

# The University of North Carolina Survey of Senior Faculty Preliminary Report

## Background:

The University of North Carolina participated in a joint research project in fall 2003 to gather information about senior faculty members' aspirations, plans, and concerns pertaining to late career and retirement. Other participants in the project were the University of Minnesota (with 5 campuses) and Associated New American Colleges (ANAC), 19 independent comprehensive institutions across the United States. Investigators from the three groups of institutions developed a survey to be administered to faculty 50 years or older. The web-based survey was posted and responses collected by a third party research firm, Creative Analytics of Indianapolis, Indiana.

At the same time, the UNC Office of the President, in cooperation with North Carolina State University, developed and administered a survey to participants in the UNC Phased Retirement Program who were still working part-time on UNC campuses. (The results of the Phased Retirement survey are not yet available for analysis.)

E-mail addresses were collected from UNC offices of institutional research by the UNC Office of the President Division of Planning and Assessment. E-mails were requested for every employee with a faculty appointment who was 50 years or older on June 30, 2003. This population represents the widest possible definition of faculty and included full-time and part-time non-tenure track faculty members as well as administrators who hold faculty rank.

Invitations to participate were sent via email to the selected population and signed by Dr. Betsy Brown, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Office of the President, and Dr. Jeffrey Passe, Chair of the UNC Faculty Assembly, which had voted its support of the survey in spring 2003.

A total of 6690 email invitations were sent to UNC faculty who were in the target populations for the senior faculty and phased retirement surveys; system responses indicated "fatal errors" for 711 addresses, producing 5979 apparently usable addresses. No reminder messages were sent to the target population. Usable responses were received from 835 UNC faculty members to the senior faculty survey and 96 from Phased Retirement Program participants, for a total of 931 responses. This represents a response rate of 15.6%.

## Comparison of Respondents to the Target Population:

The number of respondents to the senior faculty survey (835) and the response rate from the total target population (15.6%) is lower than was anticipated; however, the target population included both tenured/tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty, many of whom are part-time faculty members. Non-tenure track faculty may not have thought they were actually part of the target population of respondents, and a number of the survey questions may not have seemed relevant to these faculty. Responses by faculty from all three institutions (UNC, University of Minnesota, and ANAC), however, are remarkably consistent across most of the survey, creating confidence in the representative nature of the responses for a large group of U. S. senior faculty members at a selected group of public and private institutions.

A large majority of the UNC respondents were, as might be expected given the nature of the survey, tenured professors who have served at their institutions for a number of years. These faculty include a generational cohort currently of great interest to higher education institutions: senior faculty in traditional appointments who are expected to retire in large numbers in the next 5 to 15 years. This cohort's plans and attitudes toward the late stages of their careers and their pending retirement are of particular interest to institutions who wish to develop short- and long-term plans for anticipating retirement patterns and replacing this large group of faculty, estimated at 50% or more at most four-year institutions.

Compared to the target UNC faculty population, UNC respondents mirror the larger population in mean age, gender, and actual vs reported institutional salary. Overrepresented among the respondents were white faculty, tenured/tenure-track faculty, and professors.

	<u>Target Population</u>	<u>Respondents</u>
Mean age:	58 years	58 years
Gender:	66% male 34% female	67% male 33% female
Race/ethnicity:	84% white 11% black 5% other	91% white 5% black 4% other
Mean salary:	\$83, 316	\$84,362
Tenured/tenure track:	61%	86%
Professors:	46%	61%

The response rate among the population of professors (15%) mirrors the overall response rate to the survey for faculty of all ranks. Further analysis will provide comparisons between the population and the respondents based on three age cohorts: 50-55, 56-60, and 61 and older.

**Preliminary Analysis of Responses to the Senior Survey:**  
Some items below may exceed 100% because of rounding.

I. Demographic, Academic, and Financial Profile of UNC Respondents:

Mean age:	58 years
Gender:	67% male 33% female
Marital status:	79% married 10% widowed, divorced or separated 7% unmarried, living alone 4% unmarried, living with a domestic partner
Racial/ethnic identify:	91% white 5% African American 4% other
Academic Rank:	61% professor 23% associate 7% assistant 10% other
Tenure status:	82% tenured 4% tenure-track 14% non-tenure track or no tenure at institution
Employment status:	97% full time 3% part time
Administrative appointment:	35% hold administrative appointments
Mean years at current institution:	19
Mean years in higher education:	25
Mean salary from institution:	\$84,362
Mean other institutional income:	\$ 5,041
Mean income from other sources:	\$10,143
Mean total income:	\$98,688
% total income needed in retirement:	76%

Mean income needed in retirement: \$74,940

## II. Time Spent on Faculty Activities

The survey included questions about the hours respondents spent in various faculty activities; mean reported hours per week for each activity are listed below:

Total reported workload:	57 hours
Teaching activities:	25 hours
Research/scholarship:	11 hours
Administration:	9 hours
Institutional service:	4 hours
Professional development:	3 hours
Community service:	2 hours
Clinical/professional practice:	1 hour
Outside consulting:	1 hour
Other employment:	<1 hour

The survey also asked respondents to estimate the percentage of time they believed their institutions expected them to spend on various faculty activities. These expectations can be compared to the percentages of actual hours reported for each activity by the respondents:

	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Expected</u>
% Teaching activities:	45.9%	41.9%
% Research/creative activities:	20.0%	29.2%
% Inst/community service:	26.3%	19.3%
% Professional development	4.9%	5.1%
%Outside activities	2.8%	2.4%

Respondents reported the following mean numbers of selected scholarly/creative activities in the past three years:

Scholarly articles in edited book	1
Scholarly refereed articles	3
Scholarly non-refereed articles	1
Papers presented at conferences	4
Funded grant proposals	1

## III. Planned Retirement

The survey asked respondents about their retirement plans, including the likelihood of their retiring in three years. Although responses to this question will be more valuable when associated with a particular age cohort, overall responses to this question are listed below:

% not at all likely to retire in three years:	65%
% somewhat likely to retire in three years:	20%
% very likely to retire in three years:	15%

The mean response to a question about the age at which respondents expected to retire was age 66, with a mean of 8 years to planned retirement.

Asked whether they planned to enter phased retirement, UNC responses were as follows:

No	58%
Yes	32%
No response	10%

#### IV. Attitudes Toward Work, Professional Development Needs, Motivators and Stressors

The survey asked respondents a number of questions about their attitudes toward work, their professional development needs, and the professional and personal circumstances that might influence them to retire earlier or later than they had planned. Responses to selected questions are summarized below. Only those items are included for which

- the mean response was 3 or more (3=agree or important or significant) on a 4-point scale  
*and/or*
- the combined percentage of “agree/strongly agree,” “significant/very significant,” or “important/very important” was 70% or more.

(Please see the attached report for the full set of questions, items and responses.)

Question 20: In thinking about the current stage of your career and your institutional setting, how strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Compared to when I began my academic career, I am more enthusiastic now about:

Service to the larger community and society	3.0	NA
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Enthusiasm regarding my field and institution:

My interests have become more interdisciplinary in recent years	3.1	80.9%
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This is an especially creative and productive time in my field	3.0	
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I would like the opportunity to shift some of my

workload to areas where my interests are greatest	3.0	
Faculty Roles and Institutional Relationships		
Faculty members have an important civic responsibility to society	3.3	94.7%
Contributions to my institution		
Institutions often inadequately acknowledge and reward institutional service	3.2	85.2%
I believe that I have a lot to offer in mentoring faculty members new to my institution	3.0	83.9%
Overall		
If I had it to do over again, I would still choose an academic career	3.4	92.5%

Question 21: How important are the following types of institutional support for your continuing professional development at this point in your career?

Funds to present your work at scholarly conferences	3.3	81.0%
More opportunities for sabbaticals or other professional leave	3.3	83.9%
Better financial support for sabbatical and other leave activities	3.3	82.4%
Funds for travel to professional workshops and conferences on teaching	3.1	74.7%
Temporary teaching load reduction for scholarly/professional growth	3.1	74.5%
Support for pursuing external grant funding	3.0	

Question 22: How important are the following as sources of motivation and satisfaction in your professional life at this stage of your career?

Learning and intellectual stimulation you gain from study in your discipline/field	3.7	97.8%
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Feeling that your contributions have a positive impact at your institution	3.5	95.0%
Merit pay salary increases	3.5	92.2%
Favorable peer evaluation of your performance	3.3	90.3%
Favorable student evaluations	3.2	87.9%
Publication of a book, article, or presentation of a well-received conference paper	3.2	
Special awards or recognition by students	3.1	
Recognition of your contributions by a professional organization in your field	3.0	

Question 23: How significant are the following circumstances as sources of stress in your current professional life?

Lacking the time to give a piece of work the attention it deserves	3.2	84.3%
Institutional processes and procedures (e.g., “red tape”)	3.1	73.4%

#### V. Influences on Deciding to Retire Earlier or Later Than Planned

Question 26: Professional circumstances influencing you to retire earlier

Dissatisfaction with your work environment	3.0	73.9%
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Question 27: Professional circumstances influencing you to retire later

Overall satisfaction you gain from your work	3.5	90.5%
Flexible workload policies	3.2	84.3%
Financial or other incentives (e.g., phased retirement)	3.1	79.7%

Question 29: Personal circumstances influencing you to retire earlier

Having accumulated sufficient retirement income	3.4	84.4%
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Desire for more time to pursue your personal interests	3.1	79.6%
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Feeling “burned out”	3.0	74.8%
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Question 30: Personal circumstances influencing you to retire later

Having inadequate retirement income	3.6	93.2%
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Poor performance of your retirement fund	3.3	83.4%
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Continuing to have good health	3.2	80.5%
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Concerns about the rising cost of healthcare	3.1	79.0%
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Anxieties about the state of the economy	[2.9]	74.4%
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Question 31: How important are the following in the relationship you would like to have with your institution during your retirement?

Health care benefits	3.9	98.6%
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Library privileges	3.3	82.0%
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Access to office space, etc.	[2.9]	71.8%
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Opportunity for part-time teaching or other paid work	[2.9]	71.5%
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Emeritus status	[2.9]	70.0%
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Survey Data and Reports:

The Office of the President has received the raw data and written comments from all usable survey responses, as well as summary reports both for UNC as a whole and for individual UNC campuses. Additional reports are being developed which will allow analysis of the responses by the three age cohorts described above and other demographic categories. These summary reports will be posted on the UNC Office of the President Academic Affairs website (<http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/aa/index.htm>) and distributed widely to such groups as the UNC Chancellors, Chief Academic Officers, the UNC Faculty Assembly, and Directors of Institutional Research and Human Resources. Campus summaries will be distributed to the Chief Academic Officers, who will be encouraged to share them widely on

campuses. When they are available, the results of the Phased Retirement Survey will be posted on the Academic Affairs website and shared with the groups noted above.

## **Conclusion**

(by Jerry Berberet, ANAC; Carole Bland, University of Minnesota, and Betsy Brown, University of North Carolina)

Even in these preliminary analyses of responses by UNC faculty, several findings are striking:

- Senior faculty work significant hours (average 57 hours/week).
- They emphasize teaching and outreach – even beyond what their institutions expect.
- They are active scholars, producing an average of 1 refereed paper and more than 1 presentation each year.
- They perceive higher education as important to the civic good.
- Overall, they are satisfied with academic life, to the point that, if given the choice, over 90% of them would select this career again.
- 31% of them are somewhat or highly likely to retire in the next three years.
- They anticipate needing 76% of their current income in retirement, an amount that approximates what experts say retirees will need to maintain the purchasing power they had before retirement (once contributions to retirement accounts, etc., are removed from their expenses and their tax rate decreases).
- Health care benefits are their overwhelming concern in retirement.

Of particular interest is the discrepancy between how faculty spend their time and they believe their institutions expect faculty to spend their time. If the current perception of the public is that faculty spend more time on research than they should and less on teaching, the opposite seems to be the case for these senior faculty.

In addition, what motivates these faculty most is intellectual stimulation and positive contributions to their institutions, suggesting that there is a large pool of seasoned faculty eager to contribute, if institutions can find ways to support and harness their efforts.

Given their high level of satisfaction, it is not surprising that these faculty members do not plan to retire early. On average they expect to retire around the age of 66. Further, none of the professional aspects presented in the survey would influence the vast majority of them to retire earlier, such as financial pressures facing their institutions, having job opportunities outside higher education, or increased workload and productivity expectations at their institutions. “Dissatisfaction with your work environment” was the professional aspect most likely to influence faculty to retire earlier (74% agreed). This lack of motivation to retire early by a committed and seasoned faculty may herald good news for institutions. However, the survey results also suggest that it is important to continue to attend to the development and vitality needs of senior faculty.

When senior faculty do retire, the thing they overwhelmingly report as most important to an ongoing relationship with their institutions is health care benefits. Beyond that, academic aspects are most important to them in retirement, such as library privileges (even more than parking privileges), access to office space and other professional support, and opportunities for part time teaching and other paid activities.

These are very preliminary analyses. Responses to the survey are being analyzed further from a number of perspectives, including demographic cohorts (age, gender, race), administrative appointment, and institutional type. Results from these analyses will be included in future reports.

Betsy E. Brown  
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