dougherty et al., 2018, pg. 34). Student evaluations also continue to be used to evaluate faculty performance, despite their invalidity as measures of faculty effectiveness (Anderson, 2018; Lawrence, 2018). The issues around evaluation suggest that the overriding emphasis on student completion as measures of productivity can threaten educational quality and the academic freedom of faculty.

### **Attacks on Tenure, Academic Freedom and Shared Governance**

Continuous news stories throughout the year described attacks on tenure, including at University of Wisconsin and at University of Tennessee (Williams, 2018); on academic freedom at the University of Nebraska Lincoln (Tiede, 2018); and on faculty autonomy through legislative policies aimed at measuring faculty work and simplifying evaluation processes. Wisconsin’s governor’s questioning of the need for tenure was one very visible example of legislators increasingly targeting

**The higher education enterprise faces attacks from political opponents who wish to reduce the emphasis on open exploration, discovery and knowledge that has been a key dimension of American higher education.**

tenure and academic freedom. Attacks on tenure have also come in the form of post-tenure review processes that subtly chip away at the permanence of tenure (Williams, 2018). Attacks on academic freedom have come in the form of firing or disciplining faculty and instructors for political speech outside the classroom, such as was the case at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, which recently suspended a graduate student for protesting Turning Point USA on campus (Tiede, 2018), or for discussions in the classroom that can be construed as political. The higher education enterprise faces attacks from political opponents who wish to reduce the emphasis on open exploration, discovery and knowledge that has been a key dimension of American higher education (Levy, 2018). Many faculty news stories also described declines in shared governance, with the growing population of adjuncts excluded from governance as well as tenure-track faculty feeling excluded from university decision-making. All of these efforts thwart faculty autonomy by taking away their ability to speak freely and without retaliation, facilitate classroom learning experiences in accordance with their scholarship

and expertise, have input on their working conditions and feel secure in their jobs.

The last few sections point to issues that should be addressed through new campus policies (e.g. requiring students to gain instructor permission before recording a class), new contract language as part of collective bargaining related to classroom recording, protections of academic freedom in course development, and content or in speech on campus (Dougherty et al., 2018).

### Challenges to Unionization

The political environment has made unionization challenging, with appointments of anti-labor individuals to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) by the Trump administration. With the newly-added conservative appointees John Ring and Peter Robb, the NLRB soon stands to reconsider a 2014 case from the University of Southern California that had originally disidentified adjunct faculty at private institutions as managerial staff, rendering them eligible to unionize. Under the new NLRB, adjunct faculty at private institutions may again lose the legal protections to unionize and will instead have to pursue unionization by other means (Flaherty, 2019).

### A Profession in Resistance

Many trends suggest that the academic profession is under attack. At the same time, these trends have inspired a growing resistance, which can be seen in increased unionization efforts, as well as organizing among faculty who are unable to unionize and are reopening AAUP chapters or galvanizing in other ways. Several years of organizing are starting to come to fruition and show results. Some tangible outcomes include rising salaries and benefits, with particularly strong outcomes for adjuncts. Through unionization, adjuncts who suffered under poor working conditions have made substantial gains. Shared governance is on the rise among full-time contingent faculty as well.

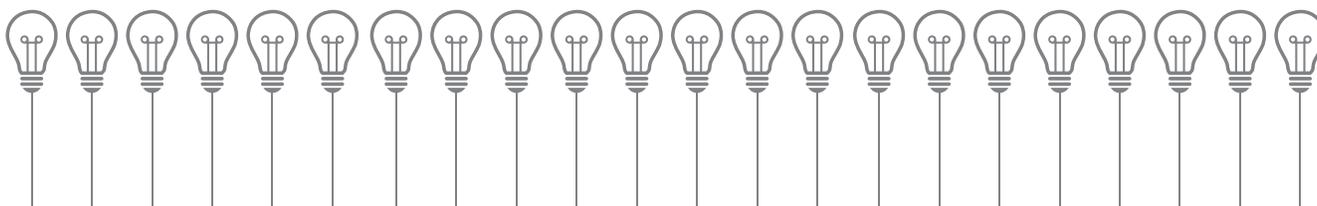
### Collective Action

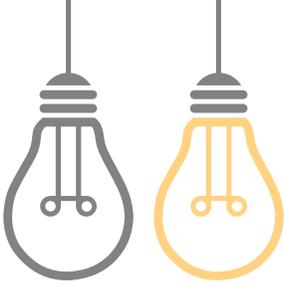
New chapters of the AAUP are forming and older ones reviving, including those at Oregon State University, Rutgers and Plymouth State, to name a few (Johnson, 2018). In fact, faculty note the rising attacks on academic freedom, tenure and autonomy (noted in the last section) as motivating their organizing efforts. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* profiled many chapters of the AAUP that are being revived at Dartmouth, Syracuse and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill—all at campuses that had become apathetic to organizing and are now seeing that without activism, the rights they had enjoyed as a profession for so long eroded.

Unionized Faculty are pushing back and gaining wins on key issues where administrators and policymakers are trying to take away their power and autonomy. For example, the Indiana AAUP helped overturn Purdue University Global from requiring faculty members to sign nondisclosure agreements as a condition of employment (Blumenstyk, 2018). AAUP noted this as a fight against corporate control and practices moving into higher education (Owens, 2018). While still battling in the courts, AAUP is also launching a campaign to protect faculty’s academic freedom as presidents and university leaders sanction faculty who they feel are making controversial statements. AAUP filed an Amicus brief in the McAdams case, one of several cases where faculty members’ due process and academic freedom are under attack.

### Rising Salaries and Benefits

The results of recent and current organizing efforts are coming to fruition. For example, according to The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession (AAUP, 2018), salaries increased 3% in 2018 over the previous academic year or by 1.1% adjusted for inflation. While this is still a terribly low number, since the recession faculty salaries have taken a large hit and remained relatively flat such that even this paltry increase is at present noteworthy.

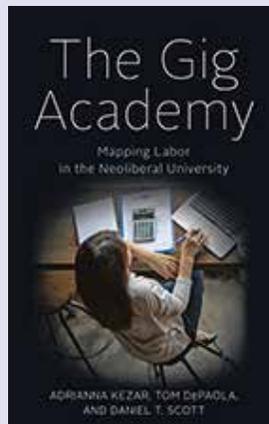




Additionally, benefits are recovering from lows during the recession (Conley & Trice, 2018). Given the severity of decline during the recession, many faculty have pushed for changes to pensions. For example, several states are requiring stress testing for their pension funds which mandates regular analysis of plans so that problems such as significant declines in the pension are made public earlier. Many state systems and individual campus are trying to move away from defined benefits, but most courts are upholding that states/institutions must continue to uphold previous agreements that entitle faculty to their benefits (Conley & Trice, 2018). Also, several lawsuits have been filed against universities for making beneficiaries pay excessive fees and for not providing pension options (Conley & Trice, 2018). There is a pushback against these attacks by administrators and policymakers on benefits.

Resource strapped institutions are often unable to provide pensions and health care benefits to contingent faculty. Studies are demonstrating that other benefits can be offered that improve adjunct faculty motivation including the following: recognizing seniority, instituting meaningful evaluations, improving communications, expanding professional development, managing teaching assignments and providing academic amenities such as library cards and access to technology resources (Page, 2017).

**The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University (2019)** *Adrianna Kezar, Tom DePaola, Daniel Scott*



Over the past two decades, higher education employment has undergone a radical transformation with faculty becoming contingent, staff being outsourced, and postdocs and graduate students becoming a larger share of the workforce. This is a resource for faculty, university staff and administrators to rethink the state of working relations on their own campuses. *John Hopkins U Press*

**Increasing Involvement in Shared Governance for Full-Time Non-Tenure-Track Faculty**

News stories also reflected that non-tenure-track faculty leaders are making strides to improve their involvement in governance (Owens, 2018). Jones, Hutchens, Hulbert, Lewis, and Brown's (2017) study was one of the first national snapshots of non-tenure-track faculty involvement in governance and showed that 85% of full-time non-tenure-track faculty are included in governance, much higher than in the past. However, adjuncts remain underrepresented, with only 11% being included in governance.

**Adjunct Victories**

Adjunct faculty are also seeing the benefits of unionization with over 60 campuses having organized under SEIU (Edwards & Tolley, 2018). In their recent study of adjunct bargaining agreements, Edwards and Tolley demonstrate that unionized adjuncts received higher salaries, increased job security, and better health benefits than non-unionized campuses. They also negotiated some compensation for canceled classes and increased access to professional development, office space, and supplies for teaching. However, Edwards and Tolley note that true pay parity, adjunct equity in shared governance and reduced (or eliminated) reliance on contingent labor are three essential-but-elusive goals that would benefit the entirety of the professoriate by making contingency a less attractive option for employers.

# Mythbusters

Many studies challenge myths about faculty. These studies come at an important time where politically conservative groups are trying to demonize the faculty profession. The general public finds itself increasingly isolated from the faculty profession and these mythbusting studies are a needed antidote.

The *first myth is that faculty are a largely privileged group with adequate compensation and tenure*, which lends itself to demonizing faculty as wealthy, undeservingly powerful and aloof actors who do not care about students and who are responsible for the rising cost of education. The reality facing the majority of faculty working off the tenure track counters this stereotype (AAUP, 2018). Data shows that in fact the majority of instructional faculty are undercompensated and have limited job security. The reality facing the majority of faculty working off the tenure track counters this stereotype (AAUP, 2018).

The second myth is that *faculty are politically active, identify as extremely liberal and abuse the power of their positions to indoctrinate students*, which supports the demonization of faculty as exploiters of their power. However, the truth of the matter is that faculty are no more liberal or more politically active than other Americans with similar education levels (Abrams, 2018).

The third myth is that *unions do not make much of a difference for faculty working conditions*. A recent study found that that unionized faculty in four-year institutions make \$7,000 more a year; in two-year institutions, they earn an additional \$18,000 (NEA, 2018). While only faculty salaries were examined, this suggests unions do have a positive impact on faculty salaries. Additionally, Edwards & Tolley's (2018) study demonstrates that unionized adjuncts received higher salaries, increased job security and health benefits than adjuncts on non-unionized campuses.

The fourth myth is that *faculty on part-time appointments at community colleges prefer these appointments*. Yet a recent study showed that over 50% of the part-time faculty sampled wanted a full-time position (Ott & Dippold, 2018). The fact of faculty preference for full-time work deeply contradicts popular myths about part-time faculty.

A final myth is that *adjunct faculty largely obtain fulfillment in other jobs so they need no connection to the campus*. But a recent study found that adjunct faculty report their faculty identity as their key identity and thrive on and strive for collegiality and professional treatment within campuses (Ott & Dippold, 2018).

We can make better policy when we challenge myths and stereotypes about faculty—especially about adjunct faculty. Data shows the five myths outlined above to be largely inaccurate. Thus, we need a new understanding of the demographics of faculty as a collective group, as well as a clear understanding of non-tenure-track faculty preferences in conjunction with a reconfiguration of employment options to better match their needs.

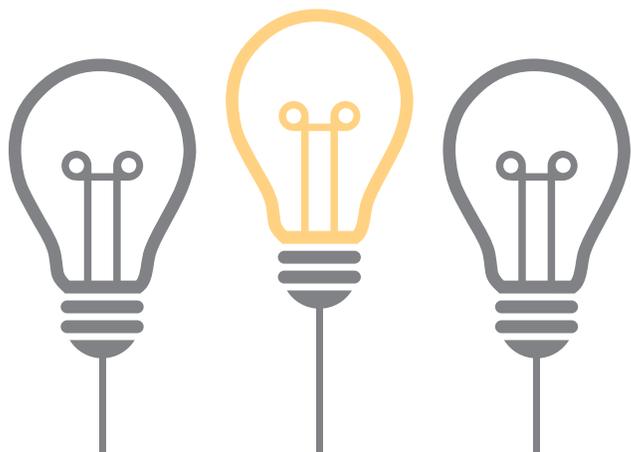
**A recent study showed that over 50% of the part-time faculty sampled wanted a full-time position.**

# Trends for Women and Faculty of Color

We highlight specific trends for women and people of color because their experiences are often unique; both news stories and various sources of data disaggregated by race and gender highlighted differences for these groups. Women and people of color continue to be underrepresented nationally among the professoriate. Current data show that among all academic ranks, women and people of color comprise 44% and 24% of faculty, respectively. Representation further fluctuates depending on rank. Fifty-five percent of full professors are white men, followed by white women at 27%. Approximately 10% of full professors are Asian/Pacific Islander women, African Americans, Latino/a, and Native American combined. White women are most represented at the lecturer rank (44%) and faculty of color altogether are more prevalent at the assistant professor level (27%) (Department of Education, 2018). Underrepresentation in the faculty coincides with findings from current studies which demonstrate differences in salary, job satisfaction and work climate.

- Women continue to earn less than male faculty, with the largest disparities at public and private doctoral universities. Women earn 79% and 81% of men's salaries, respectively (Arntz, 2018).
- The gender wage gap persists despite increases in women's average salaries from 2015 to 2017.
- Research indicates differences in work satisfaction by gender and race. In one study, women faculty are less satisfied with their department compared to men. Women faculty at private institutions reported more satisfaction compared to their peers at public institutions (Webber & Rogers, 2018).
- In the same study, Asian/Asian American faculty were less satisfied with their departments compared to their white peers (Webber & Rogers, 2018).
- Satisfaction contributes to work-life balance. One national study found African American women faculty reported less work-life balance compared to African American men. In contrast, Latina faculty reported higher work-life balance compared to Latino faculty (Denson, Szélényi, & Bresonis, 2018).
- Faculty of color feel the need to work harder than their colleagues to be perceived as a legitimate scholar at rates higher than white faculty. Faculty of color also cite discrimination as a source of stress (Stolzenberg et al., 2019).
- One case study reported women and faculty of color at one institution experience isolation due to being one of a few in their departments, which contributes to being excluded and given marginal consideration in decision-making processes (O'Meara, Templeton, & Nyunt, 2018).

In addition to measurable indicators, such as salary, more work can build upon these findings to assess the state of job satisfaction, work-life balance and treatment from colleagues from the experiences of women and faculty of color. Studies from the past have suggested concerns over work-life balance and treatment from colleagues. In fact, many news stories this year suggest that sexual harassment is a significant problem in higher education and that more research is needed to help understand this problem.



**Faculty of color cite discrimination as a source of stress.**

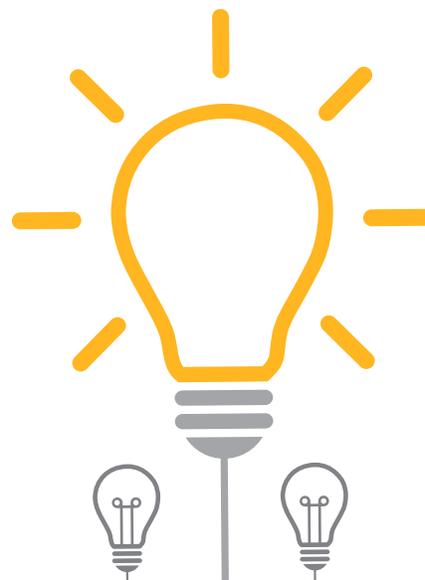
## Spotlight on Sexual Violence

Sexual assault and violence that has been part of the culture of higher education, particularly in male-dominated fields, has come under scrutiny in recent years. Certain fields like economics, philosophy and physics are wrestling with charges that there are systemic issues for these fields that affect faculty at institutions across the country. We saw developments in several sexual violence and assault cases against faculty emerge and move forward in 2018 (Gluckman, 2018; Hur & Sequeira, 2018), and the Dartmouth chapter of the AAUP has formed working groups of faculty to address the sexual assault issues on their campus (Johnson, 2018). In Texas, AAUP investigated St. Edward's University and found that a dean had

**[Sexual assault] occurs in the context of problematic changes in Title IX regulations and processes, which have heightened the burden of proof for survivors and loosened the requirement that institutions address issues of sexual violence in a timely and appropriate fashion.**

wrongly fired a faculty member because she reported having been sexually harassed by an associate dean (Scholtz, 2018). Sexual assault and violence continues to be a key rallying point for faculty seeking to organize to build collective power in the form of unions so they can bring about more appropriate responses to issues of sexual assault (Murray, 2018).

While many of the accusers are women, LGBTQ+ communities are also raising concerns about inappropriate sexual advances, which make campuses hostile work environments (Walta, 2018). This all occurs in the context of problematic changes in Title IX regulations and processes, which have heightened the burden of proof for survivors and loosened the requirement that institutions address issues of sexual violence in a timely and appropriate fashion (Stenger, 2018). A group of women's advocacy organizations sued against these regulations, saw their suit dismissed (Egelko, 2018), and filed a second, amended suit (Grogg, 2018). We await the results of the amended suit, which will have implications for faculty working conditions and experiences.



# Trends in Teaching and Learning Practices

Many stories highlighted changes in teaching and learning practices this last year. This signals that faculty, policymakers and the media are all paying more attention to this area. Enhancing undergraduate teaching is one avenue to ensure college completion and advance equitable student outcomes. Pedagogical innovations are taking root and becoming more widespread; faculty are moving away from traditional lecturing. Findings from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement show a decrease from 2007 in lecture-based teaching among STEM faculty as small group activities increased in the same period (Fassett & BrckaLorenz, 2018). Cooperative learning and group projects are rising practices among faculty across all disciplines (Eagan et al., 2014). Another pedagogical innovation is the teaching for transformative experience in science model (TTES), a method which helps students to apply what they learn to their everyday lives. In one experimental study, TTE increased learning and student interest in the material. Students who received this pedagogy also reported transferring their learning to other courses (Heddy et al., 2017). This increase in pedagogical innovation is fueled by increasing numbers of studies showing a connection between these new strategies and improved student outcomes. For example, Loes et

**Findings from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement show a decrease from 2007 in lecture-based teaching among STEM faculty as small group activities increased in the same period.**

al. (2017) found a positive association between collaborative learning approaches and student persistence, regardless of race, gender, and pre-college academic ability. Professional development is key to effective teaching, and research shows faculty who engage in the scholarship for teaching and learning make improvements in their own classrooms (Burns, 2017).

In addition to pedagogy, faculty trends also show a commitment to diversity and inclusion. According to the latest faculty survey by the Higher Education Research Institute (2019), 44% of faculty believe part of their role is to enhance students' knowledge and appreciation for other racial/ethnic groups. Over 50% teach students tolerance and respect for different beliefs. Faculty have also reported an increase in teaching students to recognize the biases in their own thinking. These indicate attention to cultivating inclusive classrooms, which is critically important in disciplines such as the STEM fields, which have yet to achieve racial and gender equity.

News media and research report positive steps institutions are taking to enhance teaching among adjuncts and tenured faculty. Professional development for adjunct instructors is a growing practice. Drawing from the Higher Education Research Institute and *The Chronicle*, innovative recommendations and trends in teaching include:

- Creating professional development opportunities for adjunct instructors, such as learning communities.
- Developing alternatives to final essays. Examples include producing a video, creating a game, or for those more traditional, an annotated bibliography.
- Incorporating adaptive learning into course design. The Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities recently released a free online guide on this topic for faculty (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, 2018).

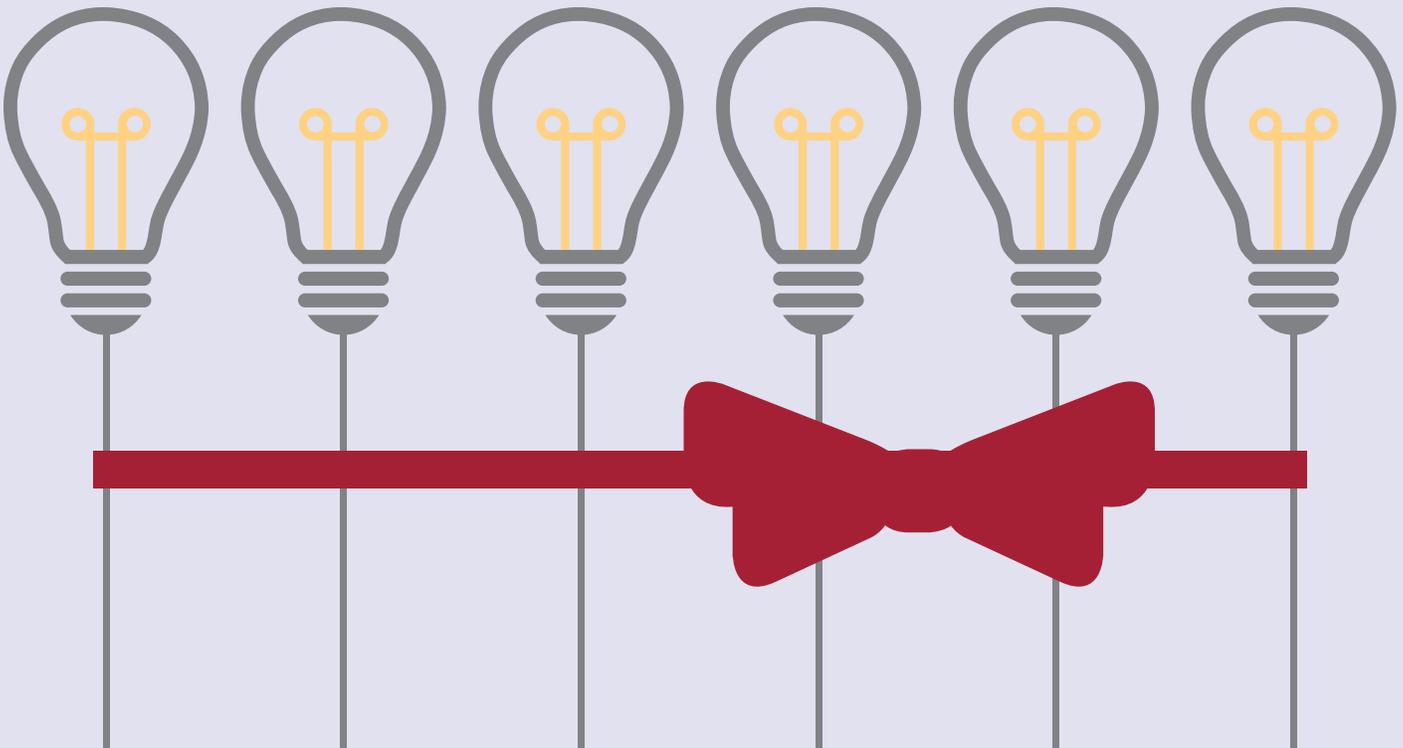
## Assessment and Teaching Improvement: Examining a Key Issue

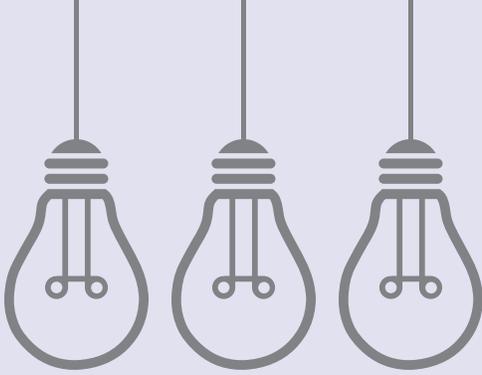
We highlight one study which addresses a key question that has been debated widely in the academic profession for decades: Assessment of student learning. This study, conducted by a former Pullias Center research assistant, helps shed light on whether and how assessment can improve teaching and learning.

### By Elizabeth Holcombe

As trends in undergraduate teaching have shifted towards an emphasis on more active and engaging pedagogical styles, faculty have also been asked to more accurately and closely measure what students are learning in their courses and programs. An increasing emphasis on assessment of student learning from stakeholders both inside and outside higher education has put additional demands on faculty time and has often asked faculty to perform assessment with very little training or support (Banta, 2007; Carey & Gregory, 2003; Ewell, 2008; Peterson & Einarson, 2001). As a result, faculty have remained largely skeptical about assessment and its ability to provide information of value about student learning or faculty teaching (Hutchings, 2010).

Assessment is conducted for both accountability purposes—proving that students have learned and that faculty are effective instructors—and for improvement purposes—gauging what students know and using those results to help improve teaching and learning (Ewell, 2008). Underlying these improvement purposes is an assumption that assessment of student learning will lead to instructional improvement through improved faculty understanding of student learning or a shift in faculty focus from teaching to learning (Barr & Tagg, 2000; Hutchings, 2010). While faculty and institutional leaders find the most value in the idea of using assessment to improve their practice (Jankowski, Timmer, Kinzie, & Kuh, 2018), there is actually very little empirical evidence of assessment’s efficacy for improving teaching and learning.





One recent study in the research university context (Holcombe, 2018) indicates that there is potential for assessment to improve teaching and learning in several ways. At the institutional level, assessment can foster cultural changes (differences in language, norms, and values), changes to institutional policies and structures related to teaching and learning, and changes to curriculum. Assessment can lead to a shared understanding of teaching and education as a collective, institutional endeavor rather than solely the province of individual faculty in individual classes, which can result in changing curriculum to be more integrated and holistic rather than fragmented into disciplinary silos. In departments, assessment can shape changes to curriculum as well as changes to teaching approaches or strategies. Among individual faculty, assessment can also provide members with feedback on student misconceptions or misunderstandings, provoke reflection on how to change aspects of their teaching to facilitate greater understanding, and facilitate a shift to a more outcomes-oriented approach to teaching, with increased attention to course goals, organization and alignment.

However, multiple supports must be in place at institutions and in departments in order to reap these benefits. These supports include institutional policies and structures that support assessment and its link to teaching; adequate support and training for assessment among the faculty; faculty champions and faculty buy-in around assessment as an activity to shape teaching improvement; and both symbolic and actual support from campus leaders. Without these supports, assessment is unlikely to improve teaching or positively affect the faculty role. In fact, Holcombe's (2018) study found that at schools without such supports in place, assessment was a compliance-oriented exercise performed mainly for accreditation requirements and did little to change teaching and learning. In these situations, assessment becomes merely another burdensome ask of faculty, both those on the tenure track who have taken on increasing responsibilities as their numbers have dwindled and those non-tenure-track faculty who are asked to perform increasing amounts of uncompensated work.

As attention to student outcomes and the quality of higher education is likely to only increase in the coming years, stakeholders should reflect carefully on how assessment can be used not only to measure student learning but also to improve teaching. Paying attention to the conditions that foster assessment's ability to improve teaching and offering ample support to faculty who are asked to perform assessment work can help institutions reap the benefits of assessment and avoid its potentially negative implications for faculty work.

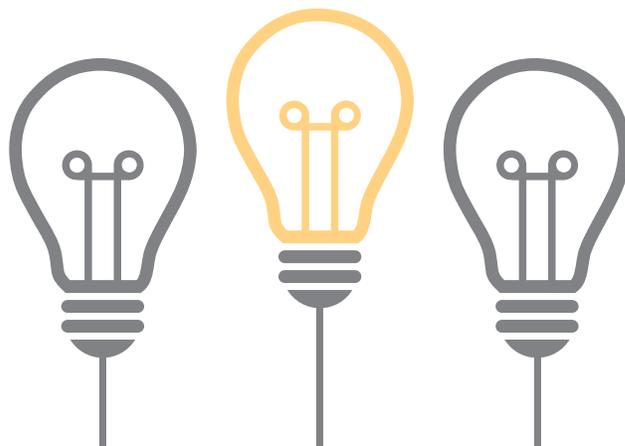
# Supports for Non-Tenure Track Faculty: Delphi Award Winners

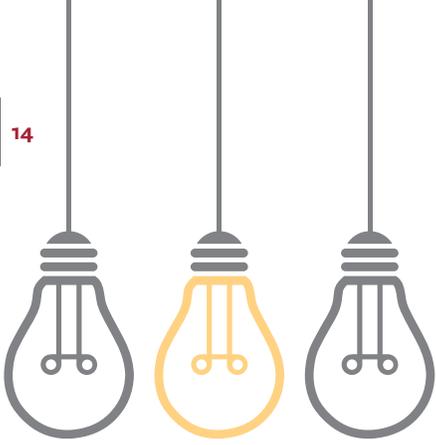
As faculty employment has increasingly moved to being off the tenure track, many national and regional efforts have emerged to support faculty. In 2018, we at the Delphi Project launched the Delphi Award, an annual award to recognize the exceptional efforts of different types of groups to support non-tenure-track faculty on their campuses and in their communities. The first two winners of the Delphi Award were Harper College, a two-year college in Palatine, Ill., and California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), a four-year regional university, both of whom made innovative and substantive changes to support non-tenure-track faculty on their campuses (Scott, Kezar, & Bates, 2019; Scott, Kezar, Celly, & Robinson, 2019).

Harper College began reflecting on non-tenure-track faculty professional development in 2014, establishing the Center for Adjunct Faculty Engagement and a process for adjunct faculty evaluations to support their instructional development (Scott, Kezar, & Bates, 2019). Faculty feedback indicated that the observation options available to faculty felt transactional and were not helpful, so the college worked with the adjunct faculty union to establish an updated evaluation and professional development system that offers a greater variety of more helpful options, including goal-based self evaluation and reverse peer observation. Since implementing the new professional development and evaluation system, Harper College has seen a large proportion of non-tenure-track faculty take up the new professional development and evaluation options, and the college has received positive feedback about the changes.

California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) initiated a task force in 2017 to examine the working conditions of non-tenure-track faculty and propose recommended actions to address them (Scott, Kezar, Celly, & Robinson, 2019). As a result of this process and in collaboration with the faculty union, CSUDH increased compensation for non-tenure-track faculty, fixed a hole in its bargaining agreement so that counseling faculty (a sub-type of non-tenure-track faculty) became eligible for sabbaticals, provided non-tenure-track faculty with research awards and grants, actively encouraged the hiring and promotion of non-tenure-track faculty into more permanent positions (including tenure-track positions), included non-tenure-track faculty in governance and made them eligible for awards. These compensatory improvements and cultural changes have led to improved working conditions and a more professionalized social status for non-tenure-track faculty at CSUDH.

Harper College and CSUDH both initiated changes that were grounded in values and principles that centered faculty contributions as key to the success of each institution. By prioritizing the experiences, working conditions, and social status of non-tenure-track faculty on their campuses, Harper College and CSUDH were able to initiate transformative changes that better aligned with their missions as institutions focused on rigorous and innovative scholarship, teaching and learning.





## Conclusion

The profession is experiencing both hills and valleys. There were areas where we saw improvements through unionization, increased attention on pedagogy and attention to correcting problems like sexual harassment. And there were significant challenges as well. On top of ongoing efforts to dismantle the profession came added attacks from conservative groups, efforts to monitor faculty, dwindling job market and constraints on unionization. It is certainly a time for all who care about the academic profession to be aware of trends and mobilize in ways that support the future of faculty work.

Given an unchanging political climate, the challenges will likely persist in the next few years. Thus, those who care about the academic profession will need to be armed with data provided in this report to counter the trends to dismantle the profession. The data about faculty's efforts to improve teaching and support students, even as their roles are compromised, is an important story to be communicated. The success of unions also needs to be highlighted and used to strengthen collective bargaining efforts. As a profession, faculty need to continue to address challenges that have long existed, such as sexual harassment and the unequal treatment of woman and faculty of color. Being vigilant to transform the profession is important even as the profession is threatened. The integrity of the profession will help garner support for its recovery in the long run. In the post-truth environment, we must still let data and information guide us to combat the current political winds for the long-term health of the academy.



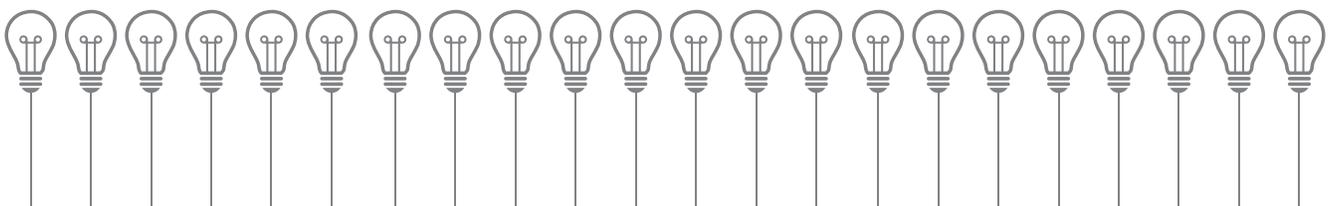
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# Key Resources from the Delphi Project



## **The Imperative for Change: Fostering Understanding of the Necessity of Changing Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Policies and Practices (2014)**

This publication aims to facilitate a conversation about changing faculty trends that begins with a shared appreciation of the potential risks of inaction or inattention to these problems.



## **Non-Tenure-Track Faculty on our Campus: Supplemental Focus Guide for Centers for Teaching and Learning (2013)**

This guide is designed for use by centers for teaching and learning to explore how services and programming could be made more readily available and accessible to non-tenure-track faculty, a segment of the faculty that has become a majority nationwide and on many campuses.



## **Non-Tenure-Track Faculty on our Campus: A Guide for Campus Task Forces to Better Understand Faculty Working Conditions and the Necessity of Change (2012)**

This guide is designed for use by task forces, committees, or groups who would like to examine non-tenure-track faculty practices and issues at the campus level. Its question sections, discussion questions, and concluding questions guide practitioners through the process of examining non-tenure-track faculty issues on campus and help them to better understand challenges associated with current practices and begin to build the rationale for change.

These and more resources can be found at  
[pullias.usc.edu/delphi/resources/](http://pullias.usc.edu/delphi/resources/)

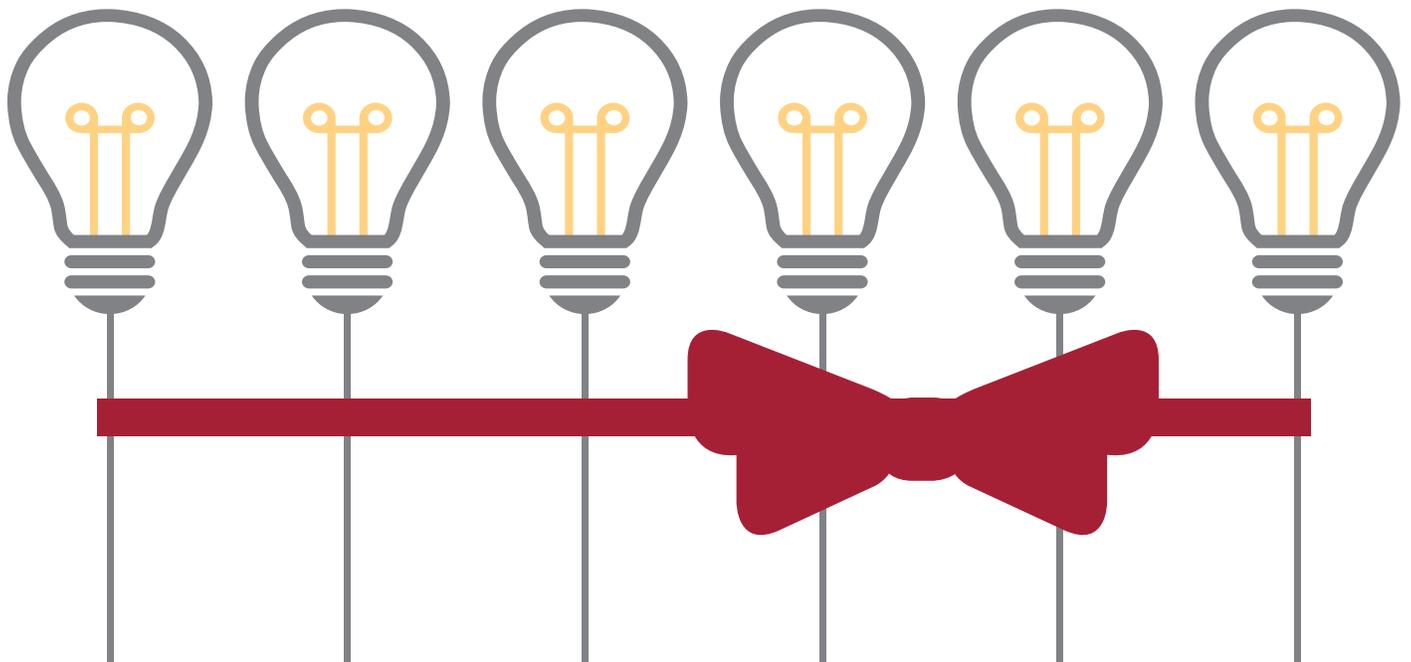


# The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success

The Delphi Project is dedicated to enhancing awareness about the changing faculty trends, using research and data to better support faculty off the tenure track and to help create new faculty models to support higher education institutions in the future.

An initiative of the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California, the Delphi Project works in partnership with the Association of American College and Universities (AAC&U), the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. The Delphi Project has received generous funding from The Spencer Foundation, The Teagle Foundation, The Carnegie Corporation of New York and TIAA-CREF Research Institute.

For more information on the Delphi Project on Changing Faculty and Student Success at [www.thechangingfaculty.org](http://www.thechangingfaculty.org) or at [pullias.usc.edu/delphi](http://pullias.usc.edu/delphi).





## About the Pullias Center for Higher Education

One of the world's leading research centers on higher education, the Pullias Center of Higher Education at the USC Rossier School of Education advances innovative, scalable solutions to improve college outcomes for underserved students and to enhance the performance of postsecondary institutions.

The mission of the Pullias Center is to bring a multidisciplinary perspective to complex social, political, and economic issues in higher education. The Center is currently engaged in research projects to improve access and outcomes for low-income, first generation students, improve the performance of postsecondary institutions, assess the role of contingent faculty, understand how colleges can undergo reform in order to increase their effectiveness, analyze emerging organizational forms such as for-profit institutions, and assess the educational trajectories of community college students.



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