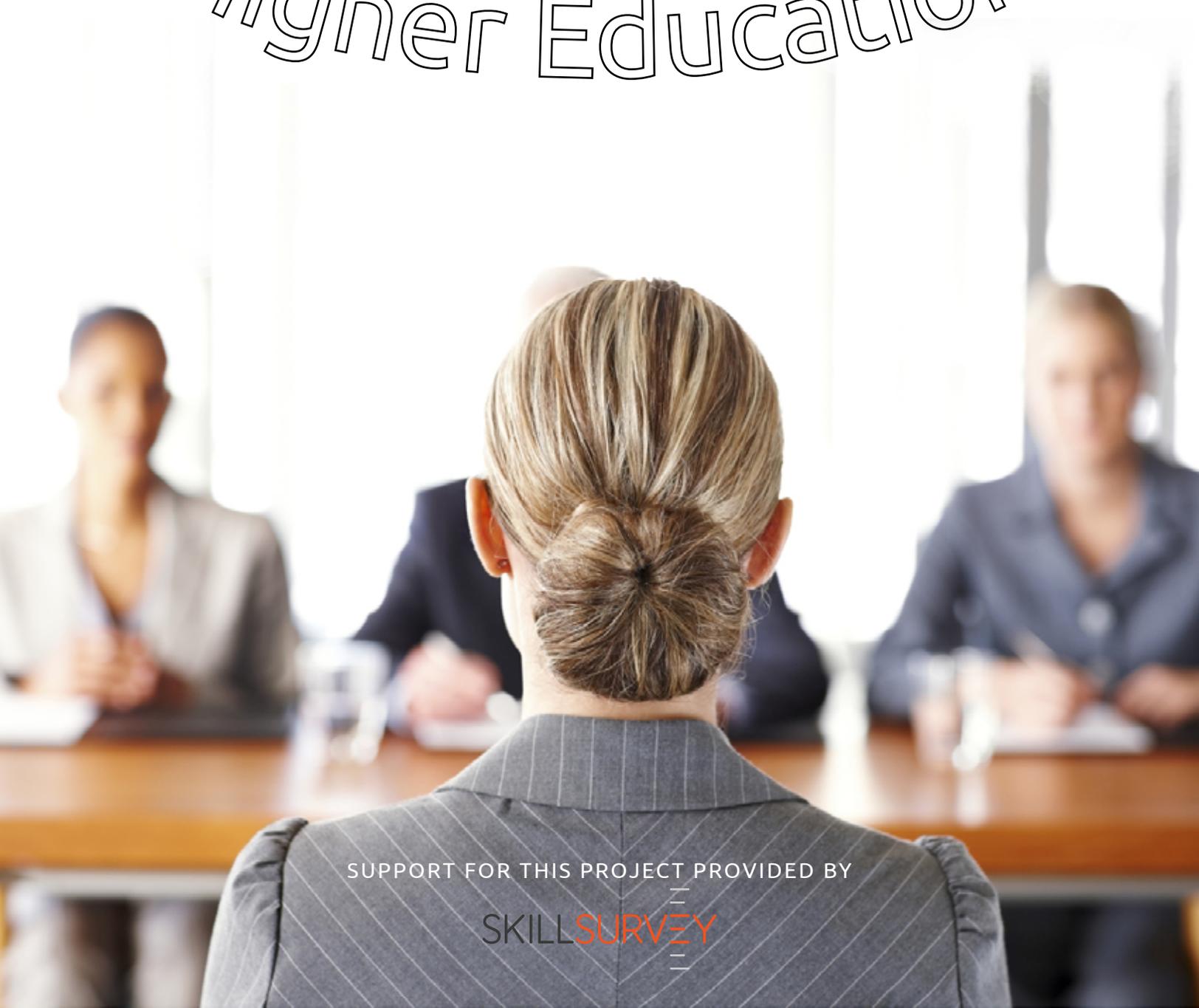


A SELECTION OF *INSIDE HIGHER ED* ARTICLES AND ESSAYS  
JULY 2014

# HIRING TRENDS — in — Higher Education

SUPPORT FOR THIS PROJECT PROVIDED BY

SKILLSURVEY



# Hiring for Success

Discover how pre-hire assessments can help identify top talent and predict which candidates will succeed at your institution.



Colleges and universities devote an average of 60 to 70 percent of their total spending to employee compensation. And the cost to replace an employee ranges from 50 to 150 percent of a position's salary... and this doesn't factor in resulting lack of productivity and lowered morale. It's clear: Make the wrong choice and your new faculty or staff member could impact the growth of your institution, damage your organization's morale, and result in involuntary turnover. On the other hand, make the right choice, and your new employee can make an immediate and lasting impact on lifelong learning.

With so much riding on making the right hire, HR has had an increased interest in pre-hire performance assessments. A recent issue of *Forbes* listed evolving assessment science as one of the nine hottest trends in HR technology, and *The Atlantic* featured people analytics on its December cover stating how it is "already transforming how employers hire, fire, and promote."

Most HR professionals and hiring managers would agree that past performance is the best predictor of future performance. Pre-hire assessments, like SkillSurvey's Pre-Hire 360®, take the guesswork out of hiring by helping you objectively measure the skills that matter most. These scientifically validated assessments are completed by a candidate's references (managers, colleagues, and direct reports) and offer candid, honest insight.

The key is for institutions to begin assessing candidates' past performance from references in a way that overcomes the legal, logistical, and scientific shortcomings of dealing with references by phone. Web-based pre-hire performance assessments can be initiated in minutes and completed in less than two days with no recruiter or hiring manager intervention. In fact, using Pre-Hire 360®, our higher ed partner institutions are receiving comprehensive feedback on their candidates from an average of **4.6 references per candidate in just 1.5 days**. And risky candidates are being identified earlier in the hiring process—**10.2% of these candidates are identified as having moderate to high development need**.

Talent is an institution's most important resource. And SkillSurvey's Pre-Hire 360® is completely changing the way institutions identify and choose the best talent, avoid risky hires, and streamline the hiring process. We invite you to consider using it today for good reason: It's been proven to work. Get started with a pilot at your institution, and see for yourself at [www.skillsurvey.com](http://www.skillsurvey.com).

## INTRODUCTION

In higher education, few decisions are more important than those related to hiring. Will a president lead an institution well? Will an administrator have an appropriate vision for a department? Will faculty members nurture students and advance scholarship? A college or university that hires well or poorly is sure to feel the impact.

As a result, in an era of unprecedented scrutiny of higher education, academics spend considerable time debating the best hiring strategies – whether they are doing the hiring or hoping to be hired.

The articles and essays in this compilation explore some of the hot debates over academic hiring today – from the selection of presidents to the recruitment of junior faculty members. As the pieces reflect, there is no consensus on the best approach, only a shared conviction about how much hiring matters. *Inside Higher Ed* will continue to write about this topic and invites your comments and suggestions about this compilation and themes for future coverage.

--The Editors

[editor@insidehighered.com](mailto:editor@insidehighered.com)



**I know something critically important about  
the candidate you're about to hire...**

**...too bad you  
didn't ask.**

Pre-Hire 360® automates a new kind of reference collection and analysis to accurately predict success on each job. It helps you hire better people who stay longer and drive greater business results.

And we've got the data to prove it.  
Learn more by downloading our *Predictive Hiring* eBook:  
[go.skillsurvey.com/inside-higher-ed](http://go.skillsurvey.com/inside-higher-ed)

SKILLSURVEY

News Articles

## Professor With a Past

By Colleen Flaherty

*Should a history that includes membership in the Symbionese Liberation Army and jail time disqualify one from keeping an adjunct job?*

“I hope that you’ve Googled me.”

That’s what James Kilgore, adjunct instructor of global studies and urban planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, told his program head when he applied for a teaching job there in 2011. Two years out of prison for his involvement with a 1975 bank robbery in which a woman was killed, Kilgore wasn’t legally obligated to disclose his criminal history. (Kilgore was not the gunman.)

But he wanted to save the university from being blindsided by a possible media firestorm over hiring a convicted felon – especially one formerly associated with the notorious Symbionese Liberation Army. The underground group is perhaps best-known for kidnapping the heiress Patty Hearst.

“My belief is, because of the nature of my case, it was the respectful thing to do to put all that out there,” Kilgore said in an interview with *Inside Higher Ed*.

University officials had Googled Kilgore, who by then had served time in prison, earned a Ph.D. and authored several novels, articles and a textbook.

They hired him anyway.

And the firestorm never came -- until February 2014, when a local newspaper, *The News-Gazette*, published a series of detailed articles about Kilgore’s past, including that he’d been a fugitive for more than 25 years after the robbery. He was finally caught in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2002, where he was living under the name John Pape, had a family, and was teaching at a university. He served six years in prison back in the U.S. for second-degree murder, possession of an explosive device and passport fraud.

After his sentence, he returned to his wife, Teresa Barnes, who by then had become an associate professor of history at Urbana-Champaign. Kilgore was active in local politics and community life, including his vocal opposition to a proposed \$20 million county jail.

Nothing in the reports was new to anyone who had been following Kilgore’s case over the years. But the fact that the university knowingly hired a convicted felon became headlines throughout the state, prompting an

article in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The article mentions concerns state residents have about Kilgore’s employment as an educator, and it was illustrated with his mug shot.

In that article, a university spokeswoman is quoted as saying Kilgore “does a great job” and “is well-respected among students.”

The spokeswoman, Robin Kaler, continued: “He served his time in prison. He is very remorseful. He didn’t do the shooting. He is a good example of someone who has been rehabilitated, if you believe in second chances and redemption, he’s someone who helps prove that’s the human thing to do.”

But Kilgore says that sometime between the publication of that article, in March 2014, and a meeting in April 2014 that he had requested with administrators to discuss his case, the university changed its position. Kilgore says that Ilesanmi Adesida, provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs, told him that approval for his contract for next year to teach several courses -- which his unit leaders had already endorsed -- had been “held up.” Sensing something was wrong, Kilgore says, he asked if it would be “more appropriate to say that the door was closed on my future employment at the university,” and that Adesida said yes.

“I asked him who and what process had been gone through to arrive at that decision, and he answered, ‘I can’t say,’ “ Kilgore said. “So that’s my

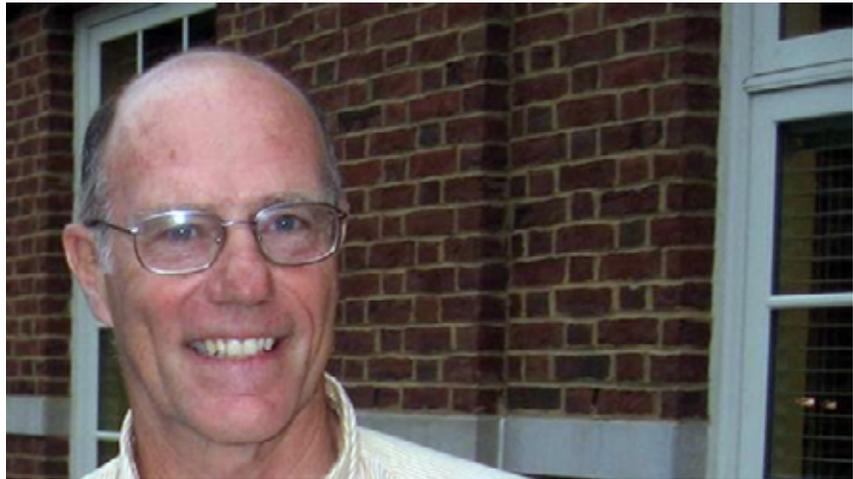
information.”

Kaler, the university spokeswoman, said Kilgore is an adjunct lecturer, and that the university is not required to provide such faculty with a reason for not rehiring them. She declined to comment further on Kilgore’s case, saying it was a private personnel matter.

It’s true that adjunct faculty members nationwide won’t be rehired by their institutions this season, and in most cases won’t be entitled to know why. But the timing of Kilgore’s non-rehiring, coupled with the fact that he had otherwise been in good standing, has raised academic freedom concerns among faculty members at Illinois.

This isn’t the first time the University of Illinois system has been criticized for employing radical professors, or the way it’s reacted to public outcry. The system’s board blocked a move to make William Ayers, who retired as a professor education from the Chicago campus in 2010, an emeritus professor. Some criticized the university for ever having employed someone with past ties to the Weather Underground, and others said the board was playing politics at the end of his career.

Tenured faculty members have formed a group called Friends of James Kilgore to advocate for his rehire and protest what they call a lack of transparency in the university’s handling of his case. Kilgore and the group believe that pressure from outside the university stemming from the news stories has factored into the university’s decision, and that that threatens the freedom under which any



*James Kilgore*

of the university’s scholars – tenured or not – can teach and do research.

“We the undersigned scholars, legal professionals, activists and concerned individuals believe that the University of Illinois gave in to political pressure and refused to approve future employment contracts for James Kilgore on the basis of his background and sensationalist media coverage, rather than on his job performance,” reads a petition from the Friends on Change.org, which has garnered more than 1,600 signatures. “Refusing to approve Kilgore’s employment contracts represents a blow to academic freedom and transparency in universities but also has serious implications for the fifteen million Americans who have felony convictions and face a constant battle to access employment. We call on the University of Illinois to immediately restore James Kilgore’s employment status.”

D. Fairchild Ruggles, a professor of landscape architecture who helped create the group, said it’s clear that Kilgore’s non-reappointment to the

faculty is related to the news stories, and that professors are trying to show the administration how much support exists, not just for Kilgore, but for transparent hiring policies and the right of formerly incarcerated employees to move on with their lives. Earlier this week, members of the group delivered in person a petition to university administrators signed by 300 faculty members.

Ruggles also said Kilgore has particular expertise in incarceration studies, a discipline in which the university is becoming known.

“Not only did I know [about Kilgore’s record], he was totally frank and honest about it,” Ruggles said. “He has never hidden any aspect of it, and they hired him with full knowledge that he had been incarcerated. That has not changed. What’s changed is the amount of public outcry, due to stories in *The News-Gazette*.”

A student petition contains similar language, and the Faculty Senate this week approved a resolution affirming its commitment to “the principles of

academic freedom, fair employment practices for all faculty, both tenured and non-tenured, and appropriate unit autonomy[.]”

Kathryn Oberdeck, associate professor of history, sponsored the resolution. She said the original version contained more explicit references to protection from prejudicial judgments and other elements of academic freedom, but was more “vague” by the time it reach the Senate floor. Neither version contained specific references to Kilgore. The final version passed 44-21.

Cary Nelson, a professor of English, member of the Senate and past president of the American Association of University Professors, said via email: “This whole effort was triggered by the university administration’s violations of academic freedom and shared governance when it decided to tell James Kilgore his services as a part-time teacher would never be needed again.”

Nelson continued: “Such global commitments to lifetime non-reappointment are only issued with

cause: incompetence, fraud, or moral turpitude.

Only a week earlier the administration gave him a ringing endorsement. In the meantime, a *News-Gazette* slander piece was published. It told the university nothing that James hadn’t already disclosed when he was hired. The university acted out of political cowardice, ignoring the wishes of Kilgore’s department and doing so [without] faculty review.”

The AAUP also has taken note, sending a letter to Chancellor Phyllis Wise on Kilgore’s behalf. It recommends that the university “retain” him based on principles of academic freedom.

In a letter of response, Wise said the provost was “charging a committee to review the processes involved in hiring employees, including academic hourly staff and visiting lecturers.”

She added: “The committee will involve campus faculty leaders as well as administrative staff. Additionally, the committee will be asked to provide a recommendation specifically regarding Mr. Kilgore’s future employability at the

University of Illinois.”

Kilgore said it was strange that a policy, not a personnel, committee was charged with reviewing his case, but that he hoped to retain his position. He loves teaching in particular.

As for his past, he said, “What I say is that I’ve lived a very different life since that time,” rejecting personally and in his work the politics of small-group violence and “trying to effect social change through that process.”

Kilgore added: “I would expect that at the university, there’s an expectation -- especially at a [top research] institution such as the University of Illinois -- that they’re at the cutting edge of civil and human rights issues and employment for people with felony convictions.”

Since it published Kilgore’s story, *The News-Gazette* has reported that the university will begin performing criminal background checks for all faculty. Kaler said she was not aware of that policy change, but referred questions to human resources officials, who did not immediately return a request for comment. ■

---

## Who Will Lead Community Colleges?

By Paul Fain

*With a wave of retirements looming, community college leadership pipeline needs urgent repairs, report finds.*

**M**ore than 40 percent of the nation’s 1,200 community college presidents are likely to retire

in the next five years. And the current pipeline to replace them is not up to the task.

Those are the findings of a June 2013 report from Achieving the Dream and the Aspen Institute College Excellence program. The two groups called for an urgent national conversation about how to best prepare community college leaders to succeed in jobs that won’t be getting easier anytime soon.

Past reports have also predicted rapid turnover at the top for two-year institutions. This one goes further by calling for new and improved ways to



**I know something critically important about  
the candidate you're about to hire.**

**If you had asked me the right questions, I would have told you this faculty candidate needs to:**

- ✓ *Show some enthusiasm. The impact on students was disastrous.\**
- ✓ *Not bring personal issues into the classroom, be more focused on work.\**
- ✓ *Accept feedback without being defensive, and have an open mind.\**

**Pre-Hire 360®** automates a new kind of reference collection and analysis that provides job-specific feedback. It helps you hire better faculty and staff who stay longer and drive greater business results.

Learn more by visiting our website at [www.skillsurvey.com](http://www.skillsurvey.com).

\* These are actual responses taken from SkillSurvey surveys.



[Istock.com/pondshots](https://www.istock.com/pondshots)

train and select presidents.

“There is urgency,” said William Trueheart, president and CEO of Achieving the Dream. “There is also an inadequacy.”

Incoming presidents will need to have solid grounding in how to improve graduation and retention rates at community colleges, according to the report. They will also face challenges such as how to reform remedial education, engage with part-time faculty members and make decisions about “uncertain technological innovation,” such as emerging forms of online learning -- all with limited money.

Leaders of both groups said good work is being done at some existing community college leadership training programs, including doctoral degree tracks at universities and professional development offerings by higher education associations. But many more opportunities are needed, they

said.

Some training programs need to better incorporate recent lessons learned about what makes a community college president succeed, according to the report. Likewise, trustees and presidential hiring committees often neglect valuable traits when selecting new presidents.

Kay McClenney, director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement, agreed with the report’s findings. “There’s a lot of room for expansion, proliferation and new approaches.”

The report generally found an inadequate emphasis on student completion in the grooming of new community college chiefs. Also lacking is the placement of a priority on presidents who are ready to take risks and push changes, sometimes painful ones.

Two key qualities were identified

often among top-notch presidents, according to the report: acknowledging when their institutions aren’t cutting it and making tough budget decisions to fix those problems.

“Rather than defending current institutional performance -- including completion and transfer rates that are commonly below 50 percent -- exceptional presidents openly acknowledge shortcomings,” the report said. They also “understand that budget reallocations are necessary to maximize the portion of limited resources spent on what matters most to student success.”

## LOOKING OUTSIDE

In recent years Aspen has identified top-performing community colleges based on a broad set of completion-oriented data as well as site visits. The report drew on that process by including interviews with 14 presidents who lead colleges that have fared well

**“Rather than defending current institutional performance -- including completion and transfer rates that are commonly below 50 percent -- exceptional presidents openly acknowledge shortcomings.”**

in the Aspen Prize.

Achieving the Dream is a nonprofit group that works with more than 200 community colleges on data-driven improvements, many of which are also aimed at retention and graduation rates. The report includes results from focus groups with presidents at some of those colleges, as well as experts who have worked on student-success-oriented reforms.

In addition to the importance of risk-taking, making tough choices about money and being committed to boosting completion, the research determined that successful presidents need to be in it for the long haul. For example, Aspen Prize winners and finalists all had their presidents in place for more than a decade.

The report describes how presidents can create lasting change by creating strong plans, collaborating on campus and building external partnerships.

To study how desirable presidential traits are being encouraged through preparation and the hiring process, the report included interviews with eight veteran search consultants. It also featured an analysis of the

curriculums of 16 traditional academic and professional training programs.

The training programs fell short in a few areas. For example, budgeting and finance courses did not consistently address how to measure the efficiency of campus initiatives. And none of the curriculums reviewed included course content in communicating effectively with faculty and staff members.

Trueheart said he hopes the report can be used to develop “open-source curricula” for training presidents. To that end the two groups plan to collaborate with the American Association of Community Colleges and other higher education associations.

The most prominent academic program for aspiring community college leaders has long been the one at the University of Texas at Austin. But UT’s Community College Leadership Program has faced recent turbulence, most notably the departure of John E. Roueche, its founder and leader for 41 years.

Roueche subsequently moved to National American University, where he now runs a leadership program at the Roueche Graduate Center.

Current programs cannot possibly fill the wave of looming vacancies, said Josh Wyner, executive director of Aspen’s College Excellence Program. The UT graduate degree track, for example, enrolled only four students last year, down from 12-15 in previous years.

Wyner and Trueheart encouraged community colleges to be open about looking outside of traditional pools of talent for new leaders. But those candidates, like others, will need proper orientation and preparation for how to tackle the job’s unique challenges.

One possible model to emulate comes from K-12. Trueheart and Wyner said the Broad Center’s Superintendents Academy is an innovative approach to training superintendents for success in urban school districts.

McClenney said coping with leadership turnover in the sector will require both creativity and hard work.

“We’re going to have to be able to look in nontraditional places because of sheer numbers,” she said, but cautioned that to “come in knowledge-free is not going to work.” ■

## Adjuncts on File

By Carl Straumsheim

*As New Jersey's community colleges finalize an electronic repository of adjuncts, instructors off the tenure track are pushing back against a system they fear could be used to exploit them.*

New Jersey's community colleges moved in 2013 to consolidate how they hire and train non-tenure-track instructors, but some adjuncts are concerned the program will make it more difficult to find teaching opportunities in the state.

The initiative will create a Web portal that connects aspiring adjuncts with community colleges searching for qualified instructors. In addition to simply serving as a job board, the website will allow adjuncts to post their profiles, making their fields of study visible to New Jersey's 19 community colleges.

Steven M. Rose, president of Passaic County Community College, said such an initiative has never before been attempted by community colleges in other states. "If they did, we would have copied from them," Rose said.

The effort to simplify how institutions recruit adjuncts comes after New Jersey's community colleges have increasingly come to depend on adjunct faculty members to tackle explosive enrollment growth. At Passaic County Community College, the number of adjunct faculty members has more than doubled in the last decade. Today, the institution has 103 tenure-

track faculty members and about 550 adjuncts, Rose said.

"One of the most important things that our colleges can do is to pay a lot of attention to our adjuncts, because they are doing a large portion of the instruction on our campuses," Rose said. "Managing a workforce of that size is a challenge."

With the new website, Rose said he hoped institutions will also be able to attract professionals who have never considered becoming adjuncts. To ensure the new recruits are up to the task, the website will feature information about a credential program -- a kind of crash course in teaching. Rose noted details about the credential process are still in the works. Should the website prove a success, it could be used for community colleges to gradually amass a catalog of best practices.

While administrators praise the initiative, some adjuncts would rather see it scrapped altogether. William J. Lipkin, a full-time adjunct professor for the past 12 years who teaches at four different New Jersey institutions, said he was frustrated with how adjuncts have been excluded from the design process.

"They don't want to hear from us.

They don't want input from us," said Lipkin, who serves as the treasurer of the national adjunct organization New Faculty Majority.

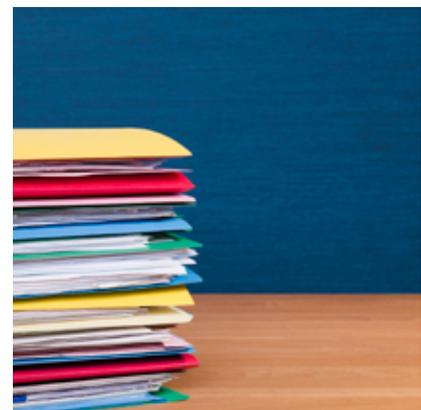
Lipkin said he feared a system where a department chair at one community college could post negative feedback on an adjunct's online profile -- in essence blackballing him or her from employment at other institutions. He also questioned why community colleges are courting instructors with no teaching experience instead of catering to the state's estimated 15,000 adjuncts.

"I don't see the benefit of this, at least for us," Lipkin said. "It's a benefit for the schools -- they can go in and pick and choose."

Lipkin said he saw no reason to change the more informal hiring system in place today, where adjuncts directly contact department chairs at individual schools.

Maria Maisto, New Faculty Majority's president, also expressed concerns about the initiative.

"[O]ur concern is always whether a proposed solution is going to exacerbate exploitation or not," Maisto



[istock.com/travellinglight](https://www.istock.com/travellinglight)

said. “Systems and solutions that are exploitative never improve the quality of education being delivered.”

For full-time adjuncts, Rose said the new system could help them

land tenured teaching positions by making them aware of the teaching opportunities available in the state.

“The goal is to ensure that our students get the best possible

instruction that they can in the classroom,” Rose said. “If we can make sure that we get a great pool of adjuncts and give them some training, that can help.” ■

## Hunting the Heads of Headhunters

By Ry Rivard

*Florida State faculty vote “no confidence” in their institution’s presidential search firm and open a new front in the battle over picking presidents.*

**F**lorida State University’s Faculty Senate is slamming one of higher ed’s top headhunters after the search tilted quickly to favor a well-connected politician.

In June 2014, the university’s Faculty Senate voted no confidence in R. William Funk, who is leading Florida State’s controversial search for a new president. Funk is head of Texas-based R. William Funk and Associates, which has placed presidents at some of the nation’s largest and most prestigious universities.

The vote of displeasure may be the first of its kind by faculty in a search firm. If faculty elsewhere adopt the tactic, the spread of no confidence votes could further complicate presidential searches.

Funk said he was “taken back” by the vote, which was said to be a close one. (He subsequently withdrew from the search.)

In Tallahassee, Funk’s search quickly narrowed to include only John

Thrasher, a state senator and former speaker of the House who is also chairman of Florida Governor Rick Scott’s reelection campaign.

Florida State faculty said that to settle on Thrasher, Funk either ignored the public advice of the university’s presidential search committee or made backroom deals that benefited Thrasher.

“Either way you slice it, Bill Funk is either the responsible party, or he’s a tool – take your pick,” said Michael Buchler, the associate professor of music theory who co-wrote the no confidence measure.

Faculty accuse Funk of several moves that helped Thrasher become the sole candidate until the university reopened its search this week amid mounting criticism.

Buchler said Funk disregarded a search committee directive that the job posting make clear Florida State was looking for “distinguished intellectual stature” and “strong academic

credentials.”

In response, Funk said that was “just a brief announcement,” not the full job description, which he said had been posted on the search website.

Funk had no comment about other faculty allegations that he downplayed their desire for academic candidates.

Second, though Funk told the search committee that strong candidates only apply near the application deadline in states like Florida with open-records laws, the application deadline was removed from the presidential search website. Funk said the change was made by the university and was a “clerical situation.”

Buchler said Funk had either ignored the search committee’s advice given during public meetings, acted without their consent, or spoken privately to others and decided to change plans.

When few candidates applied who were obviously qualified to run the 41,000-student university, Funk suggested the university interview only Thrasher, who is a former chairman of the Florida State Board of Trustees.

In an interview, Funk said Thrasher was overshadowing the search process and discouraging applications, so the best way to proceed was give Thrasher an up-or-down vote before conducting a “real search” with a “clear playing field” if Thrasher didn’t get the

job.

"We did not want to conduct a search that was not a real search, to go through a whole process and have – three or four months later – John Thrasher selected," Funk said.

Before the university reopened the search, more applications also came in, including one from Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Rick Polston and state House Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda.

Edward Burr, the Florida State trustee who is leading the search committee, said the vote was "unexpected and disappointing" because he asked Funk this week to "re-energize his efforts" to search for more applicants. Burr said he heard that three faculty senators who also serve on the presidential search committee spoke against the resolution.

"Mr. Funk has my full and utmost support in this search," Burr said in an email.

The Florida State search is not the first time Funk has been part of a search that faculty criticized for narrowing in on a well-connected politician rather than an academic. Funk said two past searches in particular became a "lightning rod" for Florida State faculty, though he said only three of his 400 presidential searches have settled on a political figure.

In 2012, a Funk-led search for Purdue University -- in which many professors stressed the importance of hiring someone with an academic career -- ended with the selection of Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, who took office the next year when his term ended.

In 2002, Funk also helped Florida State settle on another politician as president, Thomas Kent (T.K.) Wetherell, though Wetherell, a former House speaker, had been president of Tallahassee Community College before he took over Florida State.

"To be honest, I'm not sure why this vitriol is focused on us," Funk said, "except for the T.K. Wetherell and Mitch Daniels deals -- and what I perceive to be the faculty's great concern about a political figure there being the president."

Funk also worked on the 2007 presidential search at West Virginia University that settled on a former lobbyist and chief of staff to a former governor. That president resigned about a year later amid a scandal involving questions about a degree awarded to the then-governor's daughter. Many at WVU said a president with an academic background might have prevented the scandal.

The Faculty Senate vote at Florida State could add a new dynamic to the presidential search process, making not just university officials but outside consultants the object of formal faculty scrutiny during controversial searches.

"I think what it says is that search firms are responsible for the process that they recommend a board and search committee use to conduct a search -- and I think rightly so," said James Ferrare, the managing principal at AGB Search, which has sparred publicly with Funk in the past.

AGB worked on the controversial search in 2014 at the College of Charleston, which ultimately settled on Lieutenant Governor Glenn



*Bill Funk*

McConnell, despite critics who said McConnell's promotion of Confederate history and lack of experience leading a college could damage the institution's reputation. The Faculty Senate in Charleston then voted no confidence vote in the trustees, but specifically accused them of disregarding AGB's advice.

Despite political pressure, AGB managed to help Charleston's search committee produce a list of credible candidates for the job before the public liberal arts college's trustees reportedly ignored the search committee, which did not recommend the politician -- who has never worked in higher education -- for president.

Funk said the approach he tried to take at Florida State differed from the College of Charleston search

"We could have just done it the way they did it at the College of Charleston and people would react after the fact," he said.

In the past, some states have sought to rein in the use and influence of headhunters like Funk, as well as to control costs. In 2012, Illinois lawmakers forbid universities to use taxpayer or student money to hire search firms. ■

## Spousal Pay Backlash

By Scott Jaschik

*Days after reports that Winthrop U. gave part-time work to husband of its president, board moves to fire her.*

Just under a year after Jamie Comstock Williamson became president of Winthrop University, the board suspended her in June 2014 and announced its intent to fire her. The board did not say why it took its action, except to say that it was “for cause.” Under the terms of Williamson’s contract, she must be given an opportunity to respond to that cause before she can be fired, and the board’s action set up that opportunity for Williamson.

The action against Williamson came days after *The Rock Hill Herald* revealed that the university had hired Williamson’s husband, Larry Williamson, as a part-time employee to work on government and external relations for nine months. A day after that news report, the Williamsons announced that they were returning the \$27,000 that he had been paid, although they also defended his hiring. The repayment did not quiet criticism of the arrangement.

Jamie Williamson has had some other controversies during her 11 months in office -- with some criticism of raises for administrators and a steeper than expected increase in summer term tuition. But comments posted on the alumni association’s Facebook page and on other social

media suggest that she was also winning fans at the university, and there was no sign -- until the news about her husband’s part-time work -- that her job was in danger.

Larry Williamson is a Navy veteran who has also held several jobs in higher education that suggest a background appropriate to work in government relations. He has been vice president for institutional advancement at Maryville University, and has been director of government relations and executive assistant to the president at the University of West Florida.

A key problem for the Williamsons, however, may be that South Carolina law bars employees of public entities such as Winthrop from hiring or promoting anyone whom they would supervise. Winthrop officials, when the *Herald* reported on the situation, said that the hiring was done by Kimberly Faust, the president’s chief of staff, and not by the president. A Winthrop spokesman told the newspaper, however, that Faust did discuss the issue with Jamie Comstock Williamson, and that the Executive Committee of the board had been informed.

The day after Larry Williamson’s employment was revealed, Jamie Comstock Williamson issued a new statement defending the hiring as

legal, but announcing that the couple had returned the money. “As president, I believe I must set a standard even greater than compliance with the law and hold myself to higher values grounded in honesty and integrity. I will not allow even the appearance of wavering from those values. That is why Larry and I have returned the compensation paid to Larry by the university,” she said.

*The Herald* reported that Gary Simrill, a state representative and Winthrop alumnus, said that he had been passing on reports to the board of concerns about the university, including about the hiring of Larry Williamson. Simrill praised the board for “taking swift action” and being “hands-on.” A state senator from the area, Wes Hayes, told the *Herald* that “whenever you have a spouse that’s a paid employee, particularly in the same office, that’s going to raise concerns.”

The head of the Faculty Conference at Winthrop did not respond to requests for comment. Nor did President Williamson, although it is unclear if she still has access to the presidential email at Winthrop. She has not commented to local reporters or made a public statement.

### SPOUSAL PAY

The issue of employing and paying presidential spouses has been discussed for years. For much of the history of American higher education, of course, presidential spouses were presumed to be women who would -- without pay -- contribute countless hours to entertaining, fund raising and a range of activities that advanced their

husbands' careers and institutions. As ideas of gender equity advanced to presidential offices, there is no longer the presumption that presidents are men, or that spouses of men or women will work for the institution without pay. But paying spouses still remains a practice only at a minority of institutions.

According to the American Council on Education's report "The American College President 2012," 36 percent of presidential spouses work outside the institution, 51 percent of spouses work on campus activities without pay, and 14 percent are formally employed or compensated by the institution for the role as a host or fund raiser. (The 14 percent figure is up from 10 percent five years earlier.)

Susan Resneck Pierce, a search consultant, former president, *Inside Higher Ed* columnist and author of *On Being Presidential*, said via email: "In my experience, when an institution hires a presidential spouse for a staff position, that decision is made at the board level rather than by the president and/or by someone who reports to the

president. This arrangement is often done at the time of the presidential appointment, often with the board creating a special contract for the spouse."

Teresa Oden is wife of the former president of Kenyon and Carleton Colleges and the author of *Spousework: Partners Supporting Academic Leaders*. She said via email that when a board acts as quickly as Winthrop's board did, she wonders if there were issues at play beyond the hiring of the president's husband. But she also said she wasn't surprised by board discomfort over that issue.

Oden stressed that the appearance issue may be as important as, or more important than, whether the hiring was legal. "The particulars of the spouse's employment in this case are sure to raise some eyebrows even though, strictly speaking, there may be nothing wrong with the arrangement, particularly because it was part-time and temporary. But no board wants to see controversy of any kind hitting the news."

In the case of Winthrop, Jamie

Comstock Williamson appears to be facing a backlash for the hiring of her husband. But she made no secret of his importance to her career, or of the complicated issues couples face when both have jobs in college administration. Just before her inaugural in April 2104, she sent a message to the campus that she had changed her name legally to add her husband's last name.

She wrote: "As I prepared my inauguration speech, I reflected on the path that led me to this pinnacle point in my career and kept returning to the realization that I would not be president of Winthrop without the dedication, support and counsel of my husband, Larry Williamson. During the early years of our marriage, when Larry worked in senior-level university jobs, we moved for his career. Then, later, at Larry's urging, we focused on my career arc. Thanks in no small part to Larry's encouragement and support, my movement through the academic leadership ranks progressed quickly and culminated in my dream job – president of Winthrop University." ■

---

---

## The Prestige Payoff

By Scott Jaschik

*Study documents impact of attending an elite doctoral program on faculty members' careers.*

**P**HILADELPHIA -- Many a would-be graduate student has debated whether to enroll in a top-ranked

program or another one that -- for reasons fair or unfair -- isn't so highly ranked but may seem a better fit.

A study released here in April 2014 at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association suggests that there could be quantifiable evidence that prestige pays off.

The study, by three University of Georgia scholars, used a national federal database of full-time tenure-track faculty members at all stages of their careers, with an average of 14

years of experience as a professor. While protecting the confidentiality of the faculty members, the researchers examined where the professors earned their Ph.D.s and then their subsequent achievements on certain metrics. Graduate programs were divided, based on National Research Council ratings, into four levels of prestige (including a level reflecting institutions too young to have a reputation). Institutions were ranked based on *U.S. News & World Report* criteria.

The study found three patterns with regard to those who earned doctorates in top-ranked departments:

- They were 22 percent more likely than others to be employed by a research university.
- They were 12 percent more likely to be a full professor.
- They had about eight more peer-reviewed journal articles than did their peers.

They also found a pattern for those who graduated from a top-ranked university (regardless of how highly ranked the department is): Their salaries were 13 percent higher.

The study covered a wide range of disciplines.

Jarrett B. Warshaw, a doctoral candidate at Georgia's Institute of Higher Education and the lead author of the study, stressed that the paper does not argue that doctoral training is better at top-ranked institutions. "It could be that higher-quality programs offer higher-quality training," he said.



*Stanford University*

But it could also be the case that there is "self-selection" at work -- that these programs attract the best Ph.D. students, those who might well have thrived elsewhere. (The other authors are Robert K. Toutkoushian, a professor at the Institute of Higher Education, and Hyejin Choi, a graduate student.)

Warshaw also said it was important to remember that there are "lots of ways to measure success," and that doctoral students with goals other than those measured in this study might find better fits elsewhere. "You have to find your best experience," he said.

The study also didn't explore why these patterns surfaced (work on the project continues and more findings are expected later).

Warshaw speculated that one reason salary was the only area where reputation of the university (as

opposed to the program) appeared to have an impact was because of who decides on salary. When a department wants to offer more money to recruit or retain someone, typically deans or other administrators from beyond the department are involved. And they may be more swayed by a university's overall reputation than by knowledge that a particular graduate program was highly regarded.

While it may come as no surprise that those who earn Ph.D.s at prestigious programs achieve various levels of success, some disciplines have debated whether the advantage enjoyed by those graduates is appropriate. A paper published in 2012 argued that political science departments overwhelmingly favor graduates of a relatively small number of doctoral programs -- ignoring the talent elsewhere. ■

## Negotiated Out of Job

By Colleen Flaherty

*How one tenure-track candidate's attempts at negotiations resulted in her losing the offer entirely.*

The worst they can say is no. That's the advice a new Ph.D. receives about negotiating with a department that has extended a job offer. Sure, you might not get everything you want, but there's no harm in trying. This may be your best shot at getting good pay or working conditions and, after all, they have offered you the job and won't take that away.

Or maybe not, according to a March 2014 post on Philosophy Smoker. The blog, popular among philosophy graduate students and junior faculty, recounts a job offer negotiation gone wrong at a small liberal arts college.

The candidate, identified in the blog as "W," sent the following email to search committee members at Nazareth College, in Rochester, N.Y., after receiving a tenure-track job offer in philosophy:

"As you know, I am very enthusiastic about the possibility of coming to Nazareth. Granting some of the following provisions would make my decision easier[:]

1) An increase of my starting salary to \$65,000, which is more in line with what assistant professors in philosophy have been getting in the last few years.

2) An official semester of maternity leave.

3) A pre-tenure sabbatical at some

point during the bottom half of my tenure clock.

4) No more than three new class preps per year for the first three years.

5) A start date of academic year 2015 so I can complete my postdoc."

She ended the email by saying "I know that some of these might be easier to grant than others. Let me know what you think."

In a reply, the search committee said it had reviewed the requests, as had the dean and vice president of academic affairs.

"It was determined that on the whole these provisions indicate an interest in teaching at a research university and not at a college, like ours, that is both teaching and student centered," the email continues. "Thus, the institution has decided to withdraw its offer of employment to you."

The search committee ended by thanking the candidate for her "interest" and wishing her "the best in finding a suitable position."

The email exchange is the worst nightmare of any job candidate who has put forward requests -- and, not surprisingly, has people talking.

Jaded, Ph.D., a non-tenure-track, full-time professor of philosophy at an unnamed university who is one of the blog's moderators, wrote that she was

most "flabbergasted" at Nazareth's refusal to negotiate or discuss the requests with the candidate before rescinding the offer.

"If 'W' was unable to answer the questions in a way that demonstrated her commitment to providing the type of education a [small, liberal arts college] wants to give their students, then I could understand their position," Jaded wrote. "But to [rescind the offer] on the basis of a few requests -- some of which appear prima facie reasonable (maternity leave, an increase in salary), but some of which 'W' acknowledges as 'easier to grant than others' -- seems a disproportionate response (even if it was well within the rights of the [college] to do something like that)."

Commenters on the blog have had mixed reactions, from sympathetic to the candidate to critical, to both.

One reader said it was simply a "buyers' market," and that "I would be very reluctant to ask for any [deal] sweeteners, since members of search committees often report that they would have been happy to hire ANY of the candidates they interviewed and flew out."

Another reader wrote that the candidate's requests could have been made more "delicately," but that it was "very hard for me to believe that the college would retract the offer. Do you really want to hire someone not wise enough to try to negotiate him/herself into a better position? Probably not."

The candidate did not respond to an interview request.

A spokeswoman for Nazareth

declined to comment, citing its policy of keeping personnel issues private. Scott Campbell, chair of Nazareth's philosophy department, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Experts in academic job negotiations were less surprised at the account than some of the blog's followers.

Karen Kelsky, an academic job consultant and moderator of the blog *The Professor Is In*, said that while job offer retractions such as W's are "outrageous, unethical and wrong" they're not uncommon, particularly at less prestigious institutions without strong traditions of transparency.

"They happen, and they aren't distinct to philosophy – they happen in all kinds of disciplines at all kinds of schools," Kelsky said. She advises her clients to negotiate offers, but with careful attention to tone and by tailoring their requests to the institution at hand. Some of W's requests, such as taking time for the postdoc, would be a major inconvenience to the institution, she said. And it's never a good idea to suggest what the market-appropriate salary is, since starting salaries vary widely by institution type.

Nevertheless, she said Nazareth should have engaged in a "good-faith dialogue" with the person it was about to hire – not take the offer off the table entirely.

Cheryl E. Ball, a Fulbright scholar at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design who will start as an associate professor of digital publishing studies at West Virginia University in July, recently wrote a column about



Nazareth College

negotiating a tenure-track job for *Inside Higher Ed*. She advised candidates to sit on a job offer for 24 hours, then write a counteroffer. She counted salary, course load and assignments, computer equipment, research funds and leave, among other requests, as fair game.

She wrote that "negotiations should be an expected part of the job offer process, not unusual for anyone to engage in, and should result in a productive working environment for the job seeker and a productive working relationship between the seeker and the university."

But, she cautioned, "While I've been mostly successful with negotiations, I only take what I need, and my needs are reasonable and in line with the job ad and tenure expectations for the university."

Like Kelsky, Ball said that while Nazareth's retraction was "totally uncouth," the candidate's requests signaled a disconnect between her needs and what the college could

offer. Several of the requests involve time away from teaching – the central mission of most liberal arts colleges. Such institutions generally have small faculties and need new professors to cover courses right away, she said.

"It was the 'no more than 3 preps a year' however, that made me guffaw," Ball added via email. "This candidate really has no idea what s/he was considering stepping into at a [small liberal arts college]. While s/he could have done the job just fine, working at a [small liberal arts college] is, above all, about collegiality and teaching ability, and this candidate basically offered [several] counterpoints to her being able to fulfill that part of the college's mission."

A longtime philosophy chair at a large research university who has been part of nearly 20 faculty searches and who requested anonymity, said he's never rescinded an offer.

But he has "let the clock run out" on several candidates from whom extensive negotiation requests

“confirm” flags raised about collegiality or “fit” during interviews (offers last 10 days at his institution). He also said that frequently – and in weak academic labor markets in particular – candidates’ qualifications are so similar that picking between two, or three, can be like “flipping a coin.”

A candidate is only as valuable as how good the next person is behind him or her, he added.

That said, the chair said he’d be more accepting of unrealistic requests from a new Ph.D., maybe from an elite institution, who was “wet behind the ears” in relation to the broader academic labor market. Rather than

rescind an offer, he’d likely pick up the phone and talk to the candidate about which requests were possible and which weren’t.

And many aren’t, simply due to departmental or institutional policies regarding research, or salary scales, he said.

Perhaps more than anything, experts said the account points to the need to explicitly mentor graduate students in negotiating before they hit the job market. Kelsky emphasized that candidates shouldn’t be scared off from negotiating altogether.

“Zombie,” another moderator of Philosophy Smoker who is an

assistant professor at a public research institution, agreed.

“We are all, as job candidates, advised that we should try to negotiate when we receive a job offer, and we’re all told that it can’t hurt to ask.”

Zombie said the issue has particular implications for women: “To the extent that women are already disadvantaged in academia -- they get lower salaries, are disproportionately burdened by family and childcare concerns, and so on -- a situation like this has to make you worry about the possibilities for overcoming some of those disadvantages, if the hiring process is so unfriendly to those concerns.” ■

---

## Not Much Notice

By Scott Jaschik

*Is it O.K. for a search committee to tell job candidates on January 3 that they do or do not have interviews at a disciplinary meeting that starts January 9?*

**F**or years, graduate students have been complaining about the practice of search committees that conduct interviews at disciplinary meetings telling them just two weeks before the gatherings whether they have an interview. For graduate students with limited funds (in other words, for most of them), they are forced to gamble on airfare, hotel and maybe an interview wardrobe without knowing if they will need to be at the meeting. And in the current job market, many won’t get a single interview.

Others wait, and then, if they are fortunate enough to get an interview,

must scramble at a time that discount airfares and hotel rooms are gone.

Well if two weeks makes logistics difficult and expensive (but is a widespread practice), how about less than a week? That’s the question raised by an email sent out by a search committee at the University of California at Riverside in January 2014 about a tenure-track job in American literature before 1900.

Yes, a tenure-track job in literature at a research university -- the kind of job many English grad students dream about. Hundreds applied, and 12 or so lucky candidates were due to be

interviewed at the Modern Language Association meeting, which started January 9, in Chicago. But if they thought they would find out before, say Christmas, they were wrong.

The search committee sent out an email telling all candidates that they would be informed on January 3 whether they have an interview. And in the blogosphere, that struck some as rude, and a demonstration of the way those on search committees may have lost touch with the realities facing grad students.

The email was sent to Rebecca Schuman, an adjunct who wrote about it on her blog, Pan Kisses Kafka. She urged readers to contact Katherine Kinney, the search chair at Riverside, and express their anger. “If you are feeling trolly, or bold, or aren’t in English, or have nothing to lose, please feel free to contact Dr. Kinney and tell her how you feel about her committee

being unable to read through their applications and decide on their semi-finalists more than FIVE [expletive] DAYS in advance of a conference, to which people will be spending upwards of \$1,000 to travel having bought tickets in advance,” Schuman wrote.

“The way I see it, Dr. Katherine Kinney and the Overlords of the UC-Riverside English department have decided that anyone they deem worthy will, of course, already be attending MLA, either to give several important papers, or to be interviewed by several other institutions who have the common [expletive] human decency to notify their candidates more than three days in advance. This is a move that is both elitist and out of touch. Because of the hyper-competitive market and huge glut of applicants for every job, nowadays many, many Ph.D.s and A.B.D.s attend MLA to go on a single, solitary, pathetic interview -- because, they're told, 'all it takes is one,' after all.”

Schuman, who has written critically of search committees in the past, said this was the first time she was doing so and naming the search chair, because the “naming and shaming” was needed to promote change.

Many of Schuman's readers agreed. One wrote: “Two WEEKS isn't even enough! Some of us live from stipend payment to stipend payment and need at least a month to plan for any sort of domestic travel, including seeking appropriate couch surfing opportunities. There is something seriously fishy going on here.”

The MLA does in fact tell search

committees that they need to be considerate of job seekers' need to travel to the meeting. Guidelines from the association say: “Departments need to be able to reach candidates quickly to schedule MLA convention interviews. Candidates, especially those who plan to travel during the holidays, should supply departments with contact information. Because of the expenses related to convention attendance, departments should notify all candidates, including those not invited for interviews, of their status as early as possible.”

So why are officials at Riverside not making up their mind until January 3? In an interview, Kinney said that the committee -- using a new system for reviewing applications -- discovered two weeks ago that some applications had been read by only one search committee member, and others hadn't been read at all. The committee tried to catch up, but was still behind. Applications had only started to be reviewed November 25, and there just wasn't enough time, she said.

The university could have called off the search, she said, but that wouldn't have helped anyone, Kinney said. In the end, she said she decided the best approach was to continue to have the committee read applications, and to “let everyone know” that there would be no word until January 3.

“I understand how much anxiety there is,” she said. “There are not a lot of Tier I research jobs compared to the number of qualified candidates there are.” She added that the pool was very strong.

Kinney said that, in the past, when a candidate couldn't make an MLA job interview, the department has let those in Southern California drive to campus another time, and she said that the search committee would try to be flexible with anyone unable to make it to Chicago. (She acknowledged that this pledge of flexibility was not in her email to job applicants.) She also noted that, before the MLA moved its annual meeting from the period between Christmas and New Year's to early January, her department regularly notified candidates only about 10 days before the meeting started.

On Facebook, Twitter and elsewhere, candidates are suggesting that Riverside is far from alone with late notification. And while some note that Skype interviews and conference calls are being used by some search committees, many candidates who like that idea if all candidates are interviewed that way are afraid that they would be at a disadvantage if most candidates are being interviewed in person, and only a few are not.

Kinney said she was not surprised by the frustration, and that she realizes that there is a lot of “structural unfairness” in the hiring process. “I don't want to defend the system.”

Deborah Willis, chair of English at Riverside, said via email that she was surprised by the concern over the issue.

“When I was on the job market years back, I can recall getting an interview invitation on Christmas Eve -- and that's when MLA was on the weekend right after Christmas. (I also recall

being thrilled to get the request.) I've heard of other people being contacted a day or two before MLA," she said.

Added Willis: "The job search is, especially for entry-level positions, a stressful, challenging, exhausting process, and I can understand why

job seekers would be upset about anything that makes it more stressful. We all have a lot of sympathy for our applicants -- especially since we've all been through it ourselves.

But the big problems are the things that make the job market so

terrible in the first place -- budget cuts, dwindling support for public universities, the increasing reliance on adjunct faculty, etc." She adds: "The timing of an interview request seems pretty minor in the great scheme of things." ■

## Smile! You're (Not) on Camera!

By Colleen Flaherty

*Historians group prohibits hiring committees from recording job interviews at hiring annual conference.*

The beige hotel-cum-interview rooms, the nerves, the sudden feeling of kinship with cattle -- job interviews at academic conferences can hardly be described as comfortable. But the American Historical Association is trying to make the experience a little more "humane," and in May 2014 decided that hiring committees can't videotape or otherwise record interviews.

"One of the big issues has always been the anxiety level of people on the job market at our annual meetings," said James Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association. "We do everything we can to bring that down to a reasonable level."

Past adjustments in favor of interviewees include offering hiring committees less expensive "subletted" suites (rented by AHA), to make the experience of interviewing in a hotel room a bit less awkward, he said.

More recently, there were reports of graduate students being recorded by hiring committees, adding to their stress.

Consistent with AHA's other policies about recording, including conference panelists, the association's initial impulse was to require permission to record interviews, Grossman said. "But someone very astutely pointed out that if you're a job candidate, you can't say no."

So AHA's Council in 2014 approved an addition to the organizations' Guidelines for the Hiring Process saying that "The AHA considers it unacceptable to record or videotape any employment interview activity that takes place in conjunction with the AHA's Annual Meeting."

Grossman said reports from aggrieved interviewees about videotaping were few, and that the practice was not widespread in general. (He said hiring committees

might attempt it if a professor can't attend an interview, for instance).

But he hoped that the new measure would help "preserve people's spontaneity" during a 20-minute preliminary interview.

Joshua L. Reid, an assistant professor of history at the University Massachusetts at Boston who is co-chair of AHA's Graduate and Early Career Committee and AHA Council, said -- as a recent job-seeker -- that he personally appreciated the move.

"I would have felt pressured to say 'yes' to this request if this had been made during any of my interviews at the AHA annual meeting," he said via email. "Although I myself might have not been troubled by this request (but I don't know; it might have thrown me off at the time), I can see how some candidates would be uncomfortable with it."

Reid continued: "AHA interviews are stressful enough without introducing additional dynamics that might increase anxiety."

And as a recent search committee chair at Boston, Reid said he didn't see the policy as any kind of inconvenience, or how taping an interview would enhance its value.

"Basically, I walk out of the AHA

interviews ready to narrow the list down to those to invite to campus -- my votes for whom to bring to campus go to candidates I want to continue the conversation with," he said.

Rosemary Feal, executive director for the Modern Language Association, which hosts similarly large hiring conferences each year, said her organization has a "no photos where individuals are identifiable" policy for the interview area and interviews in the Job Information Center.

"The rationale has to do with respecting and protecting members' privacy," she said via email. "Candidates being interviewed may not wish to broadcast that they are being interviewed with specific institutions."

MLA has no policy regarding taping individual, private interviews but Feal said she understood AHA's desire to alleviate candidates' anxiety about the process.

"Anything scholarly associations can do to make high-stress situations like job interviews more comfortable



[istock.com/innovatedcaptures](https://www.istock.com/innovatedcaptures)

seems the right way to go," the MLA leader said.

Ervin Malakaj, immediate past president of MLA's Graduate Student Caucus and a Ph.D. candidate in Germanic languages and literature at Washington University in St. Louis, said the idea of taping candidates -- possibly to have a "go-to" reference after the interview -- "seems rather

unethical" in that is "another imposition on interviewees given the high-stakes and high-stress scenarios of the interview setting."

Malakaj noted that there have been calls to end interviews at MLA altogether, and that many institutions now use Skype to conduct preliminary interviews traditionally conducted at the conference. ■

## Views Articles

### Spousal Hire Realities

By Anonymous

*The author never thought much about her career being connected to her partner's until it was -- and she writes about the numerous challenges of the situation.*

**A**s a grad student, I never gave a moment of thought to being a spousal hire. Like so many grad

students in top-20 departments, especially pre-recession, I thought that I had somehow earned an offer of a

tenure-track position somewhere with a 2-2 courseload because I had been a good student, graduate assistant, and department citizen. I had done everything that I was told to, checking off just about every box on a grad student's to do list: collaborate with faculty -- check, teach -- check, present at my disciplinary society meeting -- check, publish a sole-authored, peer-reviewed piece -- check, win a teaching

and/or paper award – check and check, forge network connections – check. I realized at the time that I wasn't going to be a superstar but, whether it stemmed from naivete or optimism, I was certain that I would get a job – and a good one – on my own merit.

Sure enough, I got a job – and a good one – but I'll never know if it was on my own merit and I'm not sure it really matters. Regardless of how things really went down, I am married to one of those superstars and, as long as we are in the same department, there are people, including me, who perceive me as a spousal hire.

People have written posts about how to land (and negotiate) these elusive spousal hires. What I haven't seen as much discussion of is what comes next. What is life like once you're lucky enough to get a position with your partner? I can tell you what it was like for me.

- My partner and I are constantly considered in tandem. She is less productive than he is. He's the leading spouse, she's the trailing one. If we want to hire him, we'd have to find a place for her. My partner, on the other hand, as the superstar, benefits from an autonomous professional identity that I seldom experience.

- I notice inequity. Regardless of whether it is attributable to my position as a spousal hire, many injustices are perceived as directly related to that position. Even though I was hired with a 2-2 load, I taught five days a week my first semester (a T/R class and a M/W/F class). It was supposedly a mix-up by the office staff.

Even if it wasn't intentional, it felt unfair and I assumed that if a department rockstar had suffered a similar mishap, something would have been done to address it.

- Inequity begets inequality. Although course releases were relatively standard in my department, I didn't get any (and, yes, I did ask for them). This was just one permutation of The Matthew Effect, helping widen the gap between my productivity and that of my colleagues'.

- People take me less seriously. Even worse, when people treated me as if I was incompetent, I began to feel incompetent. Although colleagues generally know better, I have found that grad students are particularly attuned to status differences and susceptible to status assumptions and expectations.

- Impostorism sets in. I am plagued with a nagging sense that I am not really worthy of my position. I fear that at some point in the very near future someone will expose me for the fraud that I really am, they will say out loud that I could not have gotten the job without my spouse and that I took the job from someone more qualified. Because there is a negative stereotype associated with partner hires, targets of opportunity, and spousal accommodations something akin to stereotype threat kicks in, perhaps influencing my actual performance. I overprepare and overanalyze to ensure I don't do anything to live down to the stereotype or to reveal myself as the impostor that I might be.

- I try to make up for

(perceived) inferiority. One of my friends from grad school was also a spousal hire. His response was to absolutely kick ass on research and prove that he might officially be a spousal hire, but that he was at his institution because he wanted to be and deserved to be, not because he had to be. My own response was more damaging – and perhaps gendered. I became the ultimate department (and university) citizen. I taught larger and larger classes. I volunteered for everything that no one else wanted to do. I showed up for every faculty meeting, every advising night, and just about every other department event. This not only negatively affected my productivity, but also affected my self-perception. As my identity became increasingly wrapped up in teaching and service, I felt more and more distanced from my research so didn't devote as much attention to it. This simply exacerbated any inequity and inequality linked to productivity.

- Even worse, I bought into that inferiority. For a long time after getting hired, I did the bulk of the household labor. I stayed home when the kid was sick, was on homework duty, planted and weeded the flower beds, shopped, planned meals, and cooked. It didn't matter that I had the exact same job title as my partner or that our tenure expectations were the same. I convinced myself that he needed the time to work and that my work was less important. Being a spousal hire became a self-fulfilling prophecy. In many ways I had a more balanced life than my partner did, but I was making

---

**“I am plagued with a nagging sense that I am not really worthy of my position. I fear that at some point in the very near future someone will expose me for the fraud that I really am, they will say out loud that I could not have gotten the job without my spouse and that I took the job from someone more qualified.”**

---

tenure a more elusive goal.

So what can you do? How can you avoid the painful letdown that might emerge after the initial excitement of landing a position that allows you to live with your partner?

I wish I had a cure. I wish that I could tell you to just get over it. I wish that I could say that departments could do something by emphasizing that you are a valued member of the faculty, that they do not see you as a spousal hire, but my own department did this and it didn't work. In fact, the above was my experience even though I had my own offer from my institution. My offer was not contingent on my partner accepting his. It came with no strings attached. From the moment I was called for an interview, the party line was that they wanted me too. Sure, my partner had interviews at most of the top programs in our field that year, but I also had both attributes this university was looking for: teaching experience and accolades and an interesting research

program.

Yet simply being part of an academic couple – and with a growing understanding of how the academic world worked – I had a nagging feeling that the party line wasn't the entire story. That nagging feeling was bad enough. I imagine that it is only worse for people who have full information, whose offers are contingent, who are not just assumed to be the spousal hire, but who have evidence of it.

I think that it is useful to think of being a spousal hire as similar to having another stigmatized identity (although localized, as everyone outside of academe just thinks it's cool and/or normal that my partner and I work in the same place). Yes, being at the same institution as one's partner is an undeniable privilege – and many discussions before this one have alluded to just how elusive and extraordinary it is – but it is also time to acknowledge that the experience of it can mirror that of other academics who

are members of stigmatized groups. It could potentially help someone land a position, but the self-doubt and other disadvantages that might come with it do little to help them keep it.

As long as we continue to think about leading and trailing spouses, with the latter automatically deemed unqualified, we lose sight of individuals and their merits. I love my department and colleagues, my students, and especially my partner, who made his own sacrifices.

I didn't write this to hurt any of them, but to help others who might suffer after the reality of what it means to be a spousal hire sets in. I guess my advice is to not be your own worst enemy. Trust in yourself, trust in your worth, and show them that if they were smart, they would have hired you regardless. ■

*The author is a social scientist in a tenure-track position at a research university. This piece is adapted from a blog post at Scatterplot.*

## An Anti-Conference (Interview) Manifesto

By Patrick Iber

*The arguments in favor of the time-honored ritual don't apply in an era of tight job markets and tight budgets for job-seekers, writes Patrick Iber.*

**T**he conference interview for academic jobs is a time-honored ritual. Hundreds — or thousands — of job hopefuls descend upon a conference city, with their best (perhaps only?) suit in hand, and a selection of practiced answers prepared to the normal battery of questions about research and teaching. There are long, awkward moments waiting in chair-less hotel hallways — and comradely good wishes to one's rivals as they leave. Then there is the interview itself: a table and chairs (sitting on a bed in a hotel room is at least no longer the norm), some glasses of water, a panel of interrogators, and somewhere between 30 and 60 minutes of time. The process will winnow a short list of 10 or so down to 3 or 4 selected for fly-outs. The conference interview is a time-honored ritual. It is also a terrible one, and it should be brought to an end.

The basic argument against the conference interview is straightforward: It imposes considerable costs on the interviewees at a time in their lives when they are likely to be painful to absorb. Professional membership dues, conference registration, airfare, and lodging can easily run to \$1,000 or more. Most job-seekers are, naturally, people without secure jobs:

graduate students, lecturers, adjuncts, and postdocs. Only the latter (and occasionally the first) are likely to have a support budget from their university to attend the conference, meaning that for most the money will come, in whole or in part, out of pocket. Candidates are sometimes only notified if they will have an interview a few weeks — or, in egregious cases, just a few days — before the conference begins.

For a graduate student, \$1,000 probably equals a month's salary; for adjuncts and lecturers, it still represents many weeks of labor: money that they will be forced to spend on a kind of grotesque parody of an actual vacation. To this might be added the environmental costs of flying and the difficulties imposed on families, especially those with young children, and you have an institution that would seem to have little to recommend it. If it were not already a tradition, and someone proposed that candidates hoping for tenure-track jobs should have to pay a four-figure dollar amount simply to be eligible for possible employment, it would be considered an unconscionable form of pay-to-play. Yet because it is already the norm, it is accepted.

There is no question that the conference interview does have

two types of benefits: those that are intended, and those that are ancillary. The intended purpose of the interview, of course, is to help the committee get a sense of what it is like to interact with the candidate: to see how they represent themselves and their work. Most interviews, therefore, consist of candidates being asked to rehash the content of their cover letter and other application materials. There is rarely enough time in an interview to develop a really deep conversation about the candidate's work. Most of the people who seemed like the best fits for a position before the interview still seem like the best after it. Only occasionally does the interview process unearth someone who stands out as unexpectedly impressive — or someone who is particularly unimpressive (for personality reasons, perhaps) in a way that could not have been evident from the paper file.

There is a secondary justification for the conference interview: that it essentially is in the candidate's interest to be forced to attend. According to this argument, young scholars ought to be traveling to their major disciplinary conferences in the early years in order to meet people in the field and share the results of their work with a wider audience. It is a networking opportunity that would likely be passed up if the demands of the job market didn't require it, and it might pay off in future professional connections, or even a book contract resulting from a lucky conversation with an editor. Furthermore, without the presence of job-seekers (and, for that matter, those conducting interviews) the annual



conferences might be considerably smaller, resulting in some loss for the field at large.

These arguments have some merit, but ultimately fail to be convincing. Most sensitive observers (and even the obtuse) will by now have noticed that academe is in the midst of a high-unprecedented hiring crisis. Many job hopefuls will never find academic work, no matter how much networking they do early on. It is hard to defend placing the burden of maintaining a professional society on its poorest members, who may never have an opportunity to become full members of the guild.

Furthermore, people who attend major annual conferences in order to be on the job market are often too worried about their interviews to do much of anything else. Often, they're even discouraged by their advisers from serving on panels. Most of the benefit of conference attendance comes in the early years of secure work, not before they begin. Ending the conference interview may indeed result in some downsizing of meetings and disciplinary societies, but this would be no great tragedy if the people attending were actually more engaged.

Furthermore, for all that young

scholars are encouraged to plan ahead for conference attendance, they are not given much support to do so. In my own experience, for example, in my second year post-Ph.D. I had several conference interviews but no conference paper to give, which ended up feeling like a wasted opportunity. So I organized a panel for the next year, figuring that I would certainly have interviews again. But in that third year, I had no conference interviews, and had to make a long and expensive trip at a time that proved very difficult for my family. I planned as well as it is possible to do, and still faced an absurd outcome.

Additionally, many scholars are increasingly building professional relationships online, making the handshaking less urgent than it may once have been. I don't at all doubt the general value of conference networking — I once had a half-hour conversation with the ex-president of the Dominican Republic when I recognized him browsing at the book exhibit at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association — but it would be reasonable to assume that early-career scholars are also adults. I agree that they should attend conferences, but they should be able

to choose the conferences that are in cities relatively close to them, or where they have friends or relatives to stay with, or that fit well with the demands of work.

There are many seemingly intractable problems in academe today, where a issue can be identified but where it is difficult to imagine solutions, at least in the short term. Happily, this is not one of them: There are at least two superior alternatives to the conference interview. One is to move short-list interviews to video conferencing. Many committees are doing this already; it can be done at no cost and at the convenience of the committee and the candidates. It can be done sooner (in November, for example), perhaps allowing fly-outs to take place in January and thereby shortening the painfully long application cycle. If the hiring committee is concerned to see and interact with potential hires before extending further invitations, a videoconference is no more of an artificial environment than is hotel room.

Alternatively, the short-list can be skipped altogether. Seeing the people on the short-list in person might help identify a deeply unpleasant personality, but they might also

introduce forms of bias of which we are not aware. The literature on implicit bias tells us that none of us are exempt from it, and that results can change dramatically when candidates are given more anonymity. (Famously, for example, the number of women hired as musicians in classical orchestras jumped when auditions began to be held behind blind screens.)

Perhaps committees would be

most likely to find the best candidates for their positions by making the process as anonymous as possible — reading files and then moving straight to campus invitations. The significant amount of money saved by not sending the committee to do conference interviews would surely be sufficient to bring another one or two candidates to campus to provide a bit of additional insurance against

someone who ended up seeming like an unexpectedly bad fit.

The conference interview is a ritual that most in academe have experienced. But if it ever served its purpose, it is now clearly inferior to its alternatives. Those who have the power to do so should hasten to end it. ■

*Patrick Iber is a visiting lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley.*

---

## The Happy Hour Test

By Jeffrey A. Johnson

*Departments favor candidates who seem like they will fit in, and there's nothing wrong with that, writes Jeffrey A. Johnson.*

It's decision season. Conference interviews at the big humanities meetings and elsewhere came and went, campus visits were made, and some candidates anxiously await news. On campuses across the country, meanwhile, search committees and departments are sitting down to choose the candidate they'd like to offer that elusive tenure-track job.

Like many of you, I have had the unpleasant experience of being a job candidate and the, for different reasons, unpleasant experience of serving on search committees. It's not all bad, of course, and the positives far outweigh the negatives. In fact, while it is woefully time-consuming and in the end you are left wishing you could offer the job to many of the qualified candidates, serving on a

search committee is one of the most important, and meaningful, service duties one can do at a college. We are choosing our colleagues and, for our students, their teachers and mentors. I find it much more worthwhile work than my recent assignment to, with all due respect to the fine folks on it, the "Copyright Committee."

Getting a job, as we all know, can prove mysterious. Just what determines if one gets the job or not? And what, for departments and committees, proves the deciding factor? We can reasonably expect that all three of our three finalists will spend most of their professorial lives as we all do: writing, teaching, and serving our departments and institutions. And most candidates that make it to the finalist stage, it seems clear, can do all of those things competently enough.

If things are relatively equal by the finalist stage, and they usually are (final candidates are almost always from a strong graduate program, offer a promising research agenda, and have teaching fields that complement the department's existing offerings), then what? Something must tip the scales, right? I'd contend that many, maybe most searches come down to the intangibles. And the biggest and most indefinable of them all is simply fitting in. It's no secret (though worth saying) that collegiality, personality, and social skills matter, a lot.

In my department I call it, probably to the unrelenting annoyance of my colleagues, "The Happy Hour Test." (Drinking has little, if anything to do with it, incidentally, and many can pass and have passed this test without any hint of libations). Instead, it's a metaphor for potential collegiality.

While at first glance the "test" asks if this candidate may occasionally show up to the Friday afternoon gatherings at the pub near campus, it really asks questions about their broader sociability. Will this person be sociable? Have a laugh? Tell a joke?

Simply be friendly? We all know that lunch and/or dinner during a campus visit are an extension of the interview, and most of the serious conversation centers on research, teaching, and the institution. Really, though, it is an important chance for applicants to demonstrate pleasantness, which might just get them the job.

My wife tells me that in her world of the nonprofit this concept is “The Cincinnati Layover Test” (which puts forward a hypothetical scenario where you’re traveling for business and find yourself snowed in in Northern Kentucky and must navigate the next evening and morning; I like to imagine it including a late and desperate dinner at the local Chili’s, and airport shuttles to and from the airport with your colleague).

How would that period of forced companionship go with this person? Is this potential hire a colleague you could endure, maybe even enjoy, this circumstance with?

Choosing a colleague isn’t a marriage, but it’s close. The exercise centers on selecting a colleague you will see, particularly at colleges like mine that hire people we think we can successfully guide to tenure, in the halls for the next 25 or 30 years. So it’s important to ask, will this person engage in what Larry David of “Curb Your Enthusiasm” calls a “stop and chat,” or will they more often than not mechanically retreat to their office? Can they have a casual and easy conversation about something that, while perhaps meaningless, might offer a moment of retreat from the humdrum of our academic lives? Will this person be a welcoming “door open” colleague,



[istock.com/ kali9](https://www.istock.com/kali9)

or a persistent “door shutter”? In short, is this person capable of “playing nice with others?” We’re all “weird,” of course, we are academics, after all, but warmth and friendliness make this long-term relationship a lot easier to commit to.

More often than not, collegiality proves a, if not, the deciding factor in searches. (I’ll confess, and it shouldn’t come as a surprise, given the tone of this piece, that it matters a great deal to me when I evaluate candidates.) More professionally, we tend to call these sentiments “fit,” but it is a fit beyond the ability to offer courses that complement the expertise of those already in a department. And the notion extends beyond a candidate replicating what a department might already boast in its ranks. Unless territoriality is a factor, we all know that early on in searches departments and committees tend to “like” and gravitate toward potential colleagues who are professionally, or otherwise, similar to them (which is probably another essay altogether).

Still, assuming finalists all bring complementary and unique qualities to a department, the Happy Hour Test proves significant when it comes time

to make that final decision.

In the end, the Happy Hour Test depends on affability, but its consequence goes beyond likability. If one “passes” the Happy Hour Test, I’d argue, there is an especially strong correlation to being a strong teacher, colleague, and college citizen. It’s not the deciding factor in hiring, of course, and shouldn’t be, but it is an important consideration when thinking about the potential for successful teaching and an ability to attract students. For better or worse, it is important. As a candidate, and then hopefully as a colleague, offer a smile. Tell a funny and/or self-deprecating story. Demonstrate warmth. Revel in the oft-dismissed small talk. Get to know your professors and colleagues. (“Why I had no idea you were such a macramé enthusiast, Dr. Thompson!”)

Ultimately, people get – or don’t get – jobs for a variety of reasons. This is one you, as candidate (and hiring departments), can win. ■

*Jeffrey A. Johnson is associate professor of history and director of American studies at Providence College.*

## The Faculty Administrator

By Michael J. Cripps

*Higher education could benefit from moving away from the dichotomy in jobs between those who teach and those who manage, writes Michael J. Cripps.*

College and university costs have outstripped national inflation rates for well over a decade. A good part of this inflation is due to state disinvestments in public higher education and the across-the-board embrace of a more Club Med-like experience at residential institutions to attract undergraduates. Colleges and universities have adopted a Taylorist vertical division of labor that favors layers of full-time associate and assistant provosts, deans, and directors instead of a bevy of faculty-administrators with one foot firmly planted in the classroom. Higher education needs to rethink this leadership model.

How big is this issue? The American Institutes for Research, drawing on National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, documents a two-decade trend that should give anyone pause:

Public nonresearch institutions in 1990 averaged roughly twice as many full-time faculty as administrators — more than 20 years later, the two were almost equal. By 2012, the pendulum had swung at private nonprofit colleges and public research universities, which averaged less than one full-time faculty member (.75 to .90) for every administrator.

Across the entire higher education landscape, there are only about 2.5 faculty for each professional and managerial administrator, and at private nonprofits and public research-intensives, there are actually more administrators than faculty members!

This shift toward administrators contributes measurably to the cost of higher education, all with scant evidence that it has improved the quality of either instruction or student learning. If first-year retention is any indication of the ratings “education consumers” give to the experience, colleges and universities are in real trouble: The nation’s first-to-second year retention in 2010 was just 77 percent (NCES). This growth in the managerial-administrative class is not working as higher education’s quality control or efficiency mechanism, two things Frederick Taylor promised in *The Principles of Scientific Management* more than 100 years ago.

Colleges and universities require some full-time administrators, to be sure. But they would do well to recognize that the faculty-administrator, an endangered species on campus, is uniquely situated to deliver the outcomes at the core of the higher education mission — at a fraction of the cost of a member of

the administrative managerial class. Faculty and administrators alike have given up this important leadership ground between the pure faculty role and the managerial-administrative role of deans and provosts.

Tenure-track faculty know the three-legged stool of scholarship, teaching, and service. The rank ordering of those three legs varies by institutional type, with research universities privileging scholarship and community colleges emphasizing teaching. Often lost in this mix is “service,” a highly elastic category of academic labor commonly reduced to such activities as membership on a committee or two, attendance at a majors fair, and participation in reviewing placement tests.

Ask a faculty member to head up a major new initiative, call it “service,” and the university gets a new initiative developed without any added overhead — provided all goes well. The faculty member spearheads the new initiative, sits on a couple other committees, maintains a regular teaching load, and pursues a research agenda. With the new responsibility thrown in as “service” on top of existing work, however, nobody should be surprised when things don’t add up. Overloaded a bit, the faculty member may underperform in developing that new initiative, slide a bit in the area of teaching, or scale back on research productivity. The provost or dean concludes the faculty member cannot do that kind of work — he is not capable of leading, is too focused on research or teaching, or simply doesn’t care — and hires an

associate-level provost or assistant dean to take on the kinds of work represented by this new initiative. It's no surprise that many faculty are wary of these "service" roles.

Putting aside hypothetical scenarios, one might explore a classic function at colleges and universities: admissions. Not long ago, faculty played a key role in the admissions process, both guided by and guiding a dean. Faculty would help to shape the standards, vet applicants, and determine the academic profiles of the entering class. Today, full-time administrators staff admissions offices and faculty engagement in the admissions process is uncommon. Faculty may complain about who is and is not admitted, but they do so from the sidelines. It matters little whether faculty have retreated from these roles or been nudged aside to make room for managerial administrators.

It is precisely the elasticity in "service" that leads universities to miss both the efficiency and the potential effectiveness of the faculty-administrator. Enter any bar and you'll notice right away that the stools have four legs, not three. A three-legged stool is fine when one wants to sit while squatting; it is an accident waiting to happen once it's more than about 20 inches high. And our hypothetical faculty member's new initiative involves a higher level of responsibility than membership on the college's alumni scholarship committee. The university doesn't need a new associate or assistant dean to handle these kinds of challenges. It needs a



[istock.com/Boarding1Now](https://www.istock.com/Boarding1Now)

faculty workload stool with a fourth leg called "administration."

We can quickly locate at least two places where faculty already have a fourth leg on their stools: the chair of an academic department and the campus writing program administrator. Both are excellent examples of the faculty-administrator, particularly when done well. The chair and the writing administrator are almost always faculty, which means they are in the classroom each term, serve on assorted committees across campus, and maintain a program of scholarly inquiry. This close connection to the pedagogical labor of the university means they do not forget how difficult, time consuming, and rewarding it is to teach well. And they value the careful analysis and measured claims that advance scholarship. When they bring this mindset to their administrative work, great things happen.

What distinguishes the chair and writing administrator from our faculty member leading that hypothetical

new initiative? The chair and writing administrator have reassigned time from teaching for their work, something that is too often dismissed as "course release." This time signals the importance of the work by providing them with room to do it. Faculty-administrators teach one or two fewer courses per term than their colleagues, have a clear set of responsibilities for administration, and are held accountable for performance. This model is scalable and entirely applicable in many of the important leadership activities currently lumped in as "service" or handed off to some associate or assistant dean or administrative director.

This is a financial no-brainer. Universities have hired armies of administrators over the last two decades, while faculty hires (and salaries) have remained mostly flat. Replacing full-time faculty with adjuncts does little to advance a university's core mission. An economically rational approach more consistent with the

---

“This shift toward administrators contributes measurably to the cost of higher education, all with scant evidence that it has improved the quality of either instruction or student learning.”

---

higher education mission would suggest that hiring more full-time faculty to cover those classes from which our faculty-administrators have been reassigned would yield a better return on investment than adding more associate deans or directors. Full-time faculty cost more than adjuncts, but they also contribute much more to the university. After all, an adjunct’s stool has only one leg — teaching.

If the managerial administrator model is not more cost-effective, perhaps it yields better outcomes for the university. Specialization can build expertise, better analysis and more subtle judgments in specific knowledge domains, and performance efficiencies. There are definitely administrative roles for which faculty are not qualified. Psychological counseling services, for example, are likely best left to trained counselors at most universities. Between the dean and the director of health services, however, there are dozens of roles in academic affairs, advising, admissions, and student life that faculty-administrators could legitimately fill on reassigned time. Might the faculty-administrator approach yield comparable (or better) outcomes than the managerial administrators who teach no classes and engage in no scholarship? The answer is a matter of priorities, professional development, and evidence.

Colleges and universities miss important opportunities to capitalize on institutional memory and dense campus networks when they locate essential skills and responsibilities in just a few individuals whose ties to the institution are relatively thin. Many deans don’t last more than about three years. By privileging and expanding managerial administrator hires, we miss the opportunity to distribute academic leadership skills across highly educated, deeply analytical employees with robust institutional ties and a finger on the pulse of university life. Leadership skills are transferrable, making investments in faculty-administrators contributions to the quality of faculty service across the entire institution.

Faculty-administrators are close to the ground on educational initiatives and have campus networks they draw on to advance initiatives by recruiting colleagues and building support. Deans also have networks, but their networks are more often within the administrative ranks. They tend to be less closely tied to the faculty, making multiple, interlocking network-based management difficult. As a result, they can easily find themselves managing by directive, with initiatives lurching forward in fits and starts as faculty respond, react, or resist.

And the evidence that managerial-administrators make better decisions

than faculty-administrators is anecdotal at best. One can easily cherry-pick exceptionally smart decisions made by deans, just as one can readily locate real duds. And the same is true for faculty-administrators.

Several years ago, I was a faculty writing program administrator working in the City University of New York system. At that time, Alexandra W. Logue, executive vice-chancellor and university provost, published an opinion article in *Inside Higher Ed* entitled “The Scholarship of Administration.” Writing to the managerial-administrative class and borrowing an insight from Ernest Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Carnegie Foundation, 1990), Logue called for the best, most scholarly, systematic approach to administrative initiatives:

Turning the scholarly lens on administration and using the same careful investigation, design, assessment, and communication strategies employed in traditional research, colleges and universities can more effectively ensure that their efforts result in the greatest positive effect. Too often, and in direct contrast with how they would conduct their own research, some administrators embark on academic initiatives without first investigating what others have done, without designing their initiatives so that they can assess the results, and without broadly communicating those

results.

I read Logue's call as a breath of fresh air, and I'm certain that other faculty wish administrators consistently brought such an approach to their work. Although she completely ignores the possibility that faculty-administrators might have a role to play in the scholarship of administration, I take Logue's point as a clear indication that faculty-administrators are entirely capable of excelling at campus administrative responsibilities.

Expanding this model of the faculty-administrator will require both faculty and administrators to adjust their role definitions. Those of us in the faculty ranks need to shift our thinking about "service." We are forever squeezing important campus leadership roles into a box called service and devaluing the meaningful work faculty in those roles perform. A chair's role is not service; it is an administrative leadership responsibility. Reassigned time from teaching, stipends, and other workload or compensation offsets signal that the work is more than simply service. At many colleges, unfortunately, performance evaluations and promotional criteria still consider this kind of work as "service," a situation that confirms just how elastic (and problematic) the category has become. Recognizing "administration" as distinct from mere service is a first step toward accepting that some faculty work from a four-legged stool.

Both faculty and administrators in

colleges and universities also need to recognize the faculty-administrator role as a reallocation of the workload – from three legs to four. Both administrators and faculty must accept that the fourth leg is not simply tacked onto the three-legged stool. Some reassigned time from teaching (or some scholarship expectations, depending on the context) redistributes the faculty-administrators' responsibilities and workload, reducing the teaching (or scholarship) obligation somewhat to create space for the administrative obligation. Expanding the faculty-administrator model will require recalibrating the load on each leg of the stool, something that is neither radical nor particularly difficult.

The real challenge may be found in the ranks of the managerial-administrator class. I am not particularly interested in lamenting the corporatization of the university and the decline of faculty autonomy — at least not here. But something is amiss when whole classes of universities have more administrators than faculty.

Benjamin Ginsburg's *The Fall of the Faculty* (Oxford University Press, 2011) is an evidence-based broadside that charts the rise of what he calls "deanlets," "deanlings," and an "administrative blight" within higher education. For Ginsburg, this explosion in the managerial-administrative class is part adaptation of a corporate ideology to higher education and part Bureaucracy 101: Deans need

associates and associates need assistants. This may not be the iron cage as Max Weber imagined it, but it may still be a cage.

How might universities break free? I recommend an incremental pragmatism that slowly cultivates and expands the faculty-administrator role. We have a new idea for curriculum or a student affairs-related initiative. Do we put an associate dean or a member of the faculty in charge?

Give a faculty-administrator the reins, provide adequate reassigned time for the work and leadership, identify performance targets, and treat the responsibility as something much more meaningful than most of what counts as service.

As we make a series of these decisions, we will figure out how best to structure the incentives, the support, and the accountability. We will also find out which projects are just "service" and which ones involve "administration."

And we may slowly, steadily complicate that vertical division of labor, reinvigorate the role of faculty in decision making, slow the out-of-control growth of the managerial-administrative class, and make marginal improvements in the rate of inflation for college tuition. ■

*Michael J. Cripps is an associate professor of rhetoric and composition and director of composition in the English department at the University of New England. The views expressed here are his own.*

Cover images provided by  
[istock.com](https://www.istock.com)



Inside Higher Ed  
1015 18th St NW Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20036  
[insidehighered.com](https://www.insidehighered.com)