

Fulbright New Century Scholars Symposium on Higher Education
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Statements and Recommendations

Working Group One: The Academic Profession in the Age of Globalization

Academics are central actors in higher education institutions. They shape institutions through knowledge production and transmission. Conversely, diversified roles and expectations of higher education institutions shape academics. It is critical to recognize this dynamic interaction because with the massive expansion and diversification of higher education systems, academics are assuming new roles and identities. Research conducted in private and public, prestigious and non-elite institutions in Brazil, Denmark, Mexico, Peru, Russia, and South Africa revealed several relevant findings.

Key findings:

As higher education institutions become more differentiated, a segmented labor market has emerged in the academic profession in many countries. This segmentation is occurring both between and within institutions. Full-time academics with fringe benefits, salary increases, and incentives for research represent a small privileged group, while the majority of instructional staff consists of part-time academics with low salaries, few opportunities for promotion, and limited access to decision-making in academic matters. Many academics have been de-facto redefined as knowledge workers and even "just-in-time" instructors.

Emphasis on research irrespective of the mission and local relevance of a higher education institution places burdens that the institution and academics cannot satisfy. This emphasis may detract from teaching, inhibiting the formation of specialized human resources addressing local and regional needs.

Ethnic minorities and women academics in many systems encounter barriers leading to differential patterns of advancement.

There is now easier access to new and more information, more fluid communication in real time, leading to the creation and participation of knowledge communities and networks. On the negative side are the constant reporting and monitoring of professorial activities and the increasing engagement of administrators in academic matters. New programs and various short-term educational offerings are proposed, often without the input of academics.

Recommendations:

Academics work within broad institutional systemic contexts; therefore, to address professoriate needs and to preserve professional identity, actions must take place at regional and national levels:

- Foster diversification that incorporates different local/national needs, different types of faculty expertise, and different performance indicators.
- Develop a plural system of accreditation that recognizes different missions of higher education institutions and a variety of indicators such as maintaining a balance between full-time and part time academics.
- Establish equilibrium between governmental responsibilities and market adaptations to generate effective institutions and fair working conditions in order to attract and retain the best individuals into academic jobs.

- Set up national and/or regional bodies composed of persons with wide representation to evaluate not only academic performance but also physical facilities and labor conditions in public and private institutions.