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FOCUS ON FACULTY

# Exploring the Satisfaction of Part-time College Faculty in the United States

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During the past two decades, two-year and four-year colleges have increased their reliance on part-time faculty. For many institutions, hiring part-time faculty began as an administrative policy that offered a convenient way of meeting the demands for instruction while maintaining cost effectiveness during tight budgetary times. It can be argued that hiring part-time faculty now has become a more permanent strategy for colleges and universities—one that has made part-time faculty a substantial group among the professoriat (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Leslie & Gappa, 1994).

Public perception of part-time faculty has been colored by accounts in the popular media that describe part-time faculty as individuals who piece

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together academic careers by teaching courses at several different institutions for modest pay and meager benefits (Mangan, 1991; Wilson, 1998). These accounts have contributed to the widely accepted portrait of the part-time faculty member as a frustrated academic searching for permanent full-time employment (Schubert, 1999; Stiffler, 1999).

Much of the previous literature on part-time faculty concentrated on the community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1977; Vaughan, 1986). The principal reason is that the community colleges employ a higher proportion of part-time faculty than any other sector of higher education (58% vs. 23%–40% for the various types of four-year institutions) (NCES, 1991). The preponderance of part-time faculty at community colleges has also created a stir among the public and state legislators who are concerned that an increased reliance on part-time faculty reduces instructional effectiveness and affects the overall quality of institution (Vaughan, 1986). Other studies have pointed out that part-time faculty members are, to a large degree, female and less qualified than full-time colleagues; they also receive inadequate pay with few or no benefits (Clark & Corcoran, 1987; Davis et al., 1986; Weis, 1987).

Although the literature on part-time faculty does an excellent job of describing the conditions of part-time work, it sheds little light on the satisfaction part-time faculty members derive from their roles. As such, accounts of part-timers' nomadic professional lives, low pay, and lack of benefits and status (Mangan, 1991; Tuckman & Cladwell, 1979; Wilson, 1998) fuel the perception that part-time faculty are universally less satisfied than their full-time counterparts.

Our purpose is to examine the accuracy of that perception by empirically investigating the satisfaction of part-time faculty. Our intent is not to suggest that part-time faculty roles are better than, or worse than, full-time roles. Moreover, we do not wish to enter the perennial debates over the continued utility of tenure; the quality of part-time faculty teaching; or whether part-time faculty members deserve better pay and benefits, and increased status on their campuses. We agree that the increased reliance upon part-time, non-tenure-track appointments is fraught with challenges. Despite this, we feel that it is still important to ask what some may see as unpopular questions:

1. Do part-time faculty really wish they could be full time and on the tenure track?
2. Are part-time non-tenure-track faculty members *universally* dissatisfied?
3. Are their full-time tenure-track counterparts more satisfied?
4. Might many part-time non-tenure-track faculty actually choose this status because of its flexibility and professional emphasis on teaching?

We believe that these are important questions and that their empirically derived answers can help us better understand the dynamics that enter into an individual's decision to become a part-time non-tenure-track faculty member. To address these questions, we drew from a large national database of faculty to provide a comparative view of part-time and full-time faculty and to begin exploring the job satisfaction of these individuals. Additionally, this study moves beyond other examinations of part-time faculty role satisfaction by adopting a measure of satisfaction that more completely captures the complexity and multidimensionality of this psychological construct.

## METHOD

### *Data Source*

We drew our data for this study from the 1992–1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. This data, which provides a national profile of the nation's faculty, includes a sample of 974 institutions and 31,354 faculty members. For the purposes of this study, we identified a final sample of 20,300 full- and part-time faculty members who declared teaching as their primary job responsibility. Part-time faculty members represent 37% of this final sample (i.e., 7,522 part-time faculty members).

### *Analyses*

This study moves beyond other examinations of part-time faculty role satisfaction by adopting a measure of satisfaction that captures the multidimensionality of this psychological construct. Empirical studies of professional role satisfaction have long been critiqued for their lack of theoretical rigor when measuring the construct of satisfaction (Buessing, Bissels, Fuchs, & Perraret, 1999). A major criticism is that satisfaction studies typically employ a single variable (e.g., "overall satisfaction") when measuring professional role satisfaction. Such an approach ignores the complexities of this construct. For example, an individual may experience high satisfaction in one dimension of his or her professional life while simultaneously reporting low satisfaction in another dimension. Measuring satisfaction with a single variable would, in this example, yield an inaccurate picture of the individual's professional role satisfaction. Simply put, we need to understand the conditions under which a faculty member is satisfied and those under which he or she is dissatisfied. Together, these many dimensions of satisfaction give a more complete and accurate picture of faculty member satisfaction.

To overcome the measurement problems associated with most studies of faculty professional role satisfaction, we have employed a more robust mea-

**TABLE 1**  
**COMPOSITION OF SATISFACTION SCALES AND**  
**OVERALL SATISFACTION ITEM**

<i>Constructed Satisfaction Scales</i>	<i>Chronbach Alpha</i>
Satisfaction with Personal Autonomy Scale: (1) authority to decide course content, (2) authority to make job decisions, (3) authority to decide courses taught.	.95
Satisfaction with Students Scale: (1) time available to advise students, (2) quality of undergraduate students, (3) quality of graduate students.	.67
Satisfaction with Demands and Rewards Scale: (1) work load, (2) job security, (3) advancement opportunities, (4) time available for keeping current in field, (5) freedom to do outside consulting work, (6) salary, (7) benefits, and (8) spouse employment opportunities.	.78
What is your overall satisfaction with your job?	NA

Note: All items were rated on a four-point scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = very satisfied.

sure of job satisfaction that we developed in an earlier study in which we tested and validated a latent structural model of role satisfaction among faculty members (Antony & Valadez, 2000). This multidimensional measure of satisfaction, described below, captures more of the complexity underlying the cognitive and evaluative processes attributed to “satisfaction” by previous researchers. Moreover, we have shown that this multidimensional satisfaction structure is invariant among faculty members who are part-time or full-time (Antony & Valadez, 2000).

We derived our measure of faculty satisfaction from the 15 items from NSOPF that address how satisfied individuals were with various aspects of their jobs. Our earlier work showed that 14 of these items could be reliably grouped into one of three dimensions of satisfaction: *Satisfaction with Personal Autonomy* (alpha = .87), *Satisfaction with Students* (alpha = .79), and *Satisfaction with Role Demands and Rewards* (alpha = .77). We allowed the remaining item, “Overall Job Satisfaction,” to remain as a stand-alone variable representing a global measure of job satisfaction. We also retained this single variable so that we could compare findings from other studies employing single satisfaction outcomes. Table 1 shows the four job satisfaction indicators (i.e., the three dimensions of satisfaction along with each scale’s associated component variables and reliability coefficient, and the stand-alone global satisfaction measure).

**TABLE 2**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME TEACHING**  
**FACULTY BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

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<b>Panel A: Percentage of Faculty, by Institutional Type (n = 20,308)</b>					
	<i>Four-Year</i>	<i>Two-Year</i>			
Full-Time	66.3	33.7			
Part-Time	43.6	56.4			
<b>Panel B: Percentage of Faculty by Gender (n = 20,308)</b>					
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>			
Full-Time	57.5	42.5			
Part-Time	52.6	47.4			
All	55.8	44.2			
<b>Panel C: Percentage of Faculty by Race/Ethnicity (n = 20,308)</b>					
	<i>American Indian/ Alaskan Native</i>	<i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>	<i>African American/Black</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>White (Non- Hispanic)</i>
Full-Time	0.6	5.4	9.1	4.5	80.4
Part-Time	0.6	3.7	8.5	4.9	82.3
All	0.6	4.8	8.9	4.6	81.0
<b>Panel D: Percentage of Faculty by Composite Parental Education (n = 20,308)</b>					
	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>		<i>High</i>	
Full-Time	47.0	48.5		4.2	
Part-Time	47.1	49.1		3.4	
All	47.0	48.7		3.9	
<b>Panel E: Percentage of Faculty by Highest Graduate Degree Earned (n = 17,629)</b>					
	<i>Master's</i>	<i>Doctoral</i>	<i>Professional</i>		
Full-Time	40.5	53.5	6.0		
Part-Time	71.1	19.6	9.3		
All	49.3	43.7	7.0		

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## RESULTS

Panel A of Table 2 shows the distribution of part-time and full-time faculty at two- and four-year institutions. The table shows that most part-time faculty work at two-year institutions (56.4%). However, the proportion of four-year part-time faculty at four-year institutions is relatively high (43.6%), signaling the need to study part-time faculty satisfaction at both two-year and four-year institutions.

Panel B of Table 2 shows the gender distribution of full-time and part-time faculty. Most full-time faculty members are men (55.8%), while 44.2% are women. Males are slightly overrepresented (52.6%) among part-time faculty as well.

Ethnic distributions of full-time and part-time faculty are found in Panel C of Table 2. Minorities are underrepresented (compared to their propor-

tion in the overall population) in both the full- and part-time faculty categories (NCES, 1991).

Panel D of Table 2 shows the composite parental education level (a proxy for socio-economic status) of full-time and part-time faculty. The vast majority of faculty members, regardless of employment status, come from middle or lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings show that faculty members from lower or middle socioeconomic backgrounds are distributed nearly equally between full- and part-time status. Faculty who come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds however, are more likely to be employed full-time.

Lastly, Panel E of Table 2 displays the highest degree earned by full- and part-time faculty. Most full-time faculty members declare the doctorate as their highest degree (53.5% of full-time faculty versus 19.6% of part-time faculty). In contrast, most part-time faculty members (71.1%) claim the master's degree as their highest degree. As would be expected, professional degrees account for a relatively small proportion of faculty who are employed either full- or part-time.

#### COMPARING FULL- AND PART-TIME FACULTY'S SATISFACTION

This section addresses the question of how satisfied faculty are with their roles. Table 3 displays the mean differences between part-time and full-time faculty across each of the three satisfaction dimensions, as well as on the overall job satisfaction item. In terms of satisfaction with autonomy, a measure that indicates how satisfied faculty members are with their authority to develop course content and to work independently, more full-time than part-time faculty members expressed satisfaction ( $p < .001$ ). Standard deviations for this item show that full-time faculty members reported much greater consistency in their levels of satisfaction along this dimension than part-time faculty members.

Differences in the demands and rewards scale shows that both full- and part-time faculty members express equal levels of satisfaction. No evidence exists to suggest that full-time or part-time faculty experience different levels of satisfaction with their workloads, job security, opportunities for advancement, pay, or benefits.

The third scale concerns faculty members' levels of satisfaction with the time available to advise students and with the quality of students. Although both full- and part-time faculty members indicated low levels of satisfaction along this scale, full-time faculty members were significantly more satisfied with students than part-time faculty ( $p < 001$ ).

Examination of the standard deviations for the mean on this scale shows the degree of variation among individual responses. This indicates that other characteristics besides part-time or full-time status that were not specifi-

**TABLE 3**  
**JOB SATISFACTION INDICATORS FOR**  
**FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME FACULTY**

Panel A: Results of Independent Sample T-Tests: Comparisons of Job Satisfaction along each Satisfaction Scale (n = 20,308)

<i>Satisfaction with:</i>	<i>Full-Time</i> (n = 13,497)	<i>Part-Time</i> (n = 6,811)
Autonomy**	3.26 (0.68)	2.95 (1.20)
Demands and Rewards	2.83 (0.59)	2.79 (0.66)
Students**	1.80 (1.46)	1.36 (1.75)

\*\*Differences significant at  $p < .001$ . Standard deviations in parentheses.

Panel B: Response to "How satisfied are you with your job overall?" (n = 20,308)

Full-Time	(n = 13,497)	3.14 (0.78)
Part-Time	(n = 6,811)	3.21 (0.79)

Differences significant at  $p < .001$ . Standard deviations in parentheses.

Note: All items were rated on a four-point scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = very satisfied.

cally identified in the model contributed to the levels of satisfaction that faculty members derived from students.

Panel B of Table 3 shows the differences between full- and part-time faculty members' levels of satisfaction according to a global indicator, "overall satisfaction with the job." Both full- and part-time faculty members expressed moderately high levels of satisfaction. Contrary to popular perceptions of part-time faculty satisfaction, these data show that part-time faculty members report more satisfaction with their jobs than full-time faculty members ( $p < .001$ ).

#### *Examining Indicators of Job Commitment*

To explain further the sources of variation in job satisfaction between part- and full-time faculty members, we also compared full-time and part-time faculty along two additional NSOPF items that could be considered indicators of job commitment. Specifically, one of these items asked respondents to report their level of agreement with the statement, "If I had to do it all over again, I would still choose an academic career." Our rationale for examining this item was that we believed the extent to which faculty were satisfied with their career would be associated with their willingness

**TABLE 4**  
**INDICATORS OF JOB COMMITMENT**

Panel A: Agreement with "If I had to do it over again, I would still choose an academic career." ( $n = 20,308$ )

	<i>Disagree Strongly</i>	<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<i>Agree Strongly</i>
Full-Time	4.7	7.4	29.0	58.9
Part-Time	4.4	7.5	23.1	65.0
All Faculty	4.5	7.5	25.1	63.0

Panel B: Results of Independent Samples T-Tests: Agreement with "If you were to leave your current position . . . how important would each of the following be in your decision?" ( $n = 20,308$ )

<i>Influencing Factor:</i>	<i>Full-Time (n = 13,497)</i>	<i>Part-Time (n = 6,811)</i>
Higher salary	2.60 (.55)	2.56 (.59)
A tenure-track/tenured position**	2.39 (.77)	2.16 (.82)
Job security**	2.66 (.59)	2.56 (.66)
Opportunities for advancement	2.45 (.69)	2.45 (.70)
Benefits*	2.70 (.52)	2.61 (.62)
No pressure to publish	2.07 (.80)	2.07 (.80)
Good research facilities and equipment**	2.20 (.75)	2.11 (.76)
Good instructional facilities and equipment	2.63 (.57)	2.56 (.62)
Good job or job opportunities for spouse/partner**	2.20 (.83)	1.99 (.86)
Good geographic location*	2.59 (.59)	2.46 (.68)
Good environment/schools for my children	2.10 (.93)	2.14 (.92)
Greater opportunity to teach**	2.11 (.80)	2.45 (.70)
Greater opportunity for research **	1.92 (.78)	1.76 (.75)
Greater administrative opportunities**	1.37 (.62)	1.47 (.68)

\*Difference significant at  $p < .01$ .

\*\*Difference significant at  $p < .001$ .

Standard deviations in parentheses. Items rated on a three-point scale: 1 = not important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = very important.

to reenter academe as a profession. This rationale is supported by the fact that the zero-order correlation coefficients between this new item and the four satisfaction indicators tested above were relatively high ( $r$  coefficients ranged from .56 to .78).

As shown in Panel A of Table 4, the majority of full-time faculty strongly agreed that they would choose an academic career again (58.9%), but an even greater majority of part-time faculty agreed (65%). Part-time faculty were slightly more likely (65%) to state that they would enter academe if they were choosing their careers again than were faculty in the aggregate (63%). Despite some negative aspects of working part-time, in short, these faculty members affirmed their satisfaction with their role. Reasons why part-time faculty members are more certain they would choose a faculty career remain unexplained. It is important to note, however, that this finding is inconsistent with popular notions of part-time faculty members as disenchanting academics.

Panel B of Table 4 shows the differences between part-time and full-time faculty on other individual items related to the construct of job commitment. We examined these items because they provide insight on what would cause a faculty member to leave his or her present position. Full-time faculty identified moving into another full-time tenure-track position, job security, and benefits. They were significantly more likely than part-time faculty to view the availability of a tenure-track position as a reason for leaving their current job. Because tenure and part-time status rarely go together, part-time faculty members may not be as likely as full-timers to view tenure as necessary for continuing in the profession. More importantly, this finding does not support the popular belief that part-time faculty are simply biding their time until a tenure-track position becomes available.

Similarly, full-time faculty showed a greater disposition than part-time faculty members to leave their current positions in pursuit of better benefits, better research facilities, better job opportunities for a spouse, or work in an institution that is in a better geographic location ( $p < .001$ ). A curious finding concerns benefits. It is unclear why full-time faculty members are more inclined than part-timers to leave their positions in pursuit of benefits considering that fewer part-timers receive benefits.

The pursuit of better research facilities is predictable for full-time faculty members, many of whom work at institutions that evaluate them on their research productivity. Panel B of Table 4 also shows that full-time faculty members were more concerned than part-time faculty with geographic location and whether their spouse would find opportunity for employment.

Panel B of Table 4 also shows that part-time faculty considered greater opportunities to teach and opportunities to perform administrative duties significant reasons to leave their current position. Because most part-time faculty members identify teaching as their primary role, it makes sense that these faculty members would be more teaching oriented than their full-time counterparts; but it is somewhat surprising that administrative duties would be more appealing to part-time faculty. Perhaps administration is seen as an opportunity for part-time faculty to increase their participation

in an institution. Such increased participation also increases the part-timer's sense of belonging within a department and reduces the chance that these faculty members will lose their identities as academics (Leatherman, 1997).

Our findings seem to show that part-timers are significantly more satisfied with their roles than full-time faculty. In addition, part-time faculty members are somewhat more likely than their full-time counterparts to agree strongly that they would choose an academic career if they had a chance to do it all over again. Lastly, when considering what would influence them to leave their current positions, part-time faculty members again provide surprising answers. Part-timers are less likely than full-time faculty to want to leave their current position in pursuit of a tenure-track job, job security, benefits, job opportunities for a spouse, and a better geographic location.

In what follows, we present our findings based solely on the sample of part-time faculty. First, we explore the distribution of part-time faculty for institutional type, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Second, we examine differences in the levels of satisfaction and job commitment between part-time faculty members who work in two-year versus four-year institutions.

#### *Part-time Faculty Demographics*

Table 5 presents the distribution of part-time faculty members in two-year and four-year institutions: (Panel A), gender (Panel B), ethnicity (Panel C), and socioeconomic status (Panel D). Panel A shows that most four-year part-time faculty work in private colleges and universities (55.5%) rather than in public institutions (45.5%). Not surprisingly, nearly all part-time faculty members work at public two-year institutions (97.1%). In terms of gender, part-time faculty members across all institutional types are more often men than women (52.6% vs. 47.4%).

Panel C compares part-timers at two- and four-year institutions. Some ethnic groups (American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and White) are slightly overrepresented in two-year institutions while others (Asian/Pacific Islander, African American/Black) are slightly overrepresented in four-year institutions. The data also show that part-time faculty tend to come from low to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. Part-time faculty from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are, however, slightly overrepresented in two-year institutions (50.2%). In four-year institutions, part-time faculty from middle (51.9%) and high (4.4%) socioeconomic backgrounds are slightly overrepresented.

#### *Part-Timers' Satisfaction and Institutional Type*

Panel A of Table 6 shows little difference between part-time faculty members at two- and four-year institutions in their responses to the item: "If I had to do it over again, I would still choose an academic career. Essentially

**TABLE 5**  
**PERCENTAGE OF PART-TIME TEACHING FACULTY**  
**BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE AND SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

<b>Panel A: Institutional Control (<i>n</i> = 6,811)</b>					
	<i>Public</i>		<i>Private</i>		
Four-Year	44.5		55.5		
Two-Year	97.1		2.9		
<b>Panel B: Gender (<i>n</i> = 6,811)</b>					
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		
Four-Year	52.3		47.7		
Two-Year	52.9		47.1		
All Institutions	52.6		47.4		
<b>Panel C: Race/Ethnicity (<i>n</i> = 6,811)</b>					
	<i>American Indian/ Alaskan Native</i>	<i>Asian/Pacific Islander</i>	<i>African American/Black</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>White (Non- Hispanic)</i>
Four-Year	0.4	3.7	9.3	4.2	82.9
Two-Year	0.8	3.2	7.6	5.6	84.2
All	0.6	3.4	8.4	5.0	83.6
<b>Panel D: Composite Parental Education (<i>n</i> = 6,811)</b>					
	<i>Low</i>		<i>Medium</i>		<i>High</i>
Four Year	43.4		51.9		4.4
Two Year	50.2		46.6		2.5
All Institutions	47.1		49.1		3.4

part-time faculty, who were shown above to be more committed to an academic career, hold this sentiment consistently, regardless of whether they work in a four- or two-year institution. This finding provides additional evidence that individuals who work as part-time faculty are strongly committed to academic work; and although they may be dissatisfied with particular elements of their position, it does not lessen their commitment.

More full-time faculty than part-time faculty would leave their current positions for the following reasons: higher salary, a tenure-track position, greater job security, having opportunities for job advancement, better benefits, better instructional facilities and equipment, a greater opportunity to teach, and greater opportunities for administrative responsibilities. On these issues, institutional type apparently plays a role in differentiating part-time faculty members' attitudes. Specifically, Panel B of Table 6 shows that part-time faculty members employed at two-year institutions are significantly more likely than those at four-year institutions to leave their current positions for the reasons named above.

**TABLE 6**  
**INDICATORS OF JOB COMMITMENT**

Panel A: Agreement with "If I had to do it over again, I would still choose an academic career." ( $n = 6,811$ )

	<i>Disagree Strongly</i>	<i>Disagree Somewhat</i>	<i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<i>Agree Strongly</i>
Four-Year	4.4	7.8	29.0	58.8
Two-Year	5.0	7.1	29.0	58.9
All Institutions	4.7	7.4	29.0	58.9

Panel B: Results of Independent Samples T-Tests: Agreement with "If you were to leave your current position . . . how important would each of the following be in your decision?" ( $n = 6,811$ )

<i>Influencing Factor:</i>	<i>Four-Year (n = 3,129)</i>	<i>Two-Year (n = 3,682)</i>
Higher salary	2.54 (.60)	2.58 (.58)
A tenure-track/tenured position**	2.14 (.84)	2.19 (.81)
Job security**	2.52 (.68)	2.59 (.64)
Opportunities for advancement	2.43 (.71)	2.47 (.69)
Benefits*	2.58 (.64)	2.63 (.61)
No pressure to publish	2.05 (.79)	2.08 (.81)
Good research facilities and equipment**	2.15 (.76)	2.08 (.76)
Good instructional facilities and equipment	2.54 (.63)	2.58 (.61)
Good job or job opportunities for spouse/partner**	2.03 (.86)	1.96 (.85)
Good geographic location*	2.47 (.68)	2.46 (.68)
Good environment/schools for my children	2.14 (.92)	2.14 (.92)
Greater opportunity to teach**	2.39 (.73)	2.50 (.67)
Greater opportunity for research **	1.83 (.75)	1.71 (.73)
Greater administrative opportunities**	1.43 (.66)	1.50 (.69)

\*Difference significant at  $p < .001$

Standard deviations in parentheses. Items rated on a three-point scale: 1 = not important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = very important.

Two interesting elements in this table deserve further interpretation. First, part-time faculty at two-year institutions are significantly more likely than part-time faculty at four-year institutions to consider the opportunity to earn tenure as an important reason for leaving their present positions. Per-

**TABLE 7**  
**JOB SATISFACTION FOR PART-TIME FACULTY**  
**AT TWO- AND FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS**

Panel A: Results of Independent Sample T-Tests: Comparisons of Job Satisfaction along Each Satisfaction Scale ( $n = 6,811$ )

<i>Satisfaction with:</i>	<i>Four-Year</i> ( $n = 3,129$ )	<i>Two-Year</i> ( $n = 3,682$ )
Autonomy**	2.97 (1.21)	2.91 (1.20)
Demands and Rewards	2.79 (0.66)	2.78 (0.67)
Students**	1.57 (1.71)	1.17 (1.76)

\*\*Differences significant at  $p < .001$ . Standard deviations in parentheses.

Panel B: Response to "How satisfied are you with your job overall?" ( $n = 6,811$ )

Full-Time ( $n = 3,129$ )	3.14 (.80)
Part-Time ( $n = 3,682$ )	3.22 (.79)

Differences significant at  $p < .001$ . Standard deviations in parentheses.

Note: Differences not significant. Standard deviations in parentheses. All items were rated on a four-point scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = very satisfied.

haps faculty at two-year institutions observe the direct link between quality teaching and tenure and welcome the chance to work at an institution that would grant them tenure based on their teaching ability.

In contrast, four-year part-time faculty members are more likely than two-year part-time faculty members to leave their current positions in pursuit of better research facilities and equipment. This finding implies that part-time faculty members at four-year institutions are more research oriented than their two-year counterparts. Such a distinction is important when considering the motivation for working part-time and also the factors associated with continued high levels of satisfaction among part-time faculty. Specifically, part-time faculty at two-year and four-year institutions desire different things. Policies intended to promote the satisfaction and job commitment of part-time faculty at two-year institutions may not be suitable for enhancing the satisfaction and job commitment of four-year part-time faculty.

Further emphasizing this last point, we see in Table 7 that part-time faculty employed at four-year institutions seem to be more satisfied along the "satisfaction with autonomy" scale and the "satisfaction with students" scale ( $p < .001$ ). Both groups of part-time faculty are equally satisfied with the demands and rewards of their jobs.

These findings suggest that the structure of faculty work as indicated by the satisfaction with autonomy scale and the level of compensation are both important issues. Part-time faculty members at four-year institutions express greater satisfaction with their level of autonomy than their two-year institution counterparts. A possible interpretation is that governance is often centrally managed at two-year colleges, and institutions are typically organized in a hierarchical fashion. This may leave faculty members feeling as if they have limited voice in decision-making (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

The findings also show that four-year part-time faculty are more satisfied with their students. This result may stem from the fact that students at two-year colleges are frequently less prepared for college work than students at four-year colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). A curious finding is that despite these higher levels of satisfaction among part-time faculty working at four-year institutions, those who work at two-year institutions express greater overall job satisfaction ( $p < .001$ ).

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

What do these data tell us about the differences in job satisfaction and job commitment between part-time and full-time faculty? First, they project a different picture than that proposed by popular accounts of part-time faculty. Despite the exploratory nature of our findings, part-time faculty members seem fairly satisfied with their roles. These findings are not meant to diminish the real concerns of part-time faculty about pay, benefits, and a quality work environment. Instead, the inferences we draw are that part-time faculty seem to be pursuing the careers they have planned for and have reached a degree of satisfaction with their decisions. In the overall commitment item, faculty members were asked whether they would “do it all over again” to pursue an academic career. Not only did a significant majority of part-time faculty agree with this item but they also agreed at a higher level than full-time faculty.

The data also showed that part-time faculty were pursuing a profession that gave them the opportunity to do what they most enjoyed—teach. When asked what would influence their decision to leave their present position, the most popular response was a greater opportunity to teach. In contrast, full-time faculty indicated that they would like greater opportunity to conduct research. In the aggregate, full-time faculty members were more concerned with job security, tenure, pay, and benefits. Part-time faculty, though also concerned with these factors, were less willing to leave their current positions in search of better pay, job security, or benefits.

From these results, it is possible to suggest an alternative model to the one presented in the popular media and in much of the literature on part-time faculty. Specifically, instead of being largely disenchanted with their

status as part-time faculty, these individuals are in fact engaged in the kind of work they enjoy—work that brings them a degree of satisfaction. This finding does not indicate by any means that nothing needs to be done for part-time faculty. As indicated in this study, there was no significant difference between part-time and full-time faculty on the “demands and rewards” scale. It appears that part-time and full-time faculty are equally concerned with issues pay, benefits, advancement opportunities, and job security. Even though the data indicate that these issues would not influence part-time faculty to leave their jobs for another position elsewhere, it can be inferred that they seem as concerned as full-time faculty that their institution provide these opportunities.

Future studies on part-time faculty must continue to explore the differences in levels of satisfaction between part- and full-time faculty members, but also must address whether the dimensions of satisfaction are the same for these two groups. From a policy perspective this line of research is critical, given the importance and permanence of part-time faculty in higher education. Working toward a more nuanced and complete understanding of satisfaction and developing models that would help administrators in two-year and four-year institutions create environments that would contribute to the job satisfaction of this group is a worthwhile goal.

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