

The Changing Academy – The Changing Academic Profession
in International Comparative Perspective 4

William K. Cummings
Martin J. Finkelstein

Scholars in the Changing American Academy

New Contexts, New Rules
and New Roles

 Springer

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The Changing Academy – The Changing Academic Profession in International Comparative Perspective 4

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As the landscape of higher education has in recent years undergone significant changes, so correspondingly have the backgrounds, specializations, expectations and work roles of academic staff. The Academy is expected to be more professional in teaching, more productive in research and more entrepreneurial in everything. Some of the changes involved have raised questions about the attractiveness of an academic career for today's graduates. At the same time, knowledge has come to be identified as the most vital resource of contemporary societies.

The Changing Academy series examines the nature and extent of the changes experienced by the academic profession in recent years. It explores both the reasons for and the consequences of these changes. It considers the implications of the changes for the attractiveness of the academic profession as a career and for the ability of the academic community to contribute to the further development of knowledge societies and the attainment of national goals. It makes comparisons on these matters between different national higher education systems, institutional types, disciplines and generations of academics, drawing initially on available data-sets and qualitative research studies with special emphasis on the recent twenty nation survey of the Changing Academic Profession. Among the themes featured will be:

1. Relevance of the Academy's Work
2. Internationalization of the Academy
3. Current Governance and Management, particularly as perceived by the Academy
4. Commitment of the Academy

The audience includes researchers in higher education, sociology of education and political science studies; university managers and administrators; national and institutional policymakers; officials and staff at governments and organizations, e.g. the World Bank.

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New Contexts, New Rules and New Roles

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Preface

As academics that have been around for awhile (Cummings' first full-time US academic appointment was in 1972, Finkelstein's was in 1979), it is our sense that things are not like they used to be. But what is the precise nature and scope of the change? And how has it affected academic work and careers? The conduct in 2007 of a national survey of the US academy modeled in part on an earlier 1992 national survey has provided us with the opportunity to address these questions. An additional bonus of the 2007 survey known as The Changing Academic Profession (CAP) study is that it has been conducted in 18 other countries, thus making the overall endeavor possibly the largest ever study of the world's academic profession.

In this book, we seek to provide some tentative answers to our guiding questions on the state of the US academy in historical and comparative perspective. As with most endeavors of this kind, the message is mixed. The physical plant in which the US academy works seems to have improved somewhat, especially for the purposes of teaching. The obligations of academics have changed somewhat, toward a greater stress on teaching with a reduced emphasis on research. While we expected younger faculty to be taking a greater share of the increased teaching burden and hence to be less satisfied, it would appear that they have adjusted well to the changes—partly through downsizing their expectations from their employers. The big losers over the past two decades appear to be the expanding legion of contingent faculty who get paid less and possibly respected less for doing much more.

Another major theme in our analysis is to consider the health of the US academy relative to the academies of the other countries and economies participating in the 2007 CAP survey. In general we have found that the USA maintains a high quality academic system, but other systems are catching up. Especially impressive are the gains of some of the East Asian systems (notably Korea and Hong Kong). Also notable is the progress of Malaysia, Mexico, and Brazil. This volume provides some information on these comparisons while other volumes in the related series go into greater detail.

While Martin Finkelstein and William K. Cummings are the principal authors of this volume, they received considerable assistance from several colleagues. Olga Bain is a co-author of Chaps. 5 and 6. Elaine Walker and Rong Chen are co-authors of Chap. 7 and Ming Ju is co-author of Chap. 8.

Above all else, our commitment in this volume is to let the data speak for themselves. As we all know, however, data rarely do that—unassisted! There are world-views and assumptions that shape the direction and contours of survey instruments; and there are professional values and commitments that invariably shape how the data are “sliced and diced” and reported. While we cannot avoid those, it seems useful and fair in the interests of transparency to offer the reader an introduction to some of the views and value commitments that we—consciously, at least—bring to the analysis reported here.

Both Cummings and Finkelstein share a sense that the changes we are experiencing in academic life are structural and far-reaching—not a “swing of the pendulum,” but rather a re-alignment in the models and practices that define academic work and careers in the service of new and expanded social functions of American higher education. In the terms of the late Martin Trow (1973), we see these trends as invariably associated with the “massification” and incipient “universalization” of higher education: *quantitative* changes which at some point (and we appear to be approaching that point) become changes in *quality*. Moreover, these concomitants to massification are concurrently being shaped by the great economic transformation of the past generation: the emergence of the globalized, knowledge-based economy at once integrating knowledge production across borders, but also through its “flattening” affects, undermining the staying power of old status hierarchies and practices and re-structuring the nature of work in most organizations outside the Academy. We are, simply stated, hardly immune from these macro developments; and we see current higher education developments through that larger lens.

So, while we, in some sense, view many of the changes we are chronicling with a sense of inevitability, at least in terms of (with respect to) the drivers and the economic context, we are less clear about their implications for the “peculiar” institution that is the Academy—a sort of hybrid organization mixing aspects of a “social institution” (like a church) with aspects of a “firm” that needs to manage revenues and expenditures to stay in business. We do not make any assumption that change—even wholesale change—is bad for the Academy, its social institutional or firm-like character, or for any one or group of its stakeholders. We are not seeking to viscerally or uncritically “resist” new models and practices. Rather, we approach such change from two perspectives. On the one hand, we are acutely aware that, historically, certain models and practices that developed in the USA over the past half-century such as the highly structured academic career track (much more predictable than that of most nations with the possible exception of Japan), including the institution of academic tenure, are being acknowledged as sources of the American system’s historic ascendancy and strength—frequently in foreign lands. Similarly, the place of individual colleges and universities as the locus within which academic careers are pursued (another historically distinctive feature of the US system) may also be disintegrating. We are appropriately concerned that such arbiters of our

system's strength are "loosening"—although we recognize that in the face of expanded social functions, these models will no doubt require some kind of modification. That being said, we are at the same time skeptical about how new developments and practices will affect the system and its long-term performance. What will be the impact on system performance of the increased "loosening" of the career track and the increased "de-coupling" of faculty careers from their institutional nexus? How can that best be managed?

We fondly hope that the data presented here will help readers begin to address these questions. Moreover, we wish to extend an invitation to readers to think of the book and the associated data as a resource for their own questions. The appendix to the book provides a full disclosure of the study instrument as well as information on how to access already published international tables and procedures for downloading the dataset if the desire is to carry out further analysis. As of June 2012, the dataset will become a public resource, and we hope many of you will decide to make use of it.

It is thus with an appreciation of the scale of the transformation, a concern about its impacts on the Academy and the academic profession, and an open, but determined mind, that we have attempted to mine the data for answers—and for new questions. We hope that you take our work in this spirit.

Acknowledgments

In putting together this volume, we are indebted to a wide variety of individuals across the globe. Most fundamentally, we are grateful to those scholars, including Akira Arimoto, then at Hiroshima University, and Ulrich Teichler, Kassel University, who parlayed their experience in the 1992 Carnegie Survey into organizing and leading a 15-year follow-up survey—and then inviting us to join them in that enterprise. We are indebted to the national teams of scholars from 18 other nations who became part of the enterprise, and particularly those who organized a series of conferences between 2008 and 2011 in which preliminary findings from the various national surveys were presented and in which we were able to collaboratively engage in data cleaning and organizing a systematic dissemination initiative. Those conferences were held in Kassel, Germany, in 2009, in Hiroshima, Japan, in 2009, 2010, and 2011, in Mexico City and Buenos Aires, in 2010, as well as in Melbourne, Australia. (Final conferences are tentatively scheduled for Wuhan, China in 2011 and Berlin, Germany in 2012.)

The research team at the INCHER, Kassel University, played a key role in organizing, cleaning, and maintaining the 19 national datafiles, working collaboratively with a Methods Group composed of leaders from several of the national teams. In particular, we are grateful to Ulrich Teichler, Harald Schomburg, Florian Loewenstein, and Rene Kooij who tirelessly vetted national datafiles, raised questions, and showed enormous patience, care, and dedication in working with the data and its occasionally fussy and irritable producers.

Closer to home we are grateful to Olga Bain, George Washington University, for her assistance at several stages of the study, including contributions to individual chapters. At Seton Hall University, the University Research Council as well as the Dean of the College of Education, Dr Joseph DePierro, provided timely and much needed financial and logistical support for the survey. Ming Ju, then graduate assistant at Seton Hall University, contributed both to the data analysis as well as to the write-up of several of the chapters herein. Most recently, Kevin Iglesias, also a graduate assistant at Seton Hall University, provided extraordinary assistance on whipping the tables into shape. We are grateful to Yoka Janssen and her editorial colleagues at Springer who supported not only the publication of a series of volumes

under their imprimatur reporting on the results of CAP surveys across the globe, but encouraged us to include in that collection a volume dedicated entirely to the results of the American survey. Astrid Noordermeer at Springer provided support in putting together the original manuscript and shepherding it through the production process. We are grateful as well to several external reviewers (unknown to us) whose insights and observations have no doubt improved the manuscript.

Finally, we want to recognize the nearly 25,000 dedicated academic staff and researchers across the globe, including about 1,200 right here in the USA, who took the time to share with us their perceptions and judgments about the state of academic life in the first decade of the twenty-first century. We could not have done it without them.

William K. Cummings, Burke, VA
Martin J. Finkelstein, South Orange, NJ

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