

Running head: SURVEY

The State of Psychology at Community Colleges

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August 18, 2009

Abstract

In 2008 APA's Committee for PT@CC conducted a survey of community college faculty in the US. We utilized electronic listservs, addresses provided by the American Association of Community Colleges, APA's data base, etc., to secure as wide a potential data pool as possible. Our survey sought information about faculty status (full time, adjunct status, other employment), educational level, demographics, work load (courses per term, campus and community service), courses taught, professional activity, teaching "style" (distance education, service-learning, learning communities, technology used), etc. We received over 1,800 responses representing over 600 community colleges. This presentation is a summary of these findings.

The State of Psychology at Community Colleges

In 2008 APA's Committee for Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges (PT@CC) conducted a survey of faculty at community colleges. We received over 1,800 responses, representing over 600 colleges. There are at least 1,200 community colleges in the US (American Association of Community Colleges, Fast Facts, 2009) (the actual number is difficult to ascertain given the inconsistent definition of what constitutes a *Community College*; including technical schools and those dedicated to specific job training programs can yield estimates closer to 2,500). Thus we achieved a very impressive contact rate, from somewhere between 25 and 50% of community colleges. (See Power point slides 1, 2, 3, and 4). This presentation is a description of our preliminary review of the data.

Most of our respondents were female (63%) and white (89%; African American 6%, Hispanic 3%; all others such as Asian American, Native American, Mid-Eastern (e.g., Arabian, Iraqi) were less than 1%). (See slides 5 and 6.). And, similar to other estimates regarding educational level of community college faculty (American Association of Community Colleges, Faculty Degrees, 2009), according to our data, most psychology instructors hold Masters Degrees (53%). Many of our respondents hold multiple Masters Degrees and/or many other specialist degrees, with only 41% holding doctorates. If we include those who claimed to be actively pursuing their doctorates, this figure increases to 43%. Four percent of our respondents claimed bachelors or other specialist titles (slide 7).

Most of those who took the survey reported that their primary place of employment was a community college (80%), with 4% stating that their primary job was at a four year college or university, 2% in a high school, and 12% stating other categories (such as private practice, graduate student, business or management). On the other hand, 21% claimed that a community

college was their secondary place of employment, or, in other words, were adjunct faculty (slide 8). We have not yet searched our data to see how the demographic and educational levels may differ between full time and adjunct faculty, but these are among the next questions we will be answering.

The respondents also indicated that they were fairly new to college teaching, with over 50% having less than 15 years experience (slide 9). Only 2% had over 40 years experience, and we did have one respondent who claimed 60 years experience!

As would be expected, community college faculty also teach a fair number of classes per term. Over 50% teach 13 or more hours per week (slide 10). On the other hand, 67% have between 20 and 40 students per class, and this is true for both live and internet classes. Over half of the respondents teach distance classes; approximately 1/3 use “service learning” approaches; and about 25% teach in “learning communities” (slide 10).

We asked for a listing of classes taught in the past 3 year. Over 90% included Introductory Psychology, 66% Developmental, 36% Abnormal (slide 11). Social psychology, personality, human sexuality, human relations, educational, and research methods were all listed on over 10% of the surveys. Other classes listed include statistical, physiological, cognitive, sport, cross cultural, adjustment, and industrial-organizational psychology; psychology of religion, of gender, of marriage, of parenting, and many more. These do raise some interesting questions about articulation and transferability for community college students.

Community college faculty are fairly active, as well. Over 60% stated that they belonged to at least one professional organization; only one third did not list any. The most commonly listed were APA (50%), Society of Teaching Psychology (23%), APs (15%), etc. (see slide 12). Moreover, almost every respondent listed at least one method of staying professionally active.

Over 90% attend professional meetings; 43% present at professional conferences; 42% engage in professional writing, and 27% are actively engaged in scholarly research (slide 13).

Finally, as might be expected, given the emphasis in the word “Community” in Community Colleges, over 50% listed at least one community activity. Over one third give community presentations; 31% do so in public schools; 31% are active in faith-based organizations; 27% listed work with special needs groups; 22% work with children and/or youth groups, etc. (slide 14).

In summary, our data suggest that community college faculty are mostly white, female, hold masters degrees, are relatively young, are very active professionally and in their communities, and teach a fair number and variety of courses per term to relatively small classes. We are hopeful that further evaluation of our data will continue to yield valuable insights and descriptions for those of us lucky enough to teach in community colleges.

References

American Association of Community Colleges, Fast Facts (accessed August 5, 2009).

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx>

American Association of Community Colleges, Faculty Degree Attainment (accessed August 5, 2009). http://www2.aacc.nche.edu/research/index_faculty.htm

Acknowledgements

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PT@CC Survey sponsored in part by a Grant from APA